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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

11 August 1970

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 27-70

SUBJECT: National Intelligence Estimates on the  
Vietnam War Since October 1964

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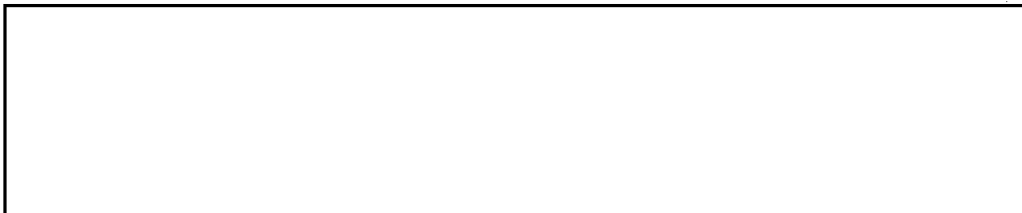
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 August 1970

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 27-70 [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: National Intelligence Estimates on the Vietnam War Since October 1964\*

I. AN OVERVIEW

1. General. Since October 1964, there have been 33 NIEs and SNIEs directly related to the Vietnamese war or to Vietnam generally.\*\* Only three of these were general assessments pointed toward estimates of Hanoi's "intentions" in the situation. Five were focussed on Hanoi's "military capabilities" to fight the war in South Vietnam and did not probe deeply into options or intentions. Sixteen were on "communist reactions to certain possible US courses of action"; three others were

\* The October date is chosen because SNIE 10-3-64, (9 October 1964) is a key estimate on our Vietnam work and provides an excellent benchmark -- or, more accurately, nadir -- for this study. It deals, among other things, with communist reactions to sustained air attacks on North Vietnam.

\*\* See Appendix for chronological listing of NIEs and SNIEs.

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specifically on Chinese reactions to Vietnam-related activities. Some of these were broad-gauged studies which examined Hanoi's intentions with care, while others were fairly restricted in their approach. Many of the reaction estimates, of course, were never put to the test because the postulated US action was never undertaken. The remaining six papers were on various subjects such as the political situation in South Vietnam, pacification prospects, and the general outlook for Southeast Asia after Vietnam.

2. In reviewing ONE work on the Vietnamese War, three factors should be kept in mind. The first is that ONE's drafts (after approval by the Board of National Estimates) must be coordinated with representatives of other agencies -- primarily State/INR and DIA -- before presentation to the USIB. Thus, the views expressed in the estimate as circulated to policy levels often represent a considerable modification of the original ONE/BNE position. But we are not offering this as a disclaimer; all in all, except perhaps on the broad "capabilities" estimates, the recorded views seem reasonably close to those held by the Agency drafters at the time. Indeed, the many footnotes attached by

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State and the military to these Vietnam estimates attest to our steadfastness in meeting the criticisms surfaced at interagency coordination sessions.

3. Another consideration is that the bulk of ONE production on Vietnam has always been in the form of memoranda rather than full-blown NIEs. Since October 1964, we count some 27 important pieces of work of this sort: most were produced as "Memoranda for the DCI;" others sent forward to the DCI as "blind" memos; one was produced at USIB direction as a coordinated CIA/DIA/State piece. \* Except for this USIB effort, we cannot be certain which of the 27 or so memos reached high policy levels. In this review, therefore, we will discuss only those memos which shed real light on overall trends in ONE thinking about North Vietnam.

4. A final consideration is that much ONE production on Vietnam since 1966 has been in the form of inputs (usually on communist intentions) to broad Agency studies coordinated by SAVA for the DCI -- e.g., the so-called McNamara papers and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] exercise.

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\* See Appendix for chronological listing of memoranda.

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5. The Estimates. Those who have estimated on Vietnam have undergone a learning process over the past five or six years. In late 1964, and through most of 1965, our record on the main issues of the war is not good. Unskilled at "reactions" papers (despite the Laos exercise of earlier years), we fell into some serious traps, many inherent in the "system." For example, the consumer's main concern in requesting a reactions paper was generally focussed on a single question: Will the response to the contemplated US (military) action be the one desired by the US -- i.e., will Hanoi "cool it" or not? A related formulation in the policymaker's mind: Will the communist response be dramatic or not? Thus, the way is open for ONE (and the community) to advance into a dual trap in preparing its response: polarization of the discussion around but two main options; and preoccupation with immediate or short-term reactions.

6. Both deficiencies, unfortunately, led to a general tendency in these early war years to underestimate Hanoi's "will to persist". Even in the few 1964-65 estimates not in the "reactions" category, ONE sometimes found itself addressing communist capabilities and/or intentions over periods of "the next month or so" or "the next four or five months". If these

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time periods were "given" by the requestor, the policymaker would have profitted if ONE had expanded the horizon a bit.

7. This is not to say that all estimates on Hanoi in 1964-65 were poor ones. Some would prove out reasonably well in a court of law. But there was considerable uncertainty and evasion within individual estimates and considerable back-tracking in judgments in the sequence of estimates produced. Thus, in our view, the lay reader of NIEs in 1964-65 would come away with mixed feelings on the critical issues of the time -- Hanoi's "will to persist."

8. The record on this issue has been reasonably good since ONE got on the track in December 1965, although a few key NIEs of the 1966-69 period are more noteworthy as discussion papers than as purveyors of "judgments." The reluctance to forecast in these papers may well be rooted in the extraordinary difficulty during this period of coordinating anything of significance on Vietnam with the military departments. Our "capabilities" estimates were particularly pallid and hardly worth the fantastic expenditures of time, energy and goodwill they seemed to require.

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9. This problem was evidently recognized by the community, at least after the July 1966 struggle (NIE 14.3-66) which examined Hanoi's capabilities up and down, and concluded that Hanoi was being forced to consider either scaling down its operations in SVN or increasing its infiltration rate from NVN -- dealer's choice! Another bit of evidence is the obvious decrease in community interest after July 1966 in NIEs and SNIEs as such. And the ensuing flood of requested and self-initiated ONE memoranda on the really tough issues. Other reasons, of course, were operative: in particular, the fact that the Johnson administration had already chosen its course in Vietnam and was not asking for many more "reactions" papers; and, possibly, that Admiral Raborn who had great admiration for the military job being done in Vietnam, left the Agency on 1 July 1966.

10. Whatever the reason for the few estimates, the memoranda produced in ONE in this period (late 1966 - early 1969) for the DCI and (hopefully) for top policymakers (e.g., McNamara, Clifford) are generally of high quality in their argumentation and judgments. One watershed is quite evident. Prior to Tet 1968, judgments as to Hanoi's capabilities, options, and intentions tend to be overly sanguine in keeping with the information being pumped

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out of Saigon at the time. After Tet -- another educational milestone for ONE (and others) -- the memos, and there are many, are better and more accurate; a few, produced in the spring of 1968 are clearly outstanding pieces of work and may have had substantial impact in high circles in those decisive months.

11. The judgments in the February 1970 SNIE on "The Outlook from Hanoi" have so far proven sound, despite the subsequent confusions of the Cambodian situation. Another "Indochina" NIE is in the works for submission to USIB in September, if schedules hold.

II. TOPICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL REVIEW OF THE ESTIMATES (AND SELECTED HIGH-LEVEL MEMORANDA)

12. For the purposes of this paper, three main topics covered in the estimates (and certain high-level memoranda) can be identified: (1) Hanoi's will to persist; (2) Hanoi's capabilities to fight; and (3) Negotiations. National Estimates, however, are seldom limited to a single finite subject; there inevitably is a wide range of subjects covered. Thus, an estimate about Hanoi's will to persist is almost certain to make reference

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to or be based upon judgments concerning Communist military capabilities and/or possible negotiating intentions. This is as it should be since the many factors making up the situation in Vietnam are closely interrelated. With this caveat, the following summaries address these three general categories on a chronological basis.

A. Hanoi's Will to Persist

13. 1964. The benchmark -- or, more accurately, the nadir -- of the estimative record on Hanoi's will to persist in the struggle in Vietnam was contained in an October 1964 SNIE assessing Communist reactions to a program of gradually intensifying air attacks against North Vietnam.\* The SNIE, after acknowledging the uncertainties in reaching any judgment, concluded (paras. 16-18) that if the air attacks were continued, they would be more likely to cause Hanoi to stop the military attacks in South Vietnam for the "time being" and renew the insurrection at a later date; the SNIE went on the note that Hanoi might also then press for a cease-fire in the South and

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\* SNIE 10-3-64: "Probable Communist Reactions to a Certain Possible US/GVN Course of Action," 9 October 1964.

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try to promote an international conference to pursue Communist ends. INR dissented from this judgment, holding that Hanoi would be more likely to send its own armed forces on a large scale to Laos and South Vietnam. Given subsequent US actions, this SNIE was potentially important; it also was totally wrong.

14. 1965. In 1964, there were seven SNIEs which, inter alia, touched on Hanoi's will to persist -- all seven were reaction estimates. The mis-estimate of October 1964 was more or less reaffirmed in two SNIEs prepared in February 1965 which assumed sustained US bombing of North Vietnam. An 11 February SNIE (para. 14) stated that "If the US persevered ...and the degree of damage inflicted on North Vietnam increased, the chances of a reduction in Viet Cong activity would rise."\*

15. One week later, the issue was faced again -- and led to an INR dissent -- and the judgment was reached (para. 9) that in the face of sustained bombing, the communists were somewhat more likely to decide "to make some effort to secure a respite

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\* SNIE 10-3-65, "Communist Reactions to Possible US Actions", 11 February 1965.

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from US air attack, especially if the US had indicated that such a respite would follow a sharp reduction of Viet Cong activity," than they were to intensify their military effort in South Vietnam.\* To some extent, the SNIE covered itself by also noting in the same paragraph that, "we think it extremely unlikely, however, that Hanoi would concede so far to US demands that it would entail abandoning its support of the insurgency in the South or giving up its intentions of unifying Vietnam under Communist control." Be that as it may, the judgments reached in the February estimates were considerably off the mark.

16. A March SNIE (para. 1)\*\* held that the introduction of a South Korean combat division was unlikely to shake Hanoi's will to persist, and a June SNIE (para. 4)\*\*\* stated that "the odds are against the postulated US [bombing of North Vietnamese aircraft and SAM sites] leading the DRV to make conciliatory

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\* SNIE 10-3/1-65 "Communist Reactions to Possible US Courses of Action Against North Vietnam", 18 February 1965.

\*\* SNIE 10-4-65 "Probable Communist Reactions to Deployment of a ROK Combat Division for Base Security Duty in South Vietnam, " 19 March 1965

\*\*\* SNIE 10-6-65: "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions", 2 June 1965.

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gestures to secure a respite from the bombing; rather we believe that the DRV would persevere in supporting the insurgency in the South." This judgment led to an Air Force dissent stating that the action would "markedly enhance" the possibility of the communists seeking a respite. The judgments in the two SNIEs were borne out by subsequent developments. Moreover, although the bombing program assumed in the June paper was less than sustained US bombing, the judgment reached reflected a shift in our view concerning the likelihood that Hanoi's will to persist could be shaken.

17. This shift was made clearly manifest in July when an SNIE\* held (para. 3) that:

We do not believe that inauguration of the US actions [US forces buildup to 175,000 by 1 November 1965, call up of US military reserves, various other military actions in South Vietnam, and possibly expanded US bombing against North Vietnam] would basically alter expectations of ultimate victory [in Hanoi] nor that extension of air attacks to military targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area would significantly injure VC ability to persevere in the South or persuade Hanoi that the price of persisting was becoming unacceptably high.

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\* SNIE 10-9-65 "Communist and Free World Reactions to a Possible US Course of Action," 23 July 1965.

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Subsequent events more than demonstrated the soundness of this judgment against the Air Force dissent that such actions "could well" persuade Hanoi that the cost of persisting was becoming unacceptably high.

18. Unfortunately the estimates rather quickly departed from the view that Hanoi's persistence level was high to a position resembling that of late 1964. For example, in September Hanoi's reaction to an intensified US bombing program was again considered. The SNIE\* concluded (para. 7) that "we think that this US course of action would be more likely in time to move the North Vietnamese toward political and diplomatic initiatives than to cause them to escalate the war." INR, which dissented from the entire estimate, held that Hanoi would be unlikely to move toward negotiations and whatever hesitations the Communists had would be resolved in favor of militant prosecution of the war. The majority view was completely in error.

19. By December, the thrust of the estimative judgments had changed again concerning Hanoi's willingness to take whatever the US might throw at it: an SNIE\*\* held (paras. 1 and 15)

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\* SNIE 10-11-65 "Probable Communist Reactions to a US Course of Action," 22 September 1965.

\*\* SNIE 10-12-65 "Probable Communist Reactions to a US Course of Action", 10 December 1965

that heavier air attacks and a substantial buildup of US forces in South Vietnam would not substantially alter Hanoi's strategy toward the war. Although the thread of argument in the estimate is vague and difficult to come to terms with, it appears that the main underlying reason for the judgment was that Hanoi already anticipated such stepped-up action and would, therefore, be unlikely to do anything radically different until the results of the assumed action were in. NSA and all the services dissented, holding that over time the assumed actions might cause Hanoi to seek a means to achieve a cessation of hostilities.

20. The December SNIE also addressed Hanoi's actions should the trend of the war clearly point toward Allied success; the judgment (para. 28) was that the odds were better than even -- INR thought they were only "a little better than even" -- that the Communists would choose some form of retrenchment rather than further escalation. There has been no way to determine the accuracy of this judgment; since 1965 there has been massive escalation of the war, though not necessarily because the war was going irretrievably against the communists; at the same time, our current judgment is that Hanoi has indeed retrenched, at least since the spring of 1969, in part because of Allied successes and momentum.

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21. 1966. There were no SNIEs or NIEs in 1966 that touched directly on Hanoi's will to persist. A review of pertinent ONE memoranda production during the year, however, reveals that the basic judgment was that Hanoi was more likely than not to persist, although by late November some allowance was being made that there was a better chance than anytime in the past two years of a serious political move from the communist side.\*

22. 1967. ONE was mute concerning the communist will to persist in 1967, particularly in formal estimates. A review of pertinent memoranda suggests that ONE had moved rather solidly to a position that Hanoi's most likely course of action was continued struggle, come what may.\*\*

23. 1968. By 1968 -- particularly following the Tet onslaught in February -- it was generally conceded throughout the intelligence community that Hanoi's will to persist

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\* Cf. MEMORANDUM "Probable Reactions to a Postulated US Course of Action," 23 March 1966; and MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "The View From Hanoi", 30 November 1966.

\*\* Cf. MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR "The War in Vietnam", 9 January 1967; MEMORANDUM "Communist Policy and the Next Phase in Vietnam," 12 April 1967; and MEMORANDUM "Reactions to Various US Courses of Action," 12 May 1967.

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was formidable, despite tremendous costs and staggering setbacks. Indeed, the question was hardly deemed worth the asking, and this is reflected in the silence on the subject in the estimates. Of course, 1968 also saw the opening of negotiations between the adversaries in Vietnam, and some have argued that this reflected a crack in Hanoi's will. The communists, however, look at it in just the opposite manner. In any event, 1968 was not a year when questions of the will to persist was a topic of estimative concern.

24. 1969. The question of Hanoi's will to persist was not the subject of estimative attention in 1969. There was no question that the communists would persist -- and they did.

25. 1970. For various reasons, much of ONE's work on Vietnam never left the Agency in 1970. In February, however, an SNIE<sup>\*</sup> held (conclusion B and para. 10) that Hanoi, despite increased problems and concern over the possibility of Vietnamization working well enough to give ARVN a chance, still

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\* SNIE 14.3-70 "The Outlook from Hanoi: Factors Affecting North Vietnam's Policy on the War in Vietnam", 5 February 1970.

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believed that its will to persist over the long haul remained stronger than that of the US. As a result, the communists were basically buckling down to and preparing for a prolonged warfare approach to the struggle in Vietnam.

B. Hanoi's Capabilities and Intentions to Wage War

26. 1965. Throughout 1965, the SNIEs maintained that the communists were not likely to resort to large-scale, all-out military offensives in the wake of postulated increased Allied actions or to attempt dramatic actions such as air strikes at US ships or bases. For example, in February, in a "near-term" intentions SNIE,\* it was held (para. 5) that the communists were unlikely to conduct surprise air raids against the northern part of South Vietnam, although Hanoi will certainly use its fighters against air strikes on North Vietnam. The SNIE went on (para. 8) to state that "the chances are less than even that the next four or five months will see prolonged offensives employing larger units." These judgments were borne out in fact, and they were reaffirmed from time to time in ONE memoranda.

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\* SNIE 10-65 "Communist Military Capabilities and Near-Term Intentions in Laos and South Vietnam," 4 February 1965.

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In September, an SNIE\* held (para. 7) that in the face of a stepped-up US air campaign against North Vietnam the communists would still be unlikely to hit US bases or ships.

27. 1966. In general, the estimates and memoranda in 1966 concluded that Hanoi's most likely military course was to continue the struggle without any substantial escalation or de-escalation, particularly the latter. Further, it was concluded that Hanoi's capabilities to do this were unlikely to be seriously eroded. For example, in February an SNIE\*\* which considered increased US action against North Vietnam (both with and without a closing of North Vietnam's ports) it was concluded (conclusion A) that "with a determined effort, the DRV could still move substantially greater amounts than in 1965." A week later, in a memorandum,\*\*\* this judgment was re-affirmed and made even stronger, largely because the postulated US actions were more sweeping.

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\* SNIE 10-11-65 "Probable Communist Reactions to a US Course of Action", 22 September 1965

\*\* SNIE 10-1-66 "Possible Effects of Proposed US Courses of Action on DRV Capabilities to Support the Insurgency in South Vietnam," 4 February 1966

\*\*\* MEMORANDUM "Possible Effects of Various Programs of Air Attack Against the DRV", 11 February 1966.

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The memorandum stated (para. 3) that "we do not believe that even the most extensive of the programs would prevent the movement of men and supplies to the South in quantities sufficient to sustain or even increase the scale of VC/PAVN activity." In July, an NIE on Communist capabilities\* concluded (para. 44) that by the end of 1967 combat losses and possible increases in force strengths will possibly exceed VC recruitment capabilities. As far as can be determined, this was indeed what occurred.

28. 1967. The general thrust of the estimates and memoranda in 1967 was that the communists were most likely to fight on, but there were few estimates on this particular subject. One SNIE,\*\* which had been months in preparation because of inter-agency disputes over communist manpower strengths, reached an implicit judgment (a common fault of capabilities estimates is the lack of attention to what is likely) that protracted warfare was more likely in the future than was heightened military action. This SNIE was issued in November -- only two and a half months

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\* NIE 14.3-66 "North Vietnamese Military Potential for Fighting in South Vietnam", 7 July 1966.

\*\* SNIE 14.3-67, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam," 13 November 1967.

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before the massive communist military effort at Tet 1968. That the estimate does not look even worse in retrospect is testimony to the lack of clarity and usefulness of capabilities studies in the national estimative context.

29. 1968. Following the mis-judgment at the end of 1967, the estimates and memorandain 1968 were generally on the mark regarding Communist intentions to fight; however, there was only one SNIE that touched on the subject, the rest were various memoranda prepared by ONE. In late February, for example, a memorandum\* stated (para. 5) that:

The Communists will maintain their offensive for the next several months and be prepared to accept the high losses this entails. They cannot accept such losses indefinitely, however, and they probably will not be capable soon again in launching repeated mass attacks of the magnitude and widespread scale of 30-31 January. But they are almost certainly capable of sustaining a high level of combat, including major battles with US forces, assaults on selected cities, and rocket and mortar attacks on urban areas and military installations.

30. This assessment, almost to last jot and tittle, described what the communists in fact did during the remainder of 1968.

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\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "The Outlook in Vietnam", 26 February 1968.

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By mid-year, in an SNIE,\* the judgment was that an early shift in communist strategy was unlikely, but that if communist fortunes had not improved by year's end, Hanoi would probably be obliged to review its options. A September memorandum carried this thought on further by noting (para. 5) that "the Communists can no longer have very high expectations that the objectives can be advanced by large scale military attacks." While the SNIE and memoranda did not go on to estimate what possible change, if any, Hanoi might make, they did point in the right direction. Some would argue that the communists actually began to change their basic approach to the war in the fall of 1968, but there is complete agreement that by the spring of 1969 (the Politburo resolution on which COSVN Resolution 9 is based was passed in April) Hanoi had opted for prolonged warfare.

31. 1969. Although there was considerable verbiage spent on communist capabilities in 1969, little light was shed in formal estimates on how that capability would be employed --

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\* SNIE 53-68 "The Vietnam Situation", 6 June 1968.

\*\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR "The Coming Political Struggle for South Vietnam", 16 September 1968.

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a common failing of capability estimates. In any case, in a January SNIE\* the judgment was made (para. 23) that the communists would try to upset the pacification program; the SNIE did not specifically state how this might be done, but did list various possibilities and concluded that consolidation of pacification gains was likely to continue to be a slow and uncertain process because of communist counteraction. In July, in a "capabilities" SNIE\*\*, the communists were considered unlikely to do more than they were then doing; but what they might actually do was practically lost beneath vague balanced presentations concerning the pros and cons of doing less or doing about the same. As far as can be determined the SNIE never arrived at a balancing out judgment.

32. 1970. There has been one published SNIE\*\*\* on communist intentions thus far in 1970. The SNIE, published in February, held (conclusion C and para. 27) that an all-out

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\* SNIE 14-69, "The Pacification Effort in Vietnam", 16 January 1969.

\*\* SNIE 14.3-69, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam", 17 July 1969

\*\*\* SNIE 14.3-70 "The Outlook from Hanoi; Factors Affecting North Vietnam's Policy on the War in Vietnam", 5 February 1970.

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communist military effort was unlikely because of the costs and risks involved. Instead, (conclusion D and paras. 29-31) the SNIE concluded that the communists were most likely to continue to follow a prolonged warfare approach to the struggle, although it was also pointed out that some fairly sharp fighting against selective targets was to be expected. Of course, the final returns for the year are not yet in, but the estimate thus far has been on target, and the same basic judgment was made recently in a draft SNIE\*, disseminated outside the agency, which was put in abeyance before fully coordinated.

C. Negotiations

33. 1964-67. As noted earlier in this review (para. 11), the issue of Hanoi's willingness to negotiate (and its likely posture in any negotiation) is intermixed with the more generalized issue of its' "will to persist." This is especially so in the earlier NIEs and memoranda, produced at a time when the implications of the communist's "talk-fight" strategy had

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\* Draft SNIE 14.3-1-70, "North Vietnamese Intentions in Indochina," 26 June 1970.

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not yet become fully apparent to the community. Thus, in the 1964-67 period, we tended toward an "either-or" view of negotiations: Hanoi would "cool it" by seeking a negotiated respite from combat or Hanoi would "keep on doing what it's doing." In effect, then, we were estimating Hanoi's will to persist in fighting rather than its willingness to use the negotiating channel as a supplement to a continuing (though more limited) military effort on the ground.

34. For example, a November 1966 Memorandum for the DCI\* cast Hanoi's outlook at the moment in terms of three possible strategies: escalation; reversion to protracted warfare; or negotiations. The final judgment -- that military options probably look best to Hanoi -- is less significant than the fact that the negotiating route is not clearly seen as one that might also be combined with military moves of various sorts.

35. 1968. A more sophisticated approach to the negotiating issue is apparent from early 1968, a time when the issue became a hot one in Washington. All the pertinent ONE

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\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "The View from Hanoi", 30 November 1966.

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work on this subject in 1968 is in the form of various memos for the DCI, many of which were probably passed on to the policymakers then grappling with the problem. An excellent January paper<sup>\*</sup> presented a case for and against Hanoi's seeking a respite from warfare. It concluded with commendable foresight that "in the months ahead, Hanoi will continue its military effort but will probe more intently to discover what the shape of a political settlement might be."

36. A more pointed memorandum (para. 9) completed on 1 March 1968,<sup>\*\*</sup> declared that, "If the US ceased the bombing of NVN in the near future, Hanoi would probably respond ... It would begin talks fairly soon, would accept a fairly wide ranging exploration of issues, but would not moderate its terms for a final settlement or stop fighting in the South." This assessment was not only timely, but was also right on target.

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\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "Alternative Interpretations of Hanoi's Intentions," 18 January 1968

\*\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "Questions Concerning the Situation in Vietnam", 1 March 1968.

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37. After the cessation of US bombing over the Tonkin region of NVN, there was an ONE Memorandum<sup>\*</sup> on Hanoi's motives for deciding to negotiate. It concluded (para. 13) with reasonable precision that "Hanoi had probably not entered the negotiating process in any mood of conciliation, but had seen the US move as 'an opportunity' to press demands for an unconditional halt to all bombing...over NVN. Nevertheless, it went on, "Hanoi probably wants to talk, and...will not seek pretexts to back away from establishing contacts with the US." A May memorandum<sup>\*\*</sup> was even more on the mark, holding that Hanoi: would not yield on the bombing issue; would offer only tacit concessions to gain the total US bombing cessation; would focus its demands on the "four points" and the coalition issue; and would play it all by ear, meanwhile persisting in its military actions in SVN. All in all, an excellent forecast.

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\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "Speculation on Hanoi's Motives", 8 April 1968.

\*\* Intelligence Memorandum, "Hanoi's Negotiating Position and Concept of Negotiations", 6 May 1968.

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38. In September, another memo\* pointed the way toward the new drift of the war in foreseeing (para. 8) "a transitional period" in which "the military aspects of the struggle will gradually be overshadowed by the political aspects." Relating Hanoi's tactics to the US political scene, the memo correctly perceived that from Hanoi's viewpoint "the optimum period for this settlement opened on 31 March and ...will probably not last much beyond the first six months of a new administration." The memorandum was also correct in stating (para. 12) that if Hanoi failed to get a deal from the new US team, "Hanoi must face the prospect of reducing its minimum terms of gearing its military strategy for a much longer war..." A good formulation, in retrospect.

39. 1969-70. Under the NSSM concept utilized by the new US administration, virtually all of ONE's work on the issue of negotiations was in the form of inputs to SAVA-coordinated papers (subsequently contributed to interagency groups).

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\* MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, "The Coming Political Struggle for South Vietnam", 16 September 1968.

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SNIE 14.3-70\*, however, "gave Hanoi three options, one a negotiation course, and concluded correctly (at least so far) that Hanoi would not pursue this course with any vigor under existing circumstances.

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\* SNIE 14.3-70, "The Outlook from Hanoi: Factors Affecting NVN's Policy on the War in Vietnam", 5 February 1970.

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APPENDIX

NIEs, SNIEs, and Selected Vietnam-Related Memoranda 1964-70

A. NIEs and SNIEs

1964

SNIE 10-3-64: "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain  
'Possible US/GVN Courses of Action"  
9 October 1964

1965

SNIE 10-65: "Communist Military Capabilities and  
Near-Term Intentions in Laos and South  
Vietnam" 4 February 1965

SNIE 53-65: "Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam"  
4 February 1965

SNIE 10-3-65: "Communist Reactions to Possible US  
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