

THE VIETNAM PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

This paper is conceived and presented with the conviction that the ultimate solution to the Viet-Nam war lies mainly on-the-ground in Viet-Nam and that it is primarily political in nature. The outcome of the conflict, therefore, is dependent ultimately on the will of the Vietnamese people, and on whether, with our assistance, they will be able to create an effective government which merits the support of its people.

As a Government, we have tended to believe in the omnipotence of our vast array of material power, and that somehow the deployment of this power would bring a satisfactory solution. We have shown little understanding of the nature of the Vietnamese people, of the nature of our enemy and his strategy, or of the nature of the conflict itself. Further, in arraying our power and using it we have tended to displace the Vietnamese and their efforts on their own behalf, the most essential elements in a satisfactory outcome.

It is now tragically late. We are negotiating with our enemy; but our Vietnamese allies do not possess the unified political base necessary to sustain such negotiations and to achieve a political resolution of the conflict. Yet, we believe it is not too late, because there are still enough Vietnamese patriots to carry on the political struggle, or to go on with the war if necessary, if we can only begin to give them effective help.

This paper examines of where we are now, and to a necessary extent what has gone wrong and why. More importantly it presents the thesis that we can still salvage a satisfactory solution, an ultimate political victory, in Viet-Nam if we really bend ourselves to the task. This will mean some painful restructuring of the U.S. Government to prosecute our Viet-Nam effort; and

it will mean being painfully honest with the American people about what we are really up against. Finally, it will mean some very tough decisions for the new President.

The modest purpose of this paper is to help point the way towards those decisions which have to be made.

U. S. OBJECTIVES

Since 1965 the primary US objective in Viet-Nam has been to prevent the defeat of South Viet-Nam by Communist forces, whether North Vietnamese or Viet Cong. This automatically involves a number of concurrent objectives -- such as the U.S. goals of stability in Southeast Asia, of an independent, non-Communist government in South Viet-Nam, of social and economic well-being for the South Vietnamese people, of military self-sufficiency for the South Vietnamese armed forces. We may speak of one objective; in fact we pursue several related and inseparable goals.

For example, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy summarized the U.S. objective as "solely that of protecting the independence of South Vietnam from external interference and force." Then, explaining why we held that objective he said: "...Southeast Asia does matter ... the independence of South Vietnam crucially affects Southeast Asia and ... non-communist nationalism in Southeast Asia and in Vietnam has in it the seeds of a peaceful, progressive and stable area that can take its place in a world at peace."

Today, other official statements and on-going programs in Viet-Nam support the following three objectives:

- Assist South Viet-Nam provide its own internal security and increase its capability to deter and defend against external aggression;

- Help South Viet-Nam secure sufficient time and means to develop an effective, broadly based and cohesive nationalist force capable of meeting the needs of the South Vietnamese people and of competing politically with indigenous Communist elements;
- Seek an honorable settlement which respects international borders, ends the fighting and permits further development of representative political institutions -- thus permitting the reduction and eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces without jeopardizing the primary U.S. objectives in Viet-Nam.

To these must be added a fourth objective found in the Republican and Democratic Party platforms and in statements by official and non-official spokesmen: - de-Americanize the war.

- This fourth objective is consistent with the goals of security, political development and peace listed above.
- It is not consistent with the strategy we have been following in pursuit with those goals.
- It indicates that in the near future priority US objectives are probably
 - . Withdraw US troops as soon as possible
 - . Help the Vietnamese create conditions which give South Vietnamese nationalist a fighting chance - militarily and politically.

THE SITUATION

The one paramount fact about the Viet-Nam situation is that we are involved in negotiations with representatives of North Viet-Nam in Paris. What progress will have been made by January 20 we cannot predict.

In any case, the new administration will be dealing with the Viet-Nam initially in a negotiating stance. It will want to use the negotiations as a weapon to gain its objectives and at the same time guard against their possible bad effects. Prior to discussion of possible courses of action the situation itself needs analysis - as it appears to official Washington, to the American public, to the South Vietnamese, and to the enemy.

As Official Washington Sees It

Level of Activity. Enemy activity in South Vietnam has declined since mid-September and has reached a level approximating the so-called summer lull, although allied forces have continued a high level of effort to carry the battle to the enemy. The enemy recently has avoided large scale engagements and appears to have withdrawn some of his forces to remote base areas to refit. His offensive plans have been disrupted by allied operations. His logistic system has been hurt--he has lost weapons and munitions at about twice the 1967 rate and substantial materiel caches have been uncovered by friendly forces. He has suffered over 25,000 killed since mid-August. Even during the late August period of intensified enemy activity, his actions were sporadic and staggered, rather than on a sustained basis; planned attacks apparently were thwarted or postponed because of allied operations.

Capabilities and Intentions. For the future, despite enemy losses and allied disruption of his plans, the enemy still retains some capability to launch further offensive operations. Allied forces are, however, in an excellent position to continue to disrupt his activities and cope with him militarily. With regard to enemy intentions, it is possible that he may seek a major military victory similar to his attempt during Tet, but, based on his recent experiences, it is more likely that he will keep up some levels of military effort less than all-out. In any event, we expect that he will concentrate efforts on influencing domestic US and world opinion and the negotiations in Paris in order to achieve a political and psychological victory. No matter which course of action he chooses, he does not appear to have changes his overall objective of a unified Viet-Nam under Communist domination.

Allied Forces. The allied military strength in South Viet-Nam is made up of 538,500 United States forces, over 765,000 Republic of Viet-Nam Armed Forces (RVNAF), and 65,500 Third Nation forces, for a total of over 1,369,000 allied forces. The approved deployment program for Southeast Asia provides for 549,500 United States military personnel in South Vietnam. The RVNAF are programmed for expansion to over 800,000 by the end of 1968, with 200,000 additional personnel in auxiliary and paramilitary forces. The number of Third Nation forces, which presently include 7,500 Australian, 50,000 Korean, 500 New Zealand, 1,500 Filipino, and 6,000 Thai forces, will reach 70,000 upon the arrival of additional troops committed by Thailand.

RVNAF Improvement. During the past six months the South Vietnamese have shown both a willingness and a capability to assume a greater share of the fighting in Viet-Nam. Accelerated expansion of the Republic of Viet-Nam Armed

Forces (RVNAF) beginning in February 1968, coupled with general mobilization, has increased their strength by over 25 percent since the first of the year. Progress in equipping this expanded force is being made. South Vietnamese forces are being equipped with M-16 rifles, other light weapons, radios, armored personnel carriers, armored cars, more modern aircraft, additional artillery, and more modern equipment.

In addition to increased force levels and more and improved equipment, actions are underway to improve leadership motivation and morale of RVNAF. These are mainly Vietnamese programs and include those to fill existing officer and NCO shortages, provide more adequate pay, train more soldiers better, etc. These actions have improved and should continue to improve RVNAF's effectiveness potential. During combat actions in the past several months, RVNAF appears to be performing better and developing confidence to cope with Communist forces. Combat readiness of maneuver battalions has improved and they are conducting more operations. Both General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker recently have commented favorably on RVNAF's improved performance. Sustained improvement will require continuing action by RVNAF.

Enemy Forces. The enemy continues to maintain a sizeable numerical threat in South Viet-Nam. The significant point about this threat, however, is that we have witnessed an almost complete reversal in the composition of the threat. Whereas in past years the force was made up of at least 70 percent ethnic South Vietnamese--Viet Cong--we now face a force that is over 70 percent North Vietnamese Army personnel. It is estimated that over 180,000 North Vietnamese Army personnel infiltrated into South Viet-Nam during the first nine months of 1968, and the lull in the fighting during the summer resulted in the enemy

having a net gain over his losses during that period. It is reasonable to assume that the enemy has made every effort to replace his losses and has used the remaining portion of his replacement pool to try and bring his units up to full strength. There has also been a significant decrease in the quality of the enemy soldier as compared to the hard core Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army regulars of the past.

Interdiction Campaign. Since the President's announcement of 31 March 1968, the air war in North Viet-Nam has been concentrated against a continuing high volume of supplies and materiel moving south of 20° north latitude. Although concentrated in a smaller area, the level of tactical air attack effort in North Viet-Nam has remained about the same level during the first nine months of 1968 as it was during the same period in 1967. The effect of halting the bombing of all of North Vietnam upon the conduct of our military operations in South Vietnam and upon the safety of our troops there would depend upon the actions taken by the North Vietnamese subsequent to such a halt. It is regrettably true that even with our present intensified bombing of the supply routes from North to South Viet-Nam, the enemy is able to infiltrate sufficient men and materiel into South Viet-Nam to create substantial casualties among United States and other allied forces there.

Military Casualties. United States military casualties in the Viet-Nam conflict have increased sharply in 1968 and are occurring at a little less than twice the 1967 rate. However, US combat deaths, which averaged about 320 per week during the first nine months of 1968, declined sharply from 438 for the week ending 1 June to less than 200 for each week during the 8 week period 23 June through 17 August. They jumped to 308 and 408 for the

weeks ending 24 and 31 August respectively, then dropped to 195 for the week ending 7 September. They rose once again to a peak of 290 for the week ending 21 September, but since then have declined steadily to 190 and 177 for the weeks ending 5 and 12 October respectively. Republic of Viet-Nam military casualties also have increased sharply in 1968 and RVNAF combat deaths have exceeded US combat deaths for each of the first nine months of 1968 except April and May. RVNAF combat deaths, which have averaged almost 360 per week during first nine months of 1968 and averaged over 400 per week during the period 18 August-28 September, dropped sharply from 372 for the week ending 5 October to 176 for the week ending 12 October.

Losses sustained by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces have been running at unprecedented rates during 1968 and are occurring at almost two and a half times the 1967 rate. VC/NVA combat deaths, which have averaged over 3,900 per week during the first nine months of 1968 and averaged over 3,200 per week during the first nine months of 1968 and averaged over 3,200 per week during the period 18 August-28 September, dropped sharply to 1,810 and 1,527 for the weeks ending 5 and 12 October respectively. The enemy/friendly kill ratio of over $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 for the first nine months of 1968 is somewhat higher than the ratio of a little less than 4 to 1 for the same period in 1967.

Enemy Materiel Losses. A comparison of the first nine months of 1968 with the same period in 1967 indicates that enemy materiel captured in 1968 has been about double the number of individual weapons, almost five times the number of crew-served weapons, about two and a half times the amount of small-arms ammunition, almost triple the amount of mortar ammunition, about

the same number of mines, over one and a half times the number of grenades, less than one half the amount of rice, and about one third the amount of salt.

Negotiations. The enemy is losing the war and cannot continue to sustain the losses we have inflicted on him. The South Vietnamese are becoming stronger both politically and militarily. Hanoi, however, does not appreciate the strength of the South, but believes that it, rather than the GVN and its allies, is winning. Further, Hanoi is counting on US and world public opinion to force a political settlement.

As the American Public Sees It

The American public does not understand why we are so heavily involved in South Viet-Nam. It does not understand the issues involved nor the morality of our commitment. The costs of the war - casualties, taxes, inflation, balance of payments problems - have not brought tangible successes which point to ultimate victory. At a time of domestic crisis it resents the vast expenditures for Viet-Nam which it feels could be used better to meet problems at home. Further, because of publicity about desertions, draft dodgers, corruption, and dissent among South Vietnamese nationalist, it believes that the South Vietnamese do not take the war seriously enough. Lack of general public support for the war is the single most serious US weakness in our support of Viet-Nam. Hanoi must be pleased at the casualties in US leadership caused by adverse US public opinion - President Johnson, Secretary McNamara, General Westmoreland, Ambassador Lodge being the most prominent.

Yet Americans by nature do support a cause they believe is right. Unfortunately, the rightness of our cause in Viet-Nam has been obscured

by controversy over our methods. This inherent support of rightness, however, is a constraint against a sell-out in Paris. Although a majority of Americans want our involvement ended, they want it done in a way they can accept as honorable. They expect a new administration to reduce casualties, to start bringing troops home, to reduce expenditures, but they want assurance that past sacrifices will not be negated by open or disguised surrender.

As It Is In South Viet-Nam

During the past three years the rule of the military directorate which overthrew President Diem has been replaced by a Constitutional government with an elected President, Vice President, and National Assembly. Nonetheless South Vietnam is still basically a divided society whose government is weak and fragmented. The principal cohesive element is RVNAF - the armed forces.

The GVN does not really govern South Vietnam. Of the total rural population about four million are governed by the GVN and are relatively secure from enemy action, about three million are under VC control, and about seven million are subject to both GVN and VC activity. ~~the~~ This contested group has remained about the same size since 1965.

Executive power is diffused among Thieu, Ky, Huong, and the senior military officers - Thieu recently having consolidated his strength to become the dominant figure. Thieu is not a strong symbolic leader, either to the insiders in the power structure or to the people, though he is a good thinker and planner and has shown considerable capacity to grow. The executive apparatus is not yet on an institutional basis, operating more by personal relationships and self-interest (including the selling of political office).

The government's civil and military channels of authority are weak, as is the overall discipline of both the civil service and RVNAF. The generals, upon whom most of Thieu's power rests, prevent revitalization of either RVNAF or the civil service. This is not an insoluble problem but requires delicate political engineering by Thieu and ~~the~~ demonstration that his actions are in the national rather than his personal interest. Efforts are being made to improve the selection and training of province and district officials.

Recently appointed province chiefs appear to have been selected on the basis of ability rather than patronage or pay-off.

The relationship between the GVN and the people has improved since adoption of the Constitution, elections, and efforts to broaden the political base through creation of nationalist party groupings. The people have not, however, attained the degree of group identification necessary for a sense of nationhood. Rather, their identification is as members of their village or town, as part of a sect or minority group (e.g., Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Nung, Chinese Montagnard), or as from the North (Tonkinese), South (Cochin Chinese) or Center (Annamese). The GVN's link with the mass of the people is weak essentially because the government neither serves nor effectively defends the people.

A hard core of resistance to Communist aggression remains among the people despite all of the above. The Vietnamese are an amazingly resilient people; after decades of war they are still full of energy and fight. In legend, believed by all Vietnamese, the people are able to unite to cope with some major threat or disaster. It has happened not only centuries ago, but as recently as 1946 in a great surge of nationalist feeling against the French. Diem evoked almost the same emotion at the beginning of his regime in 1954. A unified effort is a Vietnamese capability. We must be wise enough to evoke it effectively.

The Vietnamese fear our mishandling the negotiations or sacrificing Vietnamese interests in order to stop the fighting. They particularly fear we might agree either to a coalition government in the South or to the ceding of South Vietnamese territory to Communist control. They are frustrated also at the ~~possibility we~~ might negate the gains they hope to make through political, and economic reforms and increased military effectiveness. Vietnamese leaders know they need us, but they neither like us nor trust us. This feeling springs not only from the negotiations but also from their French experience and a very

human reaction to being dependent on someone else. Our massive presence in Viet-Nam aggravates this antipathy.

Negotiations in Paris have made senior GVN leaders recognize that they can no longer count on the U.S. to protect them from disaster - military, political, or economic - and that they have no alternative but to assume responsibility for the management of their country's affairs. However, they are still too complacent and move too cautiously without taking the risks required to make significant political gains. Admittedly, it is both risky and difficult for President Thieu to widen his political base at the expense of the military leaders who in the past have controlled the executive apparatus.

RVNAF, particularly the army (ARVN) has not oriented itself adequately to fight a revolutionary war but continues to be largely a defensive, daytime conventional army incapable of fighting without U.S. support. The GVN has failed to make ARVN a part of the people: - significant numbers in the Army continue to loot and steal from the populace. MACV is working to improve RVNAF performance both in tactical operations and in attitude towards the people, to modernize equipment, and to improve RVNAF ability to provide territorial security. Lacking strong support in word and action from Vietnamese military and political leadership, improvement, other than in equipment, will be slow. Many senior military leaders feel ^{shame} ~~compromised in their own eyes~~ as a result of their compromises with integrity during the past few years. Most also feel some degree of guilt for having fought as members of the French army against their own people. Good firm leaders at the head of RVNAF are needed.

The most urgent political need in Viet-Nam is for the rapid development of a major nationalist political party pledged to upholding Constitutional government. The timidity of President Thieu and his leaning towards the creation of a clandestine force in the image of the Can Lao Party indicate that he will be unable to create the spark of leadership required for this. Vice President

Ky has shown poor judgment in the selection of lieutenants, for such partisan political development. The course may well require leadership outside the present GVN administration, for success. If so, this will require some unique American skill in the encouragement and protection of Vietnamese politicians for the development of a major nationalist party able to get roots down among the people.

Strong inflationary pressures have persisted in the South Vietnamese economy since mid-1965. Prices rose 68% in 1966, 34% in 1967. Although 1968 was expected to be a year of advances in economic stability, output, and productivity, the disruption in marketing and distribution caused by the TET offensive, as well as its psychological effects, so far have prevented the expected progress.

After a three year decline the 1968 rice crop was expected to be slightly above that of 1967. Since the TET offensive, it appears that although output of rice increased, production of most other agricultural products will be lower. Most of the rice harvest, particularly in the delta, was completed before the TET offensive.

If security and confidence are not restored, the prospects are for continued economic stagnation in urban areas and failure to raise agricultural productivity.

One of the hidden factors in the Vietnamese economy is the Chinese community, constituting the bulk of the entrepreneurs and middle-men. They are not fully accepted by the Vietnamese even though they may have Vietnamese citizenship, and ^{they} are currently under attack (for manipulative purposes) by the Communists. Vulnerability is widened by the GVN attitude towards them. If the GVN took more care of the Chinese they could hurt the Communists' economic warfare in South Vietnam as well as strengthen the basic economy.

As Hanoi May See It

The enemy has essentially the same military capability he has had for the past two years. His main force strength (both VC and NVA) is between 120-130,000 troops in 184 maneuver battalions, 30-40,000 administrative service (combat service support) troops, 50-70,000 guerrillas, and an estimated 60-80,000 VC infrastructure personnel for a total of 261-324,000 enemy personnel in South Vietnam. Of these personnel an estimated 97-100,000 are North Vietnamese army personnel.

- NVN retains the capability to continue to provide troops to South Vietnam at a rate exceeding their 1967-68 loss rate for an indefinite period.
- Further, NVA has two divisions which it could commit across DMZ or into Northern I Corps.
- It is estimated that the total daily supply requirement for all VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam is 40 short tons.

Evidence indicates that the VC/NLF control or at least influence a substantiated majority of the rural population of South Viet Nam.

- Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) reports show that
 - The VC have retained a solid base of approximately 3,000,000 people in the rural areas since 1965
 - Approximately 50% of the relatively secure hamlets, involving about 4,000,000 people are subject to retrogression due to VC infrastructure activity
 - Approximately 2,500,000 people in rural areas live in contested hamlets in which VC and the GVN have approximately equal influence.

- Thus the VC/NLF can influence 9,500,000 individuals out of a total rural population of 13,500,000, or about 70%.
- Recent reports indicated intensified efforts by the VC/NLF/ANDPF to consolidate their hold on the rural population through formation and election of "liberation" or "revolutionary" committees, training local guerrillas to be policemen and disruptive harassing attacks on various GVN organizations and posts throughout the countryside.

Although there may be some food shortages, North Vietnam appears to be able (so long as outside assistance is maintained) to continue the war at the existing level indefinitely.

Morale in the North has been subject to varying interpretation with some sources commenting on apparent war weariness and dissatisfaction south of the 19th parallel where the bombing continues. However, there is no evidence to suggest large-scale disaffection with the war among the North Vietnamese populace. Additionally, the nature of the regime's control over the population means that dissatisfaction would have to be at a very high pitch before it could force the DRV to take any action they did not desire.

Morale among VC/NLF and NVN in the South seems to be a more serious problem for the VC/NLF /NVN effort. Reports of low morale, war weariness, and poor living and medical conditions are fairly frequent. In addition, there have been some reports of increasing disaffection between the NVN and the SVN elements of the VC/NLF to include the highest level command in the South COSVN. However, the Chieu Hoi rates for 1968 do not substantiate a level of discontent which could seriously disrupt the VC/NVN military efforts. At the present time Chieu Hoi rates are running at about one-half of the 1967 rate, one-third the 1966 rate and just slightly above the 1965

rate. Further, there are indications of a significant decrease in the numbers of Hoi Chanh who are willing to take action against their old comrades. Overall, the VC/NVA forces appear to be suffering from decreasing morale and will to fight, but the decrease is not such that they can be considered as "falling apart" or as losing the "will to win." Again, as in NVN, the VC/NLF/NVA system of controls over their personnel is strong enough and effective enough to preclude generally any large-scale break in discipline or unit defections.

Although in a reasonably strong position Hanoi has constraints and problems.

- Despite talks in Paris, it has no assurance that the U.S. will not choose to escalate further. Hanoi probably is worried that pressures in the US to end the war could result in an attempt to win militarily by an all-out, no-holds-barred offensive, particularly if the Paris talks drag on without result or if an NVA/NLF action triggers a "Pearl Harbor" reaction in the U.S. public.
- Hanoi may believe it can rely on continued Soviet military aid only so long as its policies remain within certain limits, such as refraining from full scale invasion of the South and from actions which might prejudice a favorable negotiated settlement.
- Hanoi may be under conflicting pressures from the Chinese and Russians, the former urging a protracted conflict and the latter pressing for a negotiated settlement (favorable to Hanoi). While this situation may enable Hanoi to play one against the other - thus retaining a reasonable degree of independence - it also forces Hanoi to operate from a divided base of external support.
- Hanoi probably believes it must be careful not to become overly dependent on the Chinese. This factor limits the extent to which Hanoi can risk a larger war. Unlike the situation in the South, where American involvement is massive, both as operators and as advisors, the North Vietnamese have very few foreign advisors. These few are primarily instructors in technical matters and in new weaponry. There is undoubtedly additional close-in consultation between the top leaders and representatives of the USSR and Communist China.

- There may be some danger of fracturing the Party apparatus. Tensions appear to exist within the Party due to the hardships of the war and its increasing cost, but there is no evidence available to us that this has reached a dangerous stage, or will do so in the near future. This is a most difficult development for external observers to discern; the Party apparatus may be under more strain than we realize.

. One of the most important, and difficult to judge, facets of Hanoi's position is their perception of the US and Nationalist situations

- With respect to the US, Hanoi may feel there is a good chance the US lacks the will to stay the course long enough to drive a hard bargain, and, further, that real bargaining at this point would be unwise since there is no assurance the next Administration would be bound by commitments made now. Hanoi may also believe that while the American people are increasingly opposed to US policy in Viet Nam, further hard blows in the South which demonstrate Communist power and "justness", are necessary before the US will be willing to cut its losses and withdraw.
- With respect to the Nationalist situation, Hanoi may believe their will to continue and cohesion, while greater than expected in view of the Tet experience, is dependent on US will and cannot survive any serious weakening of the latter. Hanoi may also feel that turning the conflict toward a political settlement, or at least a discussion of the latter, would be sufficient to collapse Nationalist will and stability.

- Hanoi may believe the most important remaining obstacle to a political takeover in the South is the RVNAF. If RVNAF began to fall apart the strongest cohesive political/administrative force would give way as well as the essential source of military staying power for those Nationalist groups which enjoy popular support. Hanoi probably feels the struggle has now entered a new stage, the "fight/talk" phase.

Hanoi appears prepared to negotiate a political settlement as an interim step in seizure of the South.

- Its maximum goals in such a settlement are probably complete withdrawal of US forces, a political settlement in the South which would permit a rapid Communist take over, and recognition of Communist authority over rural areas presently held by VC.
- Its minimum goals are probably removal of most US forces and a political settlement which would favor a Communist takeover in the next few years.

The following is an evaluation of the way Hanoi may view its principle options and courses of action:

Bombing. The only "deal" Hanoi would be willing to make in return for full cessation of the bombing would be an agreement to begin discussions of a political settlement in the South, including some form of increased recognition and status for the NLF, which would take part in the talks.

- Even though a limited mutual DMZ pull back would not hurt Hanoi too much, it would not agree to this unless we first stopped the

bombing. To do otherwise would set a precedent of moving toward de-escalation first and political discussions second, whereas they are seeking the reverse.

- If the US unilaterally were to stop the bombing, Hanoi might be willing to trade off a limited DMZ pull back for opening of political talks in which the NLF would participate.
- If the present bombing pattern continues; Hanoi probably will continue to try to increase political and psychological pressure on the US to agree to a unilateral halt; and retain its present negotiation posture.

Troop Withdrawal: Hanoi probably will not agree to any substantive mutual troop withdrawal, even if the phasing is in its favor, unless this follows a favorable political settlement.

- Troop withdrawal under any other conditions would be viewed by Hanoi as a political and psychological defeat (admitting not only an invasion but one which had failed), and would also weaken Communist capability in the south even if many NVA troops became VC.
- Even if Hanoi felt it could cheat successfully enough to retain its present military capabilities in the South while US forces began to withdraw, it would not be willing to proceed in this direction unless at the same time political discussions were bearing fruit.

Cease-fire: As with mutual troop withdrawal, Hanoi would not agree to any cease-fire unless following a successful political settlement, and might take even a harder line on this than on troop withdrawal.

- Even though a cease-fire might shatter Nationalist will and cohesion, Hanoi would not be willing to eake this risk since a cease-fire would also cause serious, esprit problems in the Communist camp, reduce

their bargaining position by reducing their military pressure options and get the US off the hook in terms of internal American dissension.

- A cease-fire would almost inevitably turn the conflict primarily into a political one and Hanoi is not prepared to do this until a favorable settlement as the basis for such a contest exists.

Political Settlement: Hanoi's principal tactical objective in terms of negotiations is to have political settlement talks in progress while the fighting continues. Hanoi would view this as leading to erosion of US and Nationalist will and to fragmentation of US/GVN unity of purpose.

- Hanoi might be willing to settle for a fuzzy status for the NLF in a four-party conference and might agree to a two-track negotiation situation so long as the Saigon/NLF talks took place in formal setting.

The important point would be to have the talks taking place, a situation which Hanoi would hope in itself would so weaken the Nationalist position as to permit a settlement on Hanoi's terms.

- Hanoi might initially demand a new government but, depending on the extent of Nationalist erosion, might be willing to settle for only one or two Cabinet posts in a coalition government as a palatable, face-saving "compromise" which would be ample.
- Hanoi would insist on holding local power in all rural areas which the Communists now control (i.e., Alliance village and district chiefs and security officials.
- Hanoi might agree to some form of elections to form a coalition government and to ratify its rural control but would probably greatly prefer an agreement on this without elections.

Fighting. Concurrent with the above efforts in the negotiation arena, Hanoi's military efforts will probably be along the following lines:

- Consolidate existing rural control and preparation to transform its semi-covert control apparatus into an overt, "legal" one.
- Seek to sustain a favorable balance of forces and to retain the initiative but not commit its forces to another Tet type effort unless it believed this would be the coup de grace.
- Probe for vulnerable urban targets and hit these hard on a limited basis. Such attacks would probably be timed to achieve maximum benefit in the talks.
- Continue efforts to paralyze and disrupt the Nationalist economy in urban areas.
- Hit vulnerable RVNAF units as hard as possible, perhaps particularly RF and PF units.
- Keep US forces dispersed and tied down.

The above appreciation is realistic for the foreseeable future, given the continuation of the present strategy of our side and the way Hanoi has been dealing with it. It does not take into account a future change of strategy by us, in decisive fashion, to probe and exploit the potential weaknesses offered by the present enemy situation. Hanoi is now gambling on two major courses. One is that the Hanoi leadership can continue dominating the people of North Viet-Nam virtually unchallenged. The second is that the South Vietnamese in the COSVN, NLF, VC, and Alliance will remain permissive while these organizations become predominantly manned by Northerners.

Situation Summary

In analyzing the Viet-Nam situation one must start with the fact that most obviously the great U.S. with its overwhelming power can match the power of North Viet-Nam, a nation of 18 million. On the basis of material power alone it appears unreasonable for Ho Chi Minh and General Giap to continue the fight despite serious losses and despite sacrifices so heavy that if we had to make them we would consider them unbearable.

On the basis of psychological strengths, Hanoi can see itself holding the advantage. It can estimate there being a very real chance that the US, even though gaining gradually in the military struggle, may well give up one day in disgust and frustration. It makes sense for Hanoi not to give up if they have a reasonable expectation that we will give up first.

It is, for example, possible that by military means we might force Hanoi back to a purely VC guerrilla type of fighting where large unit confrontations do not occur. Even then Hanoi could still assume it entirely rational to continue the fight, believing that by forcing the US to keep troops in Viet-Nam, and by inflicting casualties on Americans, they would make the American public willing to demand a U.S. withdrawal.

Undoubtedly, Hanoi sees sufficient weakness in the South - military, economic, political - to let them take over in a favorable negotiated settlement. Their participation in negotiations may well be due to a shift of tactics to emphasize talk while continuing to fight. Fight, to keep up the pressure on American opinion; talk, to win a significant political advantage in the South - such as a coalition government.

There are serious weaknesses in the South. There are strengths also, now beginning to be evident in long overdue reforms, in increased RVNAF effectiveness, in efforts to widen the political base, and in increased pacification activity. The fact of US involvement in negotiations acts as a spur to Vietnamese leaders to nurture these strengths. These are the budding strengths which can make freedom in South Viet-Nam a fact if they are built up, if they are strengthened and protected rather than wiped out by the negotiations.

The US public is tired of the war and does not understand the rightness of our involvement. It does not support the expenditure of funds, loss of lives, and commitment of so great a portion of our armed might to what appears to be a far off civil war. The weight of public opinion may force a de-escalation of the war, or at least its de-Americanization. The American public will, however, support our right activity in defense of the South Vietnamese people once they understood the principles involved and once they are no longer confused by those of our practices in Viet-Nam which conflict with our principles.

It should now be obvious that we cannot win in Viet-Nam with military force. What has been lost sight of is that we can help the South Vietnamese to win using the political, psychological, and economic strengths of the Free World in addition to wise use of military power.