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South Vietnam's grim battle for survival is one of the hottest parts of the world conflict euphemistically called the Cold War. To millions of Vietnamese, to families of American servicemen on duty there, the adjectives applied to that war spell anything but "cold." Yet the light from flaming hamlets dims across thousands of miles before reaching the fonts of U.S. policy. That fact neither disparages U.S. aid to stricken South Vietnam nor impugns the professional skills of U.S. military personnel.

Both public support in the United States and U.S. achievements in the battle area are hampered by the fact that the conflict is the sovereign nation of Vietnam's war. Americans can advise and assist, nothing more. Vietnamese commanders and officials can, and sometimes do, disregard our advice, decline our assistance. Exercise of greater authority by the United States might alienate the majority of our Ally's people and provide the Communists with the club of "anti-colonialism" they used to justify driving out the French. These constraints, which handicap both military and non-military aid, are by definition normal to any aid policy short of military intervention. In addition, the ancient diplomatic precept: never permit a weak ally to commit you, complicates U.S. policy.

These conditions could lead to a sardonic paradox, acknowledgment of Communist superiority in guerrilla warfare by Americans whose history includes highly effective operations on both sides of that

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However, strategy--an expression of policy--exhibits the character of its origin. If policy be indecisive or ambiguous, the strategy devised to execute it can fail through insufficient application of resources or, made strong by overwhelming force, the strategy may be directed to ends at variance with long-term national interests.

The reflection of U.S. policy in world affairs, as concern over non-nuclear conflict mounts, is in contrast to the stark, if theoretical, simplicity of massive deterrence. Disavowing pretension to so vast a canvas, this paper probes that reflection in Southeast Asia only, with principal focus on South Vietnam, to identify some of the prospects and pitfalls for American goals of ensuring political stability (without sacrifice of human freedom) by adhering to a long range, power balance* policy.

Though combat in India, Africa and the Middle East may eventually involve the United States, the protracted strife in South Vietnam constitutes the one acknowledged shooting-war on our hands today. We avoided another by settling for a questionable neutrality in Laos. The Cuban affair could probably have been speedily settled by at most a small shooting affray unlikely to expand had we so opted at least a year ago.

A strong probability that we shall encounter more conflicts of the South Vietnam category implies a need for testing and refining U.S. policy in this real-life laboratory. Our degree of success in safeguarding South Vietnam will importantly affect the frequency and severity of threats to other free territory on the world periphery. This task involves many agencies of government. Sound national policy includes political, economic, and psychological plans and action as well as military strategy in meeting the relatively low level, long range (rather than immediate) threats to U.S. security that are the hallmark of most limited wars.

National policy as publicly enunciated leaves vague three critical aspects. (1) How to deal with the present threat in South

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*In Southeast Asia today, chiefly U.S. counters to Chicom aggression. In the future a revived Japan or a growing Indonesia may eventually influence that balance.

Vietnam: Does the "enemy" consist of native insurgents, to be converted into loyal citizens with the minimum application of military force, or are Diem's foes mainly covert invaders (guerrillas) from a foreign power whose will* to continue the struggle must be broken? (2) How to enunciate U.S. policy in terms likely to obtain the full support of the American people for what promises to be a lengthy effort? (3) What trends in national policy seem likely to deter or defeat future instances of "creeping aggression?"

I.

A superficial response to question one points out a complex mixture of rebellious natives and foreign infiltrators, with unofficial estimates that bracket numbers around 20,000 for armed and organized fighters, 100,000 for part-time, partially armed, indigenous warriors. Much greater vagueness veils what proportion of the first group are Communists from outside South Vietnam and their degree of military organization.** However, accepting the dual nature of the problem does not disclose the difficult-to-apply combination of fighting and "conversion" required to resolve it, least of all for the U.S. semi-passive role of "aiding and advising."

Neither prong of the necessarily dual strategies emerges clearly, judging by the profusion of ill defined terms in the rapidly expanding literature on this type of warfare. This paper will use the comparatively simple, inclusive definitions recently promulgated by the U.S. Army, and shown below. Semantic objectors are free to substitute their own labels. Especially welcome would be an alternative title for that branch of Special Warfare encountered in friendly territory. "Counter-insurgency" is not only negative, it falsely implies U.S.

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*If the foreign power be China or Russia, destroying its capability for covert invasion transcends the scope of limited war.

**Guerrilla combat in battalion strength has been reported. Press reports imply the existence of higher levels as well, all operating within tight Communist command (plus a surprising measure of "control") centralized outside South Vietnam.

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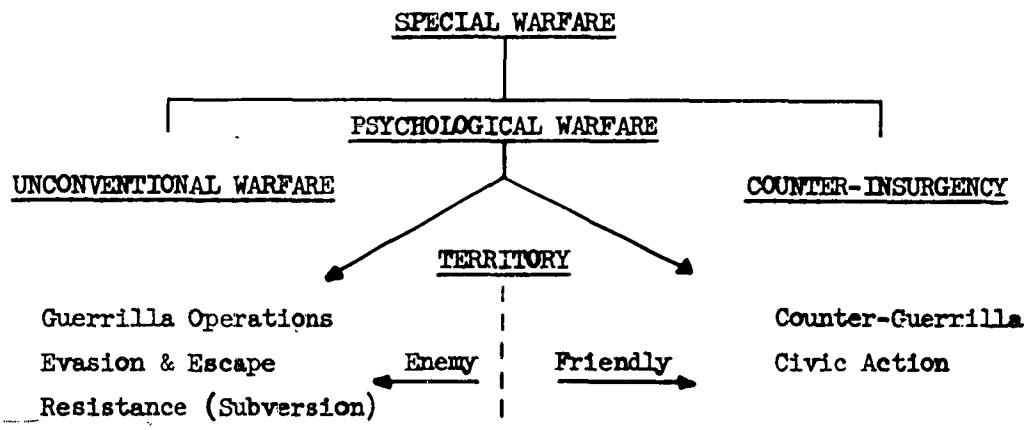
opposition, irrespective of considerations of justice or liberty, to all insurgency, as clarioned by Communist "anti-colonial" propaganda.



This chart does serve to orient discussion on the forms of conflict prevalent since World War II. "Special warfare's" potential for expansion to limited war or even higher violence levels had attracted wide attention since the Communists invaded Korea. Concern for "escalation" can be exaggerated to the detriment of the Free World. Current Western (essentially U.S.) policies seem to be influenced by that concern to neglect strategies that would improve Western capabilities to effectively meet ambiguous threats while still giving due weight to deterrence.

Like all sound military operations to "further policy by other means," those reflected in the chart require far-sighted political guidance. For example, since "unconventional warfare will be conducted in enemy held or controlled territory to aid or stimulate resistance against hostile governments," clarification of "hostile governments" requires policy, not military, decisions.

Inside South Vietnam, formulation and prosecution of the complex, dual strategies remains essentially the burden of Ngo dinh-Diem's government. Apparently U.S. aid, both military and non-military, performs yeoman service, however slow it may appear to Americans desirous of quick, decisive results. Perhaps our advice and, more

forcefully, our example might be both welcome and effective in strategy formulation.

Let us reflect on this last. Intelligence constantly seeks to assess the actual situation so that the military effort can be correctly apportioned between ejecting covert invaders from Vietnam's soil and that, heavily buttressed by "civic action,"* used against indigenous rebels--wherein the moral is to the physical as three to one. Military operations in the latter category should be modeled after Ramon Magsaysay's brilliant conversion** of two million rebellious Philippine peasants, a "sea" that sheltered some 25,000 Communist-inspired Huks. The United States is not without experience in similar fields if we reach back over half a century to operations in Cuba, under the Platt Amendment after the expulsion of Spain, or to the Philippine insurrection. Later and less exacting tests of our skill in militarily supporting civic action were well handled in Mindanao (more pacification), Haiti, Nicaragua, and San Domingo, intervention and pacification including reorganizing the civil government.

If Vietnamese officials seem even less receptive than their military commanders to American advice, the challenge to the advisor is not insurmountable. He was assigned to assist a campaign of essentially conversion. What matter if his first efforts need be devoted toward his Vietnamese colleagues? In this connection, whispering (and sometimes louder) campaigns against Diem's administration and family*** pose weighty problems for U.S. policy, unsolvable in Washington without first rate intelligence from U.S. representatives overseas. Perhaps applying the principle of war "unity of command"

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*"In cooperation with civil agencies toward economic, social betterment...a major contributing factor to the elimination of insurgency."

**In contrast to ruthless, extermination tactics characteristic of totalitarian regimes.

***What lesson to elicit from our history? For years the rage of American colonists was directed not against George III but his "evil and corrupt cabinet."

to Special Warfare would contribute toward this end.*

Lacking adequate knowledge of actual conditions in trouble spots, the United States has, in the past, mistakenly bolstered misgovernment, e.g. the later days of Batista in Cuba, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, although better informed, we accepted Rhee's overthrow in Korea. On the coin's reverse, evidence of "corruption" in Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist China doubtless contributed to our failure to adequately assist him in suppressing Mao's "agrarian revolution," in contrast to our vastly greater but belated help to the same man on Formosa.

The last analogy seems more appropriate today. Vilification of Diem's regime logically constitutes a keystone of Communist strategy. A free, prosperous South Vietnam cannot fail to endanger the success of the Communist conspiracy in the "Democratic Republic" at Hanoi just as West Berlin gives the lie to Pankow. What could be more certain than charges of "feudalism and misgovernment?" What better mouthpieces for Communism than gullible "liberals," themselves free of any red taint or tint? Here especially national policy should be unequivocal, enforceable; once fact is separated from fiction by dependable U.S. emissaries in Southeast Asia. Moreover, that policy can be far removed from vacillation and still retain flexibility to deal with changing conditions within allied governments as well as within enemy camps i.e., avoid a repetition of ineffectual U.S. policy toward Batista in his waning days.

Compared to the complex socio-military-economic strategies for converting insurgents into loyal citizens, predominantly military

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*Col. E. F. Black, USA, "The Problem of Counter-Insurgency," USNI Proceedings, October 1962, suggests that the numerous, relatively disconnected, hard working agencies, notably the U.S. Operations Mission, the Military Advisory Assistance Group, the U.S. Information Service, and the Embassy might better appreciate and advance national goals if assembled as a "Country Team" within an organization resembling our Unified Commands in overseas theatres. That organization's "responsible commander" would be, at least initially, a civilian. A shift to military command would await Washington's decision to emphasize counter-guerrilla rather than civic action.

operations against hard-core guerrillas, at least some of them foreign infiltrators, seem relatively clear-cut, however protracted and arduous. Nevertheless, Vietnamese Army veterans of up to eight years combat experience could not be expected to eagerly embrace advice from foreign officers they consider johnny-come-latelys, no matter how much they appreciate munitions and equipment. Happily, the mutual respect engendered among soldiers by shared dangers gradually eliminates this difficulty for our Military Assistance Training Advisors.*

However, development of effective tactics against guerrilla foes usually involves strategic considerations, dependent as ever upon policy. A tactical decision to proceed against enemy sources of logistic support encounters ambiguity if those sources are discovered outside Vietnamese territory. Sanctuary designation with its inherent implications for escalating the conflict transcends military responsibilities. In such dilemmas the need for a unified American politico-economic-military strategy emerges. Only then can effective coordination with the SVN government be attained.

The new aspects of Special Warfare injected by Communist doctrine and the nuclear age complicate traditional U.S. conduct of "small wars." No significant foreign influence affected our interventions in Latin America, our pacification of the Philippines,** Cuba, Puerto Rico.

Even the resolute application of the Truman Doctrine to aid Greece (1947-49) evaded the issue of guerrilla bases inside Jugoslavia and Albania. Yet we now realize that success against combined Communist guerrillas and Greek rebels owed much to enemy errors. Defection of Yugoslavia from the Kremlin sealed off major guerrilla sanctuaries since the short Albanian frontier could be guarded. The Cominform then endorsed Bulgarian desires for an independent Macedonia as retaliation against Tito. This action alienated Hellenic insurgents

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*Specially trained for this duty with U.S. Military Advisory Groups.

**A German admiral's truculent attitude in Manila Bay was quickly neutralized by the British squadron on the scene and later disavowed by Berlin.

by its threat to Greek nationalism. Thereafter the struggle terminated in a triumphal maneuver by the Greek Army.* No American military unit had been dispatched to Greece; no American soldiers engaged in combat. Happily U.S. economic aid and Greek governmental "cooperation"** seemed to alleviate (by a narrow margin) the basic causes that had put insurgents into bed with Communist guerrillas.

We dispatched aid to the French during their "counter-insurgency" campaign in Indochina, recoiling, doubtless wisely, from active intervention. But we did follow the Geneva partition (1954) of Vietnam with Dulles' creation, SEATO, that paved the way for the assistance we subsequently poured into Laos and South Vietnam as well as to SEATO member nations, Thailand and the Philippine Republic.

We have not yet tried either to deter or proceed against external sources of guerrilla strength. Only once have we bluntly resolved the sanctuary quandary in limited hostilities and that in a war already at such levels of violence that the President relieved a theater commander rather than risk further expansion. Nothing beyond small scale troop training has been acknowledged under the left side (Unconventional Warfare) of the Special Warfare diagram. Tragic, usually brief, insurrections in Hungary, East Germany, Tibet*** and the home province of Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam were vouchsafed unambiguous policy pronouncements, i.e. "hands off," apparently from fear of escalation. Only Communist propaganda has credited the United States with sending munitions to and, of course, instigating those ill fated revolts.

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*The similarity of Greek and Vietnamese problems has not extended to Communist doctrinal errors that served our cause so well in Greece. Despite hints of Sino-Soviet disagreement, Laos' status falls regrettably short of true neutrality, V.C. support by Hanoi continues.

**Not always given ungrudgingly. However, the United States made concessions, too. The Greek immigration quota (300 per year) was raised several thousands by a special 1953 program to relieve Greek unemployment and earn foreign exchange by remittances home.

***Admittedly, Tibet was unreachable behind the miles of "neutral" India.

True enough, we met the challenge of overt aggression in Korea squarely by a shocking example, in Kremlin eyes, of "capitalist perfidy." We had previously denied any strategic interest in that unhappy peninsula. So, too, must have appeared our reversal of policy between the "Bay of Pigs" and "offensive weapons" in Cuba.

Thus experience seems to question whether U.S. policy can ensure the desired power balance in Southeast Asia by strictly defensive strategy. Are results of escalation always unfavorable to the U.S.? Only a few months ago what news commentator dared advocate a Cuban blockade with implied threat of invasion if U.S. terms were not met? Yet that formerly unthinkable strategy did not provoke escalation by our opponents though free world enthusiasm over its initial success has somewhat diminished.

Leading American Sovietologists generally agree that Communist doctrine* forbids any action "provoked by capitalist maneuvers." Just as enemy weakness must invariably be exploited, retreat, when confronted by strength sufficient to jeopardize previous gains, is equally imperative. No Communist leader would indulge in "adventurism" however much he employs propaganda to save face after a withdrawal. We witnessed that aspect also in the Cuban crisis.

We have seen other instances such as withdrawal of Soviet troops from northwest Iran; the Berlin airlift's immunity to Communist interference; Soviet abstention from prophesied attack on Western Europe while we built up our defense of South Korea. Two instances when the United States did "invite" (with or without design) escalation of the Korean War offer illuminating contrast.

Our advance to the Yalu, in the fall of 1950, was executed in a maneuver that permitted flank attacks on the widely separated** Eighth Army and X Corps, both dangerously dispersed. Not surprisingly, per Communist doctrine, Chicom "volunteers" seized the opportunity to

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*Brilliantly briefed in Nathan Leites' "Operational Code of the Politburo."

**X Corps was not under command of Eighth Army. "Lateral communications" between the two fighting organizations was possible through MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo.

drive X Corps onto its shipping, push Eighth Army south beyond recently liberated Seoul. U.S. (and U.N.) good faith assurances that Manchurian soil would not be violated were ignored.

A few months later, General Ridgeway's openly proclaimed series of vicious offensives (Operations Killer and Ripper) chewed up hostile manpower at a rapid rate.* This obviously greater provocation, continued until June, elicited not Combloc escalation but Malik's request, on the floor of the U.N., for a "truce." That we accepted, allowing Chicom armies to dig in far south of the Yalu, does not obscure the moral. Our armed forces had demonstrated capability, not weakness, We appeared nationally resolute until the proffered truce. To the Communists, escalation promised no gain and risked defeat of Chicom "volunteers." Considered offensive strategy, not appeals or treaties, had achieved "deterrence." Similarly, the Communist decision to suspend the 1958 Quemoy attack may owe more to the blunt U.S. military buildup on and near Taiwan than to the vigor of the local defense.

Does not restoring the tilted balance in Southeast Asia justify offensive action, outside South Vietnam if necessary, to accompany our efforts to advise and aid inside that country? Without the slightest inclination to revive the dead issue of "preventive war," or claim that "offensives" need invariably be military, there can be belief that Clausewitz' "flaming sword** of vengeance" applies to all wars, hot or cold.

Certainly no American strategist would advocate risk-taking unless assured of the strength and survivability of our strategic

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*Personal reconnaissance behind enemy lines by Brigadier General Crawford Sams verified reports that Communist troops were riddled by disease, like the North Korean civilians among whom some 50 per cent died for lack of medical care and sanitation. Communist resort to trumped up charges of "germ warfare" soon followed to obscure their patent inability to care for the sick, in contrast to U.N. achievements south of the 38th parallel.

**"A swift transition to the attack is the most brilliant point of the defensive. He who does not include it in his conception of the defense will never understand the superiority of the defensive."

nuclear deterrent. Flexibility in promoting limited objectives depends ultimately upon the relative ability to pose, meet, or deter the main (central war) threat, exemplified in the recent blockade of Cuba. Should not that principle extend into readiness to meet any form of enemy counteraction at all lower levels of violence as well?

Lawrence taught guerrilla operations as a weapon of the weak, noting their dependence upon outside aid to maintain their campaigns. He envisaged that aid from a friendly army about to intervene. In World War II, Churchill's admiration for Lawrence influenced his endorsement of "partisan" movements where they could receive help from Britain's military establishment, recognizing the futility of isolated insurrection against a ruthless regime.

Communism has projected these lessons, exploiting Western humanitarian morality. Revolts are instigated most readily in underdeveloped countries where a revival of "colonialism" can be charged against U.S. dispatched assistance. Indoctrinated, trained guerrilla fighters infiltrate the target nation, employing terror or blandishments as needed to conceal themselves among the population, secure there against extermination tactics. The guerrillas' masters covertly dispatch vital external support and closely control all operations.

South Vietnam today lacks the means to close its remote, far-flung borders. It cannot eradicate guerrilla bases in "neutral" Laos; undertake action against the "Democratic Republic," source of guerrilla strength; must even placate Cambodia, a possible sanctuary for Viet Cong activities. Apparently, U.S. assistance is needed outside, not merely within, Vietnamese territory.

But before examining potentials for exerting political-economic-military pressures upon foes presently granted the initiative in that region, consider, as all democracies must, the attitude of the American people and the implications of U.S. undertaking an offensive strategy.

II.

Prospect of prolonged struggle exasperates Americans into extremes of behavior diversely exemplified in isolationism and

"unconditional surrender" policies. Even recognition of the appalling risks of such behavior in an age of militant Communism and megaton weapons seems inadequate by itself to effect so major a change in national character. Inspiring leadership will be essential.

Thus a disturbing vagueness, if not implicit contradictions, in pronouncements issuing from policy levels enhance American reluctance to make personal as well as national sacrifices for the cause of freedom in Southeast Asia. Most statements by senior U.S. visitors to Saigon voice optimism regarding the course and outcome of the struggle; express confidence in Diem's leadership; imply continued flow of U.S. aid. None mention committing U.S. troops to combat or condemn Viet Minh support of the guerrilla-insurgents. Neither visitors nor important stay-at-homes clarify U.S. policy toward Laos (beyond passive reliance upon the neutrality agreement) nor do they acknowledge Laos' strategic role* in South Vietnam's security. Chicom incursions in northwest Laos occasioned the dispatch of soldiers and marines to Thailand, an evidence of intent to defend the soil of our SEATO ally which failed to encompass "neutral" Laos. An apparent policy void regarding Cambodia precludes even a routine warning that strict neutrality is expected in that quarter.

Consequently Hanoi's direction of Viet Cong depredations proceeds untrammeled by any risk to the "Democratic Republic." Admittedly, deterrence by mere words has proved ineffective against Communist strategies but the Hanoi regime can be harassed by a variety of means. Economic and political-ideologic offensives could be expanded by feasible military moves should the former prove inadequate by themselves. Until the Communist threat in Southeast Asia and national policy to thwart that threat have been clearly delineated, public support may be laggard. Military doctrine's adjuration: "Know your enemy" applies to civilians in today's world. We, nationally, had a

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*Although "Laos as a base and a route for the Viet Cong" was decried in the thoroughly documented Dept. of State Publication 7308, Far Eastern Series 110, Dec. 1961: "A Threat to the Peace, North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Vietnam."

lesson on that point a decade past. An early high-level designation of "police action" applied to the large-scale, protracted (even though "limited") war in Korea had long-term results, unfavorable to U.S. effort in that bitter struggle.

To the American public, "police action" brought to mind recurrent, scarcely noticed interventions,* to "restore order and protect U.S. citizens and property"; operations often involving more police functions than combat. Only small units of regulars were employed, utterly without impact upon the U.S. economy (though sometimes beneficial to certain oil or fruit company stock quotations).

The impact of past "police actions" upon U.S. foreign policy had been minimal. A presidential order,** sometimes originating from an obscure "desk" in State, dispatched the required force (usually determined by military commanders*** drawing upon extremely meagre resources) for a stated mission whose accomplishment was left entirely to the expedition's senior officer. In this light, "police action," as a descriptive title for U.S. actions in Korea could scarcely have been more confusing: to civilians called from their jobs to engage in combat half a world away; to thousands of families where casualties were personal tragedies not a news story listing a few names (of unknown regulars).

Even the economic effects of Korea were felt nation wide. Quintupling the national defense budget with consequent flood of rush orders to industry; impending shortages of critical materials (which became fact mainly in aluminum); serious consideration in Congress of imposing wartime price and wage controls (some "priorities"

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*The Marine Corps landed troops 180 times in 37 countries between 1800 and 1934. Its forces were engaged in "active operations in the field" some part of every year from 1900 to 1936.

**The Navy's capture of Vera Cruz to avenge an "insult to the American flag" in 1914 occurred after President Wilson had requested Congressional approval for employing U.S. arms in Mexico but preceded the legislative branch's response.

***In certain cases the State Department has even dictated the size of the force to be sent according to "The Small War Manual" of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1940 edition.

were unobtrusively established); all these seemed a far cry from the U.S. economy's traditional indifference to "police actions." That White House label on the Korean emergency tacitly encouraged a "business as usual" attitude inconsistent with the situation.

Designation of the Korean Conflict (much later) as our "fourth largest war," in terms of casualties and men engaged, suggests the viewpoint of military leaders from the war's start. That it was America's first serious experience with "limited warfare" helps to explain the confusion engendered among these leaders (a confusion that a watching and, at least initially, anxious public shared to an important extent) by the unprecedented interaction of political considerations* upon military tactics. Contrary to some contentions, the U.S. military has always, if sometimes vainly, sought strategic policy direction from its civilian superiors.

Moreover, the perhaps subconscious attempt to meld "police action" concepts into the realities of a major war imposed handicaps upon military operations down to individual soldiers in foxholes. In the disastrous, early days, professionals, a small minority in Korea, expected the foe to resort to ambuscade; to shift between combatant and "innocent peasant" roles; to conceal saboteurs and spies among "friendly civilians." The vast majority of our troops did not.

Throughout the entire war, the "rotation system" that played hob with unit efficiency in paying deference to democratic equality; the requirement to weigh each small tactical operation (after the first ten months) against anticipated casualties rather than its impact upon the campaign; the shock of finding a "primitive" enemy better equipped with armor and guns,** (in the early engagements); all these increased the burdens of fighting a nasty, not so little, war.

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*The bare intimation that the United States might use atomic (sic) weapons tactically raised a furor of apprehension among the new NATO alliance. Britain's prime minister flew hastily to Washington to dissuade President Truman.

**Some critics grant technical superiority in fighter aircraft also; attribute our ten to one victory ratio (Sabrejets vs MIG-15s) in air combat to pilot skill.

"War weariness," which impairs every war effort not borne wholly by regulars, set in quickly; worsened because neither U.S. people nor troops clearly understood our "war aims." If Woodrow Wilson initiated "police action" a trifle cavalierly, he waged war from the loftiest motives, widely publicized. ("War to end war--make the world safe for democracy...") Our altruism and lofty motives in Korea matched those of any war we ever fought, but those truths plus the necessity for limited objectives in limited warfare, were never clarioned like Wilson's Fourteen Points, Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter, or the latter's less sagacious "unconditional surrender."

Politicians and diplomats alike handled broad policy with a reticence suitable to a veritable "police action." Foreseeable germ-warfare accusations were vouchsafed only dignified denials. Embarrassment over a score of American "turncoats" in enemy prison camps received exaggerated attention while the thousands of Communist soldiers refusing repatriation went almost unnoticed until Syngman Rhee's highhanded action made them "news." Public apathy was apparently preferred to a "hate-the-enemy" reaction, both poor substitutes for democracy's "informed, responsible electorate."

Reviewing Korean experience, we infer that support of the American people will be as essential to our long-term success in Southeast Asia as it was in two World Wars. Such support is unlikely to be forthcoming unless the nature and extent of the Communist threat is bluntly announced and our national objectives (not our secret plans) are stirringly proclaimed.

III.

U.S. objectives to "insure political stability and establish regimes favorable to economic freedom and individual liberty" can encounter serious setbacks in Southeast Asia despite our continued aid and advice to South Vietnam's dual strategies; despite unflagging support by the American people. Essential as these are, effective

prosecution of our regional objectives also depends upon integrated military-politico-economic-ideologic long range plans to deter or defeat potential Combloc expansion of the struggle.

Combloc capabilities in Southeast Asia obviously exceed their current commitments (a truism for all limited warfare). Progress toward "conversion" of SVN insurgents may not lead to the happy ending reached in the campaign against the Huks (Philippine Republic) where miles of open sea inhibited Combloc reinforcement and resupply. In South Vietnam, the Communists can cheaply administer a nasty check by an influx of guerrillas who either are or can be based conveniently just outside Vietnamese boundaries. Should our current foes already be predominantly guerrilla invaders whom we are mastering (per optimistic pronouncements from some government levels), Combloc covert incursions (more guerrillas) into Thailand, Burma or Cambodia could reopen the bitter cycle, again--and again for the United States. More remote, but well within military potentials, Combloc invasion of one or more Southeast Asian countries, perhaps using "neutral" Laos as a spring board, could confront the United States with "another Korea."

What plans, preparations and, especially, resolve do we have for dangers real enough to merit forehanded precautions? The United States does not seem to fully appreciate that when an outside power undertakes to assist one party to a civil war (actual or incipient) it attempts either a risky bluff or faces the prospect of an expanding conflict,* perhaps one involving other intervening states. Having definitely committed ourselves on behalf of the SVN government, we are left no honorable option than to oppose assaults upon free people anywhere in Southeast Asia.

The milieu of world-wide Cold War accentuates the deficiencies in American tendencies to counter threats only after serious danger becomes obvious, and then on an ad hoc basis, which benefits least

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*The British and French withdrew their badly needed support from the Spanish Loyalists (1937) although neither Germany nor Italy were prepared to fight on a large scale had the democracies stood firm.

from previous experience. American policy (doubtless never formulated as such) long seemed to couple deliberate neglect of national security with willingness to shoulder huge burdens, make great sacrifices in defeating any foe whose evil acts brought war to the United States. The first lead to extended, costly conflicts; the second, backed by American natural and industrial resources, guaranteed eventual victory. Our paradoxical penchant to make foreign policy out of morality alone never accepted its concomitant thesis: providing the power to enforce beneficent world rule under a Pax Americana, yet we balk at concessions to expediency required to maintain power balance, prevent power vacuum.

We have placed our money--some two to three billions of dollars--on freedom for Vietnamese, presumably by way of Diem's regime. Recently our soldiers have made down payments in blood.* An appraisal of potential total investment in lives and treasure seems due. Are the chiefly reactive, defensive strategies we have applied in wider than strictly military fields adequate to attain our long range goals?

Continued without major change, those policies could result in an inconclusive, drawn-out struggle, the kind that exhausts American patience and may well break the morale of newly independent Vietnam. Moreover, such a struggle places the lion's share of the expense upon the United States, unlike Korea where punishing air interdiction increased heavy Combloc burdens of maintaining a million-man army in a land already stripped of loot. To keep the fires smouldering in Southeast Asia, Combloc resources need provide only very small contributions of munitions and trained guerrilla manpower.

Logistic computations suggest about five pounds per man/day, more than half of it food, to sustain guerrilla operations in mountainous or swampy terrain, distinctly appropriate categories for the area under consideration. Overlooking captures from government forces but accepting indications that food is obtainable locally,

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*Forty-two American service men killed in South Vietnam by December 1962.

(gifts or seizures from inhabitants) 20,000 guerrillas consume approximately 20 tons of munitions and equipment (two pounds per man) each day of active operations.

These figures take on relative meaning when compared with experience data for U.S. ground troops, which average 37 pounds per man/day in forward areas, varying between 68 pounds for "active defense" and slightly less than 13 when in reserve with no combat. (Food alone totals six pounds.) Recognizing that a very nasty situation can result with only one-fourth of the guerrillas "active" at the same time, the minimum daily requirements for the VietCong could be as low as four to six tons of munitions and equipment. Almost trivial, viewed as two or three truck loads, this small amount poses problems when packed, by men* or animals, over long distances. Unless subsistence is available en route, the payloads of the human bearers will diminish by at least ten pounds per 100 miles.

Yet the tactical importance of closing South Vietnam's borders to guerrilla supply and reinforcement matches the task's enormity. Hundreds of miles of jungle wilderness and swampy delta are not susceptible to the mine-and-wire barriers constructed along Algerian frontiers by French forces several times larger than Vietnam's military establishment. Nor can Diem's government expect cooperation from its neighbors. While Laos dangles in impotent and barely official "neutrality"; while weakly policed Cambodia manifests concern only over encroachments by ARVN; Combloc supply and replacement has little need to utilize the extensive South Vietnam coastline, inadequately covered against small craft intrusions.

If, in fact, there are no good prospects of cutting the guerrilla-rebel forces off from Combloc backup, success for U.S.-assisted South Vietnam depends upon killing guerrillas faster than Communist sources are willing to replace them** or, an equally unlikely

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*Requiring 160-240 porters arriving daily or, for a 200 mile round trip, 3-5,000 bearers for this austere "pipeline."

**It is unrealistic to doubt Communist capability to replace casualties.

development, "converting" the entire populace into militant opponents of all guerrillas in every part of South Vietnam. Yet even these improbable achievements can be countered by Combloc escalation, in scale of violence or area of conflict. Such a dim view is justified, however, only while U.S. policies continue to eschew all offensive action other than tactical operations by Diem's troops.*

The Cuban policy furnishes an example of offensive policy which required only resolution and preparation for, not the use of, force. Recent British confrontation of the Soviet Union in the U.N. accusing the latter of being the "largest colonial power" is, in a minor key, another. Who knows what a warning to the Viet Minh might achieve if couched in terms that preclude its being mistaken for a bluff. The "paper tiger" appellation can be deserved in two ways, inadequate capability to promptly pursue an announced policy or lack of resolution. Unhappily, the United States has in the past been drawn into wars that might have been avoided or at least fought under more favorable, to us, conditions because our foes underrated our determination and on occasion our capabilities.**

A forthright U.S. policy toward Laos offers promise as an earnest of our resolve to defend Southeast Asia against Communist aggression. Pledged to the Laotian neutrality agreement, we have demonstrated good faith; withdrawing military advisors and technicians; withholding aid until the western oriented government accepted "three party" rule. Are we not equally obligated to oppose Communist violations? Enforcement of the Laos "agreement" would interpose a formidable barrier of undeveloped terrain between the bamboo curtain and non-communist countries.

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*The only hint of a "flaming sword of vengeance" strategically comes from vague reports like that of the London Economist (Nov. 30, 1961): "SVN counteraction in Communist territory north of the dividing line may be on a larger scale than either side has cared to admit."

**From the record, Pearl Harbor to Cuba-based missiles, might be deduced a peculiarly American "principle of war": The larger the force an enemy openly commits against the United States the greater the probability of U.S. victory.

As matters now stand, the 30,000 square miles of southern Laos may conceal guerrilla forward bases, training areas and air strips since strategically located Tchepone is occupied by Viet Minh troops. The eastern border of this region, 300 miles of mountain wilderness, provides a land route to South Vietnam for supplies and reinforcements from Hanoi. Northern Laos, much of it flagrantly non-neutral, Pathet-Lao country, less affects South Vietnam security although its potential threat to Thailand was recognized by the recent "visit" of U.S. combat units.

Thus far, the U.S. has apparently failed to exert pressure to terminate rather obvious infractions of neutrality. A policy shift might begin with diplomatic warnings, perhaps, a request for U.N. police. While the probability of success is low, any amelioration of the current situation represents a clear gain, perhaps increasing Sino-Soviet frictions, encouraging SEATO nations, belatedly suggesting that Cambodia should protest all border violations, not merely those from east to west.

Should politico-economic moves, including appeals to "world opinion" (so awesome to certain Americans) prove insufficient, a unified U.S. country-team in Saigon could recommend modest, yet effective, military commitments. The Southeast Asia area, like the Caribbean, favors U.S. experimentation with "controlled escalation." Resort to force, if necessary, might, for example,* be restricted to sending a small contingent of troops with air cover to liberate Tchepone, linking the town, along route 9, to the DMZ garrison. The consequent detour imposed upon Communist line crossers would delay agents, seriously penalize travel of porters or carts bearing munitions. Such traffic can be severed by extending U.S.-SVN surveillance along the valley (route 9 again) to Thakhek, cutting off southern Laos (and land travel to Cambodia) from the DRV.

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*Only one of a wide variety of feasible strategies. A bolder course might ensure the freedom of a much larger portion of Laos to protect from Communist revenge friends who trusted us. Greater caution might counsel only covert "unconventional warfare" operations inside the DRV to penalize Hanoi for its similar activities in SVN.

Justification for our action could stress the restoration of Laotian neutrality, as guaranteed by the Soviets; promise early withdrawal. Our troops would respect Laotian sovereignty, merely enforcing a blockade against "contraband" across the critical southern portion of that nation. Those who recoil from such "escalation" might consider its belated challenge to Communist aggression in Southeast Asia; weigh the unfavorable prospects for rebuttal ("counter-escalation") open to Hanoi already precariously balancing its independence from Peiping and Moscow. Unless the Chicoms are allowed to develop roads across Laos (reminiscent of happenings on India's northern frontier) the "hordes of Chinese manpower" thrown into Korea as "volunteers" cannot reach the Mekong River in combat capable units. Invasion attempts would tax Combloc logistics far more than in Korea. No U.S. nuclear weapons would be needed to rebuff a Chicom army and were Ho Chi Minh inveigled into a puppet effort his divisions would be still less dangerous. Chicom air posture is not conducive to a major commitment west of the rugged Chaine Annamitique.

Should Communist response take the form of occupying north Laos (already largely in their possession) the area is militarily of little value prior to the costly task of development. Even then the Mekong remains a natural barrier between it and Thailand. Such a response would moreover strip the mask from denials of aggression and could be dealt with as a separate problem. Meanwhile assurance of a neutral Southern Laos safeguards Diem's imperilled regime, provides leverage for extension (political measures might suffice) to all Laos and isolates Cambodia from the Combloc.

Evaluation of this hypothetical "campaign" suggests another Lebanon, plus some initial skirmishes which we would do well to settle decisively--not another Korea and still less the likelihood of explicit nuclear threats inherent in the October crisis over Cuba. Of course this sketchy outline covers but one of many retaliatory offensives open to the U.S. under a policy of controlled escalation to oppose actual, though covert, aggression. The narrow strip of the "Democratic Republic" between the mountains and the South China Sea is open to

harassment by air and naval power if it be traversed by armies marching south. Sea blockade can vitiate guerrilla sanctuaries in Cambodia should politico-economic measures fail. Who knows to what extent an encouraged Thailand might participate, once the United States leads the way; what beneficial influence upon affairs in Indonesia and the emerging Malayan Federation?

Ample maneuver space between "sabre rattling" and purely defensive "reactions" to hostile initiative may be found for national policy toward Southeast Asia. No set of strategies should sensibly be advocated prior to full evaluation of both military and non-military pros and cons, a wholly feasible undertaking for policy makers with the machinery at their disposal. Survey of events over the past decade suggests the need for an integrated political-economic-ideological offensive. Military capability exists to support such a policy in Southeast Asia. The prospect that embarrassingly large forces or "high" levels of violence would be involved are remote. Historical precedent and introspection intimate that the size of the military commitment, indeed that the probability of force being required, runs in inverse proportion to firmness displayed in our non-military strategies. Thoroughly informed by their leaders, Americans uniformly applauded their government's "strong stand" on Cuba last October despite some "panic buying" of foodstuffs and more prevalent if less noticeable private fears. Although courage tends to respond more swiftly to sudden crisis there is no reason to doubt popular fortitude in a less spectacular, long term "emergency" once the situation and America's goals are unequivocally announced.