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II. THE COURSE OF THE WAR IN THE SOUTH

General Assessment. The Bureau provided reports that for the most part accurately depicted the basic military situation in the South throughout the decade. It judged that the two sides were of relatively equal strength, the enemy had capacity to persist, the allies were failing to break the stalemate, and ARVN was unable to carry its proportionate share of the burden. It repeatedly expressed these judgments in its intelligence reports to senior officers in the Department. These appraisals had a salutary effect in balancing reports, especially from the field, that presented too optimistic a picture either of the combat operations or of the pacification program as it went through its several metamorphoses. The Bureau's analysis did fall short of the mark on occasion, particularly in underestimating the extent to which the enemy would resort to main-force warfare, involve the NVA in the South, and undertake major novel operations, particularly the Tet offensive of 1968. However, for the most part the Bureau's record on the major trends of the war was very good, and contributed heavily to the realistic picture of the military situation in South Vietnam that prevailed in the Department.

Among its achievements was to stress from the outset the unconventional nature of the war, and particularly the importance of internal subversion, in contrast to the GVN's initial and repeated stress on the threat of overt aggression, which was accepted at first by many in the US government. Of

high significance was the Bureau's estimative analysis of the atypical kind of military effort needed to turn the course of the war, combined with its criticism of the manner in which policies of this kind were implemented--from the strategic hamlet program of 1962-63 to the rapid pacification program of 1967-68. It focused on the Saigon regime's inadequate grasp of the concept of pacification, its limited commitment to implement the concept, and its inability to move ARVN out of the conventional mold to cope with the new type of combat required. It reported on the inadequacy of conventional tactics in general, and was especially critical of the heavy use of air and artillery, emphasizing the harmful political effects they would have on the effort to win the support of the people. A particular target of criticism by the Bureau was the concept of "two wars" developed by MACV in 1965: INR held that the main-force and counterinsurgency efforts should not be treated essentially as separate wars, and it pointed out how the main-force effort was receiving by far the major share of emphasis in the allocation of combat resources.

Most important, INR estimated throughout the decade that the war at best remained a stalemate and that the enemy retained the initiative in launching attacks. In contrast to recurrent optimistic reports, especially in late 1962 and 1967, the Bureau, together with CIA/OCI, maintained that the enemy was showing capacity to sustain his infrastructure, territorial control, adequate morale, recruitment, and infiltration. It took particular pains to stress that the enemy was not committed to one style

of attack, and, if he shifted to higher stages of combat, did not feel compelled to stay at those levels; rather he was quite flexible and pragmatic, able to use a combination of combat styles and to apply these components in varying proportions.

Among defects in the Bureau's analysis would be, at the start of the decade, a slight underestimation of the degree to which the enemy was committed to a rapid progress in a real war, even if conducted unconventionally. In addition, as a consequence of having to argue against the erroneous view that the troubles in South Vietnam were solely a result of Northern intervention, the Bureau may have inadvertently downplayed the importance from the outset of the Northern material contribution to operations. The infiltration of Northern personnel was more critical in terms of quality than the proportionately small numbers involved would indicate. Although INR did note that the North always had the capacity to raise the level of infiltration, the tendency to under rate the importance of the Northern military contribution persisted when the Bureau debated the issue whether regular NVA units would be sent into the South. The entire Intelligence Community consistently held that Hanoi would not send regular units for fear of stimulating the US to retaliate and, as INR particularly emphasized, because Hanoi did not then think they were needed to make sufficient progress. There was, perhaps, too great an emphasis on how the indigenous Viet Cong could keep themselves going, and, similarly a slight overstatement of the degree to which the South was separate from the North in operational terms, though the Bureau from the outset did state that the Communist forces throughout Vietnam were part of a unified infrastructure.

The Bureau also stressed somewhat too much the enemy's commitment to a program of low-level attack. While this emphasis served as a salutary corrective to other analyses that had the Communists inexorably moving to main-force operations and persisting in them, INR tended to overstate the commitment to the lower levels of operations and to treat important changes in the combat mix as relatively minor variations in Communist tactics. Thus INR missed the full significance of the change that occurred in the fall of 1967 when the enemy came to put much greater reliance on large-scale attacks--a change that cost him dearly in casualties. Similarly, INR described the Tet offensive as essentially a continuation of the enemy's basic approach, although the Bureau did quickly note the political purpose in carrying the war to the cities. In fact, thought should have been given to the possibility that these two developments had the larger objective of decisively gaining the upper hand in less time than was required by the more traditional approach of protracted war.

Still, INR was correct in pointing out that the enemy could always return to lower levels of attack in order to sustain his war diplomacy and to demonstrate that he could not be defeated. In this regard, the Bureau soon noted that as the ARVN fell back to protect the cities the way was opened for the Communists to reap great advantage in the countryside.

This analysis, which proved valid, drew considerable criticism from readers who had absorbed the original INR estimate that centered on what the Communists might have hoped to achieve within the cities. In fact, with the assault on the cities checked, the Communists did revert to low-grade attacks and to efforts to hold their own in the countryside as the military counterpart to protracted negotiations.

The General Course of the War. Throughout the 1960's INR consistently argued that the war was at best a stalemate and that optimistic estimates regarding its eventual outcome had inadequate bases in current fact. The Bureau's work was particularly valuable in downgrading arguments that pointed to victory within a short period of time. Its most telling themes dealt with the government's inability to muster support for itself or for the war effort; the allies' inability to seize and hold combat initiative for any length of time, or to reduce the rate of infiltration to levels considerably below what the enemy desired; the Communists' ability to control substantial portions of the countryside and to persist there with an effective political and administrative infrastructure; and the enemy's ability to adjust the mix of his styles of combat so as at least to maintain territorial control, force structure, and size of army in a measure that would support his extreme political war aims.

Behind this fundamental issue of determining what progress was being made in the course of the war, the Bureau faced the problem of obtaining and weighing accurately the types of information which could serve as indices of

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progress. At times the difficulty was to obtain figures or measurements that were correct; on other occasions, it was to appraise and agree with other interpreters on the validity or meaning of a whole category of information. An example of how the significance of a category could change in the course of the war is to be found in the use of captured enemy weapons as an indication. It offered important clues to the state of enemy morale early in the war when weapons were scarce and when the saving or retrieving of a unit's weapons formed an important element of Communist discipline. Later in the war, although it continued to be treated as a major indicator in weekly combat reports, its importance actually decreased, after the Communists began to receive adequate supplies from abroad, and also after the count came to include weapons discovered in large hidden caches.

As early as 1962, when the new US effort began to enhance the capabilities of ARVN, the Bureau soon saw the need to emphasize that old liabilities persisted and were affecting the overall balance of forces more than did the new factors. Also in that year, INR was most suspicious of statistics provided by Nhu and Diem, citing against their conclusions the low morale in ARVN and the rise in the rate of desertions. In fact, its estimate in the early autumn of 1963 was so much more pessimistic than those of the US military that the Bureau got into an altercation with the Defense Department. The revelations of the regime that followed Diem thus affected INR largely by confirming its views, but, as noted in Part I, for other interpreters the shock led to harsh judgments on the Minh-Tho regime. Again, during the latter half of 1967, an impressive array of

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statistics emanated from Saigon to demonstrate considerable progress in both combat and pacification. INR once more stressed the irrelevant nature of many indices which, it observed, were designed to measure the situation as if the enemy's main objectives were to destroy the allied forces when in reality he was more intent on undermining the allied governments' will to persist. Hence the ability of the allies to curtail Communist large-scale operations or enter into Communist-controlled territory did not constitute a sufficient indication of progress, given the enemy's demonstrated ability to initiate low-level attacks and the GVN's inability to progress in the pacification program (the gauging of which occasioned another major "battle of indices").

Communist Tactics in the War. The Bureau can be faulted for slowness in recognizing the degree and speed with which the enemy would move to large-scale (third stage) warfare later in the decade. It placed too great stress on the continuity in his tactics and so downgraded the proportionate importance of this new factor in the combat mix. The Bureau was, of course, correct in noting that the Communists never abandoned their lower stage efforts and therefore did not make an irrevocable switch in their combat approach. Still, the extent of the graded changes that did occur had an importance in both the military and negotiatory fields that the Bureau may have consequently understressed; that is, the enemy may have felt that he could not simply sustain protracted warfare indefinitely and that he had to try for major victories if he was to have adequate support for his extreme negotiating position.

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INR was in a much sounder position when it argued that the enemy had a large capacity to react swiftly to changes in allied military emphases and to adjust accordingly his own reactions, threats, and initiatives. The Bureau recognized that, while Hanoi remained wedded to a basic doctrine, it did not operate in the extremely rigid and inflexible manner that might be inferred from an approach that was strictly graded through stages. Field initiatives and adjustment-responses played a much greater role in the enemy's behavior than would be allowed for by concentration upon the importance of doctrine, foreign Communist influences, or even the restrictive impact of allied forces. Here again the Bureau contributed to a more realistic understanding of the war on the part of the Department's senior officials.

An appraisal in late 1966 illustrates both the shortcomings and the strengths of INR's approach. The Bureau argued, as it turned out incorrectly, that the enemy would not move to a third-stage type of attack that used main-forces in direct field engagements. The Bureau reasoned that he lacked the strength for such an effort, which in any event offered no real prospect of victory, and so that he would not expose himself to US power unless he were desperate to begin negotiations--which he was not. INR thus over-emphasized the Communist commitment to guerrilla tactics, but at the same time was right in noting how much the enemy benefitted from this approach and how inadequately the allies had coped with it. Actually, with the failure of his large-scale effort to strike the decisive blow, the enemy has reverted to the level of protracted combat--a capability for adjustment

that the Bureau had emphasized--and has achieved what, from his point of view, are adequate results. This policy included guerrilla combat, intermittent, occasional spectacular assaults, and a high and rising level of terror, harassment, and sabotage. Finally, in 1968 after the Tet offensive, the Bureau stressed that although Hanoi might be pushed toward negotiations by the fact that it did not have adequate combat strength to gain the upper hand decisively, its capability to sustain effective protracted warfare remained unimpaired.

Evaluation of ARVN. From the beginning the Bureau underlined the very limited capabilities of ARVN. INR identified several causes of this weakness: use of ARVN by various regimes for political purposes, the army's own involvement in politics, its being cast at the outset in a conventional mold, and the general administrative inadequacy and corruption that beset South Vietnam. In 1961, the Bureau correctly pointed up the army's excessive reliance on static defense that flawed the application of the doctrine of counterinsurgency. In the next year, it noted that, while proper tactics required small units and unconventional approaches, ARVN persisted in conducting conventional operations with large-scale units, and made matters even worse by relying heavily on air power and artillery.

The crisis over the problem of ARVN's effectiveness reached a peak in March 1965, when DIA, in line with the view of MACV, dissented from a finding of CIA and INR that ARVN could neither defeat the enemy nor conduct an effective pacification program. Then, just three months later, the Defense Department suddenly stressed ARVN's great weakness and held that

the war would be lost, given the deterioration in the situation, if US ground troops were not immediately deployed. The Defense Department's position appeared all the more inconsistent in that the Secretary of Defense had called for US troop deployment in March on the totally opposite grounds that advantage should be taken of a supposedly favorable trend in the war to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion "within an acceptable time frame." If the earlier Defense position was too optimistic to be tenable, the same could be said for the INR rejoinder in June that opposed deployment of US troops. The Bureau held that, with all ARVN's weaknesses and enemy strength, a radical shift in the overall balance against Saigon was not imminent. One factor not adequately considered by INR in the mid-year debate was how Hanoi's decision to commit regular NVA units to the war in the South entailed a clear and imminent danger that the balance of forces would change decisively to the ARVN's disadvantage. By the year's end, the Bureau argued correctly that the allies were not approaching victory but had only achieved a stalemate. In so doing, INR acknowledged that even this standoff resulted only because the US combat presence denied to the Communists, then reinforced by NVA units, the victories they had previously enjoyed over ARVN.

Since then, both INR and CIA have stood by their low appraisal of ARVN, recognizing its inability to offer prolonged effective resistance to NVA units. The Bureau has repeatedly stressed the following major shortcomings: poor leadership, low morale, bad popular relations, and low operational capabilities. In addition, ARVN has not improved in its handling of the

paramilitary forces, a key component in the concepts of unconventional warfare and pacification. Here too the Bureau was very much on target.

Allies' War Concept. INR consistently postulated that the allied doctrine of unconventional warfare and the related program of pacification were, however refined in concept, sorely underdeveloped and misdirected in practice. This criticism was most clearly exemplified and validated in the Bureau's strong criticism of MACV's concept of "two wars", developed in 1965 as US combat forces arrived. MACV noted that the Communists were expanding their conventional threat along with the traditional guerrilla and terrorist campaign. It proposed that the bulk of ARVN and the paramilitary forces, which had up to then been devoted respectively to main-force and guerrilla warfare, be lumped together to cope with the guerrillas, while the US forces and certain elite South Vietnamese units engaged the enemy main-forces in the sparsely settled parts of the country. INR quickly and correctly pointed up two major problems. First, the enemy main-forces could not be induced to fight battles in a manner that would enable the allies to find, fix, and destroy their units; possessing the initiative to make contact and able to manipulate even his large forces in an "unconventional regular war," the enemy could still evade combat when he wished. Second, the protecting of populated areas and the discovering and effectively disposing of guerrilla forces and infrastructure have proven to be among the most difficult aspects of modern warfare. How a South Vietnamese army that had shown itself to be inadequate in every way could cope with this task remained beyond the

Bureau's capacity to grasp. On the other hand, the Bureau held that ARVN had done moderately well in some main-force operations against the Viet Cong, and that this "downgrading" was therefore inappropriate because ARVN had at times shown itself capable of coping with a main-force foe better than with a guerrilla opponent.

To this argument INR added a third and most important criticism--that the creation of two types of combat generates an artificial distinction in a war that has organic unity and can be handled only from that perspective. For one thing, the separation meant that the two types of endeavors could go on simultaneously but without mutually supporting one another, as when an enemy main-force was cleared out of an area but the pacification force was totally unprepared to occupy that territory and consolidate the gain with the required political, administrative, and security apparatus. For another, given a separation of the "two wars," the US gave high priority to its own operations, which veered toward the conventional side and emphasized mobility, destruction of the enemy, and concentration of forces, to the neglect of the principles of counterinsurgency that required uninterrupted control over specified target areas, protection of population, and dispersal of units.

Pacification. Official claims notwithstanding, the counterinsurgency effort received a very low priority, as exemplified by the poor support given from the outset to the key element, the paramilitary regional and militia forces. Even at the start of the 1960's the Bureau observed that the government, because it did not adequately apply sound principles, failed

to make inroads into Communist strength in the countryside, despite the advantages of US aid and peasant antagonism to the Communists. The strategic hamlet program of 1962, highly favored by the Bureau, was quickly found to suffer from poor direction, inefficient operations, and unrealistic quotas. Again in 1966, the Bureau provided timely and accurate appraisals regarding the new pacification program, taking particular exception to the Ky government's plan to convert ARVN to this assignment in half a year. INR argued that the GNV still had only a vague grasp of what was involved and little commitment to its success. During most of 1967 the question of progress occasioned a battle of statistics that ended only with the Tet offensive. Even before that attack, it was evident that the Bureau was correct in its low appraisal of ARVN's ability to cope with this new and difficult assignment, especially on a crash basis.

As the Bureau observed at the start of 1967, pacification remained the most challenging of all assignments, and was not amenable to quick results. Only unremitting long-term action, under the closest scrutiny and the highest priority, offered any prospect of success. To act otherwise, it warned prophetically, was to risk repeating the costly mistakes of the past on a still larger scale.

To sum up thus far, the Bureau was most accurate in its estimates of ARVN weaknesses and the enemy's relative combat strength, and in its judgments about the inadequacy of US combat doctrine--especially as it pertained to the application of counterinsurgency principles--and the readiness of the Communists flexibly to employ various types of combat. It was less effective in recognizing the extent and significance of changes

in the enemy's combat mix, the importance--at first--of ground forces in maintaining a stalemate, the intense Communist commitment to a breakout, and the significance to negotiations of the shortfall in Hanoi's large-scale effort of 1967-68. But the Bureau, along with CIA/OCI, was closer to the mark than others in its sober appraisal of the main course of the war, and in its appreciation that the Communists had the capability to revert to, and sustain, an intermediate level of combat during the protracted negotiations that began with the President's speech of March 31, 1968.

The Role of the North.* The Bureau consistently held that the VC apparatus was an integral part of a Vietnam-wide Communist organization under the leadership of Hanoi. Within the intelligence community, this matter was not at issue; for, although the details of the operations of the system were obscure, the fact of Hanoi's commanding position was evident to anyone with access to intelligence from all sources. Thus, reference to "Viet Cong" actions in many IIR products does not imply that IIR thought they were acting independently. Nevertheless, in the early 1960's, the Bureau did exhibit a tendency to downgrade the importance of the Northern military role for Communist progress in the South. This proclivity may have been an unintentional result of IIR's correct analysis that unconventional combat and internal subversion comprised a more serious threat than the overt and conventional aggression which the GVN and top military officials stressed. IIR argued that local recruitment was more critical than infiltration and that Southern insurgent operations were self-supporting; it recognized, but may not have emphasized sufficiently, that the Northern component was more important qualitatively than the Southern. By stressing indigenous

* IIR's analysis of the role of the North is discussed more extensively in Part III, "The War Against the North and the Role of China."

capabilities in the period through 1964, the Bureau performed a valuable service in focusing on Communist strength and GVN weaknesses in the South, but it did so at the price of understating the Northern contribution to the sinews of war.

In the period before the arrival of NVA units in 1965, INR often challenged Defense figures on infiltration. Others seemed to overstate the comparative importance of these numbers in their desire to stress aggression from the North; they drew their conclusions on a weak evidential base, as INR noted, and more significantly, played down the numerically more substantial recruitment in the South. Later in the decade, intelligence showed that the Defense statistics were roughly accurate but this still meant that the far greater proportion of enemy forces before 1965 were recruited in the South. If INR is to be faulted, it is for its failure to put equal weight on the fact that substantial infiltration could occur during this period without detection. The tendency to scrutinize the statistics almost too closely, combined with a mistaken analysis of Hanoi's intentions as discussed in Part III, also accounted for INR's tardy recognition of the fact that Hanoi had decided to commit its own regular forces to combat in 1965.

INR's position on infiltration did bring a better sense of proportion regarding the North's role and, of greater immediate significance, a gradual improvement in the gathering of intelligence on the amount of external support received by the Communists in the South. This area of collection had been weak at the start and, with less justification, remained so for several years; at last, in 1964, coverage of the Northern war effort was strengthened, thanks primarily to strong pressure by CIA/ONE and INR, exerted in the course of a post-mortem on an SNIE in March of that year.

Further, although the Bureau allowed that Hanoi had a considerable capability to raise the level of infiltration, it often treated this

simply as a defensive or counter-offensive device which would be employed to balance an increase in the US-GVN effort in the South or in response to an attack against the North. Similarly, though it frequently predicted the enemy's actions with great accuracy as to timing and detail, the Bureau treated too many of them as responses to US action or, within a larger framework, as deterrents against US decisions to intensify the war. In reality, the war effort in the South had a far greater dynamic and purpose of its own than this stress on reactive operations would indicate. In short, INR did not give adequate credit to Hanoi for initiating major changes, and, in all fairness, neither did many other components in the Intelligence Community.

The Tet Offensive. We have already remarked generally that the Bureau put too much stress on the tendency of the Communists to be consistent in their combat patterns, and most recently that it interpreted operations in the South too much in terms of reaction to US actions. A classic case of surprise on both counts was the Communist urban offensive of late January 1968, a thrust that took the entire Intelligence Community by surprise. An offensive of some sort was expected, but the surprise lay in the targets--Southern cities that had been untouched by the war--the efficient tactics used by the attackers, and the extent of the operation.

INR had raised warning signals in past years regarding the possibility of an attack on the cities, as in 1965 when it observed a modification in Communist attack patterns that might portend an effort to bring the war to the urban population. The Bureau recognized the major importance of such an assault but it concentrated less on the physical-military aspects and

more on indications of Communist emphasis on political and subversive factors--very real and important issues in their own right. Later in October 1966, the Bureau noted that the enemy was seeking to bring the war closer to the hitherto immune cities. Again it stressed the political inroads the Communists expected to make by exploiting negative popular reactions to the US presence, adding that the enemy sought to achieve an unacceptably high level of conflict that would make the war intolerable to the urban population in the South.

In general, both the Bureau and EA strongly emphasized how vulnerable was Southern resolve to continue the war; they pointed to intense nationalism that did not take well the heavy US presence and direction of the war, and to morale that had been weakened by setbacks. If the Tet offensive demonstrated anything, it was that between the US and the South Vietnamese it was the US that had the lower level of tolerance for the stalemate that the Tet offensive revealed when it brought down all the hopes built up in 1967. Though the war became much worse thereafter for the Vietnamese urban populations, this development did not destroy the US political base in South Vietnam for continuing the war. However, INR's judgment that a high degree of urban security was essential to the Saigon regime received support when the Thieu government insisted on the termination of intensive attacks on the larger cities as one of the terms under which it could accept a complete halt in the bombing of the North later in 1968.

In its analysis immediately after the attack, the Bureau pointed to the importance of the urban targets, and held that the Communists intended

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to prove that the allies were not on the path to victory but would have to treat their enemy at least as battlefield equals who had to be accommodated. This is indeed how matters developed, but the Communists may actually have had larger aspirations in the offensive. They took great risks and suffered enormous casualties, seemingly out of proportion to an effort that would merely extend and intensify existing patterns. It is possible that, believing they had popular support in the cities, they placed great hopes in an urban assault as a stimulus to the "general uprising" which their documents predicted. (Incidentally, the Bureau had in 1965 accurately pointed out the weakness of their popular support and political infrastructure in the cities, and had correctly predicted that their hate campaign against the US would be a total failure.) The very tactical military success, especially in Saigon, that afforded many urban residents the opportunity to join the Communist cause underlined all the more the magnitude of their political failure when the city residents did not respond. This failure may have played an important part in the Communists' decision to move to negotiations. As to the immediate consequences, the Bureau was more accurate than other observers in estimating not only the serious effects of the Tet operations on urban communities but also on the pacification program, however unanticipated that aspect of the offensive may have been. Finally, as the Bureau had anticipated, the Communists showed a will to persist and an ability to revert to protracted warfare and negotiation--their offensive having ended allied hopes of victory, as well as the intragovernmental "struggle of statistics" over the rate and extent of progress in the war.

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Southern Morale--and Bombing the North. The Intelligence Community as a whole took grave exception in 1964-65 to the argument by advocates of a bombing program that it would have a salutary effect on Southern morale. Allowing that morale might rise at first, the Community held that, should the results of these attacks prove ambiguous or unsuccessful as seemed likely, morale would deteriorate rapidly--especially if the war dragged on and military and terrorist activities of the enemy increased. In February 1965, the Bureau took particular exception to the argument by leading policy makers that a bombing program would raise the morale of the Saigon leadership and give the US leverage to induce the political factions to join together in forming a more effective government.

In retrospect, the Bureau and others were correct in noting that any increase in morale would soon fade with the failure of the bombing to break the stalemate. It was certainly justified in discrediting the idea that the attacks would bring political dividends in Saigon. However, the Community's judgment that a bombing program that did not win the war would cause morale to sag below current levels never received an adequate test because US ground troops were deployed to South Vietnam a few months after the bombing started, thereby supplying a major new factor of support for morale. In general, there has been a recurrent tendency, as in the urban offensive noted above, to treat Southern morale as more fragile than it has actually been. The very continuation of the bombing had a steadying effect on morale, both because it demonstrated the US will to persist and because it was the one way of wreaking retribution on the North for the havoc it was

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causing in the South. And in 1967 the Bureau modified its earlier stand, noting that the bombing may have been of more than marginal value in sustaining morale and public confidence at a key point in the war. This effect, of course, made the partial halt and eventual termination of attacks against the North that much more difficult for Saigon to take and so contributed, as INR observed, to the difficulties the Thieu regime had in accepting this aspect of de-escalation. As noted, a military quid pro quo was relief from major attacks on its larger cities.

On a more general level, the Bureau was undoubtedly correct in paying careful attention to problems of political morale in the South for the country, already burdened by poor government, suffered terrible punishment in the war. Moreover, there were repeated manifestations of political unrest, as in the Buddhist incidents and in Dzu's strong campaign for the presidency as a peace candidate. Yet the Bureau never did look thoroughly at the other side of the coin, to inquire why a perennially weak country like South Vietnam could absorb so much punishment and still prove able to cope to a degree. For example, in 1965 the Bureau credited the South with considerable durability at the time of the debate over the despatch of US ground troops. A key question for policy makers then becomes--just as in 1965, prior to the arrival in strength of NVA and US ground forces--what is the South's own capacity to cope with an enemy that is not sustained by regular NVA units?

Limited Importance of Cambodia. INR consistently and correctly judged that Cambodia was of limited value to the enemy's war effort. In the early 1960's all members of the Intelligence Community agreed that supplies and

some munitions were arriving by that channel but in quantities of little significance. The Bureau held to this position in later years, adding that Cambodia also played a limited role as a route for infiltration and as a sanctuary. INR did, when new evidence appeared, alter its view that the RKG was not involved, but it adhered to the position that Laos and South Vietnam itself were far more critical as channels and sources of supply to the Communist war effort. This issue acquired major importance in 1967-68 when the US military put great stress on Cambodia's role in the war and sought to take remedial action; the Bureau played a leading role in rebutting this argument. With the rise of Communist insurgency in Cambodia and when the RKG recognized the extent of incursions by the Viet Cong and NVA (in part thanks to American documentation) this issue receded.

The Relation Between Security and Political Stability. A final problem worth brief mention is that of the interrelationship between the popularity and stability of a political regime and the degree to which physical security exists in the country. Clearly, with a rapidly changing set of conditions in the South, a single pattern may be impossible to discern; one needs only to recall the political turmoil of 1963-64, or the security dilemma of the Tet offensive. So it may be understandable that the Bureau was somewhat inconsistent in treating this question. At times it treated these factors as interdependent, almost mutually supporting, but at other times as separate, almost independent, variables. At still other times it gave prior importance or significance to one, and seemed to relegate the other to the role of dependent variable.

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Thus, the Bureau would emphasize the importance and extraordinary complexity of the security problem and focus on it when a political situation appeared to be relatively stable, as when the constitutional system took effect in 1967. At other times INR would hold that it was the absence of a politically attractive government, and the existence of regimes deficient in administrative efficiency and woefully lacking a sense of identity with the populace, that were the primary obstacle to undertaking an adequate unconventional security campaign. At times a balancing of the two factors was at least implied, as in the treatment of Diem's regime in 1961-63 and in the discussion of the value of a civilian regime in 1967, but for the most part--due primarily to the demands of crises and the need to focus on the immediate situation--INR would isolate the political or security situation, whichever was the more pressing, and focus primarily on that aspect of the overall problem.