Vietnamese Perspectives on International Relations

in the *Doi Moi* Era (1986-2016)

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Politics and International Relations,

the University of Auckland, 2020

Abstract

This thesis emerges in the context of globalizing IR studies, especially in non-Western countries. It seeks to explore Vietnamese perspectives on international relations in the thirty years of the *Doi Moi* process (between 1986 and 2016). In addition to the historical, logical, interpretive, and comparative approaches, this study uses process tracing as the primary method to explore the emergence and changes in Vietnamese perception of fundamental IR concepts such as the international system, actors, power, national interest, international cooperation and conflict, and integration. It also compares the Vietnamese perspectives with the realist and liberal IR theories, the two most influential IR traditions, to assess whether there is a distinct Vietnamese IR concept. The findings reveal that there is both convergence and divergence between the Vietnamese political and IR community, and the realist and liberal IR advocates in the West on many fundamental IR concepts. The thesis concludes that Vietnam has reached an initial stage of developing its IR thinking, which is fundamentally based on pragmatic approaches. The Vietnamese IR perspective can, to some extent, represent the voice of those nations that aim to both integrate themselves into the world and maintain their national independence and self-control in the post-Soviet international environment. The adoption of a Vietnamese IR concept of "object of cooperation" (*doi tac*) and "object of struggle" (*doi tuong*) can help explain the dynamics of post-Cold War international interactions. In reflecting upon the initial efforts of exploring Vietnamese IR viewpoints systematically, this study contributes to international endeavors of promoting non-Western IR studies. The Vietnamese IR perspectives can also serve as an analytical framework for Vietnam's foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* era.

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List of Abbreviations

APEC	Asia - Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CNS	Comprehensive national strength
CPV	The Communist Party of Vietnam
DAV	Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam
HCMNAP	Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics
IIR	Institute of International Relations
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SOV	The State of Vietnam
TNCs	Transnational corporations
UN	The United Nations
USA	The United States of America
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VASS	Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences
VNU	Vietnam National University
WTO	World Trade Organization

Notes on Vietnamese Names

In Vietnam, the order of the Vietnamese name is written in a way that is different from the West. Vietnamese people put the surname or family name first, followed by the middle name, and then the first name or given name. For example, for the name Pham Binh Minh, Pham is the surname, Binh is the middle name, and Minh is the first name. In case of addressing the name in short, Vietnamese people are usually addressed by their first name, rather than the surname as in the West. For instance, Vietnamese people address (Mr.) Minh, instead of Mr. Pham.

In this thesis, when put into text, the names of Vietnamese people are written in the Vietnamese style. That is, the order of the full name is the surname, middle name, and first name. When the names are addressed in short, the first names are used. For the names of people from the West and beyond, they are written in the Western norm.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Research Background

This study comes in the context of the international movement of indigenization of IR theories. It states that the current IR studies are "too Western-centric," and calls for the incorporation in IR of "a wide range of histories, experiences, and theoretical perspectives, particularly those outside of the West."[1] In a 2016 work, entitled "Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions," Amitav Acharya states that "a Global IR is both possible and desirable."[2] He also believes that globalizing IR studies is not necessary to "suppress" existing IR approaches, but to render it more diversified in theoretical and methodological terms.[3] Many scholars have made attempts at building "national schools" of IR in non-Western countries. The community of IR scholars in China is a case in point; they have endeavored to develop a "Chinese School" of IR over the past decades.[4]

IR is a nascent discipline in Vietnam.[5] It was not until the mid-1990s that IR-related studies started a new phase of growth in the country. The development represents Vietnam's growing demand for a deeper understanding of regional and international issues to accommodate its attempts at multilateralization and diversification in international relations.[6] Some Vietnamese scholars argue that Vietnam's expansion of international relations not only results in challenges in political, military, and economic fronts but also in ideological and cultural fronts. This requires Vietnam to understand more about the outside world in order to produce adequate responses.[7] However, most IR-related

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[1] Yong-Soo Eun, "Opening up the Debate over 'Non-Western' International Relations," *Politics 39*, no. 1 (2018): 4.

[2] Amitav Acharya, "Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions," *International Studies Review* 18 (2016), 14.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Eun, "Opening up the Debate over 'Non-Western' International Relations," 6.

[5] Quang Minh Pham, "Teaching International Relations in Vietnam: Chances and Challenges," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 9, no. 1 (2009): 151.

[6] Quang Minh Pham, "*Quoc Te Hoc O Vietnam: Co Hoi Va Thach Thuc*" (International studies in Vietnam: Challenges and opportunities), *VNU Journal of Science, Foreign Languages* 28 (2012): 211.

[7] Bang Tuong Nguyen, *"Quan Diem Mac-Xit Ve Mot So Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te Cua Cac Nuoc Phuong Tay Hien Nay"* (The Marxist perspective on some current Western IR theories), Report of Ministry-level research project of 2000-2001, *Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics*, 2001, 2.

works in Vietnam are more related to Vietnam's foreign policy and diplomacy than the theoretical aspects of international relations, as the former can serve Vietnam's goals of external affairs more directly.

International Movement of Indigenization of IR Theories

In a 1977 journal article, entitled "An American Social Science: International Relations," Stanley Hoffmann argued that the discipline of IR was shaped in the United States of America (USA) following the Second World War because the USA was the only country that had the three converging factors at the time: intellectual predisposition, political circumstances, and institutional opportunities.[8] However, Hoffmann's stance has been met with many criticisms[9] and viewed as a starting point for the grand debate that Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Ingo Peters have named as the "Global(izing) IR Debate."[10] Accordingly, though the debate started in the late 1970s, it has become vivid over the past decade.[11] The debate can be categorized into three strands, though they are not in chronological order nor separate from each other. The first strand focuses on the central question of whether IR is an "American social science." The second strand aims at raising the awareness of the dominance of Western IR theories in interpreting the international relations and calling for alternative conceptualizations of IR in the world "beyond the West." The third strand concentrates on how the discipline of IR is practiced in the non-Western world.[12]

As such, one of the main aims of the "grand debate" is to call for more diversity and pluralism in terms of the sociological composition and theoretical approaches to IR studies on a global scale.[13] In the words of Yong-Soo Eun in 2018, such calls are due to both the "under-representation (or marginalization) of non-Western worlds" in the construction of IR theories and "the intrinsic complexity, variety, and contingency inherent in twenty-first-century global politics."[14]

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[8] Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," *Daedalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 43-45.
[9] Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Ingo Peters, "Introduction: Global (izing) International Relations: Studying Geo-Epistemological Divides and Diversity," in *Globalizing International Relations: Scholarship Amidst Divides and Diversity*, eds. Ingo Peters and Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7.
[10] Ibid., 2.
[11] Ibid., 7.
[12] Ibid., 6-10.
[13] Ole Wæver and Arlene B. Tickner, "Introduction: Geo-cultural Epistemologies," in *International Scholarship around the World*, eds. Ole Wæver and Arlene B. Tickner (New York: Routledge, 2009), 5.
[14] Eun, "Opening up the Debate over 'Non-Western' International Relations," 5.

There has remained a considerable gap in the distribution of IR scholars favoring North America and Britain.[15] Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Peters admit that the sociological composition of the IR discipline has diversified geographically recently. They, however, have also pointed out that 77% of all IR scholars' responses in a recent survey hold that the West dominates the field. Furthermore, 61% of respondents believe that the field is under American influence.[16] As Ole Wæver and Arlene B. Tickner argue, such a gap reflects "the invisibility" of the non-Western IR studies, and causes negative implications of "global visibility and prestige" on the non-Western-based IR scholars.[17]

In terms of IR theoretical approaches, there is an increasing critique of the "colonial character" of IR studies and challenges to the Western dominance of IR theories.[18] David Kang stated "the need for new analytical frameworks" [19] in global IR studies, as he explained that,

> in seeking to understand international relations, scholars have often simply deployed concepts, theories, and experiences derived from the European experience to project onto and explain Asia. This approach is problematic at best. Eurocentric ideas have yielded several mistaken conclusions and predictions about conflict and alignment behavior in Asia.[20]

Donald J. Puchala also points out that while the Western analyses of IR are informed by the Western context, many find such analyses "universally acceptable and unquestionably valid" in explaining the interactions of states in the international system.[21] However, many people find it unacceptable that the Western world, which represents only a small fraction of the globe, has a monopoly on interpreting the politics of the whole world.[22] In other words, the "American social science"[23] discipline of IR cannot represent the viewpoints of the whole world, especially those of the non-

[15] Wæver and Tickner, "Introduction: Geo-cultural Epistemologies," 5.

[16] Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Peters, "Introduction: Global (izing) International Relations: Studying Geo-Epistemological Divides and Diversity," 2.

[17] Wæver and Tickner, "Introduction: Geo-cultural Epistemologies," 5.

[18] Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney, "Introduction: Thinking Difference," in *Thinking International Relations Differently* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.

[19] David C. Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks," *International Security* 27, no. 4 (Spring, 2003): 57.

[20] Ibid., 58.

[21] Donald J. Puchala, "Some Non-Western Perspectives on International Relations," *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 2 (1997): 129.

[22] Peter Marcus Kristensen, "Conclusions: Wor(l)ds Beyond the West," in *Globalizing International Relations: Scholarship Amidst Divides and Diversity*, eds. Ingo Peters and Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 294.

[23] Peter Marcus Kristensen, "Revisiting the 'American Social Science'—Mapping the Geography of International Relations," *International Studies Perspectives* 16, no. 3 (2015): 246.

Western world, as the differences in terms of history, culture, society, economy, and priority make the context or "location" of the non-Western world distinguishable from that of the West.

In a 2010 book chapter, Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan raised a question as to "why is there no non-Western international theory?"[24] This question is as "intriguing"[25] as the question as to "why is there no international theory?" that Martin Wight posed in 1966.[26] Responding to the question as to why there are no IR theories in the non-Western world, Anchalee Ruland has pointed out six factors or "structural gatekeepers" that have impeded the local growth of IR theories in Southeast Asia. They include: (i) the educational system in the region that is much influenced by the West, (ii) a nascent development of IR as a discipline, (iii) IR curricula with multidisciplinary features, (iv) the majority of IR scholars in the region trained in the West, (v) commercialization that encourages universities in the region to focus on economic aspects or cost efficiency rather than academic issues, and (vi) practices in publications where language barriers impede the diffusion of IR studies in the region.[27]

According to Wæver and Tickner, many factors have limited non-Western scholars' access to the "not so international" field of study, such as library archives, working hours, language barriers, and perspectives.[28] Hence, only a few works by scholars from the "non-core" world have been accepted as appropriate contributions to global IR studies.[29] As a result, the argument that "we get a fuller picture of world politics if we hear more voices"[30] implies that IR scholars need to find "equal opportunities" regardless of the location or backgrounds.[31] In other words, diversity and pluralism in IR studies should also be reflected in geographical terms.[32] As Gerald Chan suggests, if non-Western perspectives on IR were heard, that would diversify IR studies globally, making them "more

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[24] Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, "Why is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction," in *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia*, eds. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Martin Wight, "Why is There No International Theory," in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, eds. Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 20.
[27] Anchalee Rüland, "Constraining Structures: Why Local International Relations Theory in Southeast Asia is Having a Hard Time," in *Globalizing International Relations: Scholarship Amidst Divides and Diversity*, eds. Ingo Peters and Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 115-123.
[28] Wæver and Tickner, "Introduction: Geo-cultural Epistemologies," 1.
[29] Ibid., 3.
[30] Kristensen, "Conclusions: Wor(l)ds beyond the West," 294.
[31] Ibid., 293-294.
[32] Ibid., 292.

pluralistic, more representative, and more interesting."[33] Similarly, the Global IR project in 2015 also stated that globalizing IR studies is "both possible and desirable" and called for "advancing the pluralization and universalization of IR beyond the West."[34]

Vietnamese Perspectives on IR – a Neglected Area of Research

Vietnam's studies on theoretical aspects of international relations are still under-developed. A void has remained of the systematic studies of Vietnamese perspectives on IR in the post-Cold War era in both the English and Vietnamese languages. However, initial endeavors have emerged from Vietnamese domestic scholars who have touched on the theoretical dimensions of international relations. Some foreign scholars have also paid attention to Vietnam's standpoints of the world.

Domestic Works on IR-related Matters

Over the past decades, the main themes of IR-related studies in Vietnam are related to the shaping, evolution and collapse of the bipolar world, and the relations between the pairs of major great powers such as the USA-the USSR in the Cold War period, the USA-China, the USA-Western Europe, and Russia-China in the post-Cold War era. In addition, the Vietnamese IR community has also paid attention to international and regional organizations or great powers that can exert remarkable influence on the international system such as the USA, Russia, China, and Japan.[35] Besides this, other topics in the research agenda in Vietnam include Vietnam's bilateral ties with other countries, especially with superpowers, the world's configuration or context, and the current era or epoch (*thoi dai ngay nay*). In particular, more attention has been paid to Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on diplomacy, international issues, and international cooperation in recent years.

As far as the topic of the world's configuration is concerned, there are two major works dealing with this topic. These works were published in 2010 and 2012 respectively, entitled *Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam* (Trends of

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[33] Gerald Chan, *Chinese Perspectives on International Relations: A Framework for Analysis* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999), 3.

[34] Acharya, "Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions," 14.

[35] Ngoc Dung Tran, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Tinh Hinh Nghien Cuu Quan He Quoc Te Sau Nam 1945 O Viet Nam*" (Some thoughts on the situation of IR research after 1945 in Vietnam), in *Quan He Quoc Te Thoi Hien Dai – Nhung Van De Moi Dat Ra* (Contemporary international relations – emerging issues), eds. Thanh Binh Do and Ngoc Thanh Van (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2012), 466-468.

development of the world's context towards 2020 and Vietnam's strategic direction of foreign affairs*)* and *Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020* (The world's context towards 2020). In these works, Pham Binh Minh and other authors mainly focused their analyses on factors that affected the evolution of the world's configuration such as globalization, science and technology, and the trends of security and military in the world. They also discussed the configuration of the Asia-Pacific and East Asian regions as well as the strategies of the foreign policies of the USA, China, Russia and Japan, and the pairs of bilateral ties (the USA-China, the USA-Russia, the USA-Japan, and China-Japan).[36] Besides this, they predicted the evolution of the world's configuration, and their implication on the directions of Vietnam's foreign policy towards 2020.[37]

In his 1998 book, *The Gioi Trong 50 Nam Qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi Trong 25 Nam Toi (1995-2020)* (The world in the past fifty years (1945-1995) and the world in the coming twenty-five years (1995-2020), Nguyen Co Thach predicted that the salient feature in the early decades of the post-Cold War era would be information-based. He explained how the economic, political, and military domains would evolve towards the year 2020. He also suggested what Vietnam should do in anticipation for such a context.[38]

The topic of the current epoch has attracted many experienced Vietnamese researchers. In a 1994 research project, *Thoi Dai Ngay Nay: Noi Dung Va Nhung Dac Diem Chu Yeu* (Current epoch: major contents and characteristics), Vo Dai Luoc discussed the trends of the evolution of the epoch, the revolution in science and technology, global issues, capitalism, the Soviet model of socialism, developing countries, and the movement of the communist and working class. He also suggested the options that Vietnam could take in the current epoch.[39] In a 2003 work, *Gop Phan Nhan Thuc The Gioi Duong Dai* (Contribution to the comprehension of the contemporary world), Nguyen Duc Binh and others interpreted the main characteristics and trends of the contemporary world and the prospect of

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[36] Binh Minh Pham, *Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020* (The world's context towards 2020) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2012).

[37] Binh Minh Pham, *Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam* (Trends of development of the world's context towards 2020 and Vietnam's strategic direction of foreign affairs) (Hanoi: Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, 2010).

[38] Co Thach Nguyen, *The Gioi Trong 50 Nam Qua (1945-1995) Va The Gioi Trong 25 Nam Toi (1995-2020)* (The world in the past fifty years (1945-1995) and the world in the coming twenty-five years (1995-2020)) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House: 1998), 99-111.

[39] Dai Luoc Vo, *Thoi Dai Ngay Nay: Noi Dung Va Nhung Dac Diem Chu Yeu* (Current epoch: Major contents and features) (Hanoi: Institute of World Economics, National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 1994), 9.

the world in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.[40] Vu Van Hien wrote *Nhan Thuc Ve Thoi Dai Ngay Nay* (Comprehension of the current epoch) in 2010 and *Viet Nam Va The Gioi Duong Dai* (Vietnam and the contemporary world) in 2014. In these works, Vu Van Hien concentrated his analyses largely on the notion of the epoch, the forces and agents of the epoch (such as real socialism, modern capitalism, social movements and trends), the characteristics and matters of the current epoch, and the viewpoints of the CPV and Ho Chi Minh on the epoch.[41] He also discussed the current configuration of the world.[42]

Some Vietnamese textbooks introduce some fundamental concepts of IR. In 2007, the DAV published the book, *Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te – Quyen 1* (International Relations Theories – Volume 1). The book aimed to introduce concepts to those learners who would major in IR studies. The book fundamentally presents the main tenets and critiques of mainstream Western IR theories. However, it notes that the readers need to "critically think and selectively absorb" the contents of the book as these are the works of foreign scholars translated into Vietnamese.[43]

In 2008, Duong Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An wrote *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics). This book mainly provides students with the theoretical dimensions of IR such as the nation-state, international organizations, factors that impact international politics such as revolutions in science and technology, globalization, knowledge-based economy, geo-politics, and international terrorists. The book also discussed the main characteristics of current international politics.[44]

In a 2016 book, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), Hoang Khac Nam presented many fundamental IR concepts such as nation-state and non-state actors, the international system, power, cooperation and integration, conflict, and war in

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[40] Duc Binh Nguyen, Huu Nghia Le and Huu Tien Tran, *Gop Phan Nhan Thuc The Gioi Duong Dai* (Contribution to the comprehension of the contemporary world) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2003), 5.

[41] Van Hien Vu, *Nhan Thuc Ve Thoi Dai Ngay Nay* (Cognition of the current epoch) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2010), 9-14.

[42] Van Hien Vu, *Viet Nam Va The Gioi Duong Dai* (Vietnam and the contemporary) (Hanoi: Truth-National Political Publishing House, 2014), 6.

[43] Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, *Sach Tham Khao: Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te* (Book for reference: IR theories), Hanoi: Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, 2007), Words of Introduction.

[44] Xuan Ngoc Duong and Van An Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2008), 343-345.

international relations.[45] This is the most comprehensive survey of IR concepts that was written by a Vietnamese scholar. In 2017, Hoang Khac Nam and others published a book titled *Ly Thuyet Quan Quoc Te* (Theories of International Relations). This publication introduced and critiqued various IR traditions such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism, green politics, critical theory, and post-modernism.[46]

The IIR-HCMNAP has issued a series of IR book lectures for advanced courses on political theories with changes and revisions throughout the versions. However, most of the versions are involved with practical or real-world relationships among states or transnational social forces rather than concepts of IR.[47] For the first time in the 2018 version of the book, there was room for one of seven lessons to introduce some fundamental concepts of IR. These comprise the notion of international relations, the international system, power in international relations, and some "typical" IR theories (realism, liberalism, constructivism, and Marxism-Leninism).[48]

In the existing Vietnamese IR literature, there are two major works that are strongly associated with the topic of this thesis. Although these two works can provide readers with some essential viewpoints of Ho Chi Minh and the CPV on some matters of international relations, both of them fall short of a thorough investigation of how such perspectives have been shaped or have changed over time.

The first work, *Mot So Van De Chinh Tri Quoc Te Trong Giai Doan Hien Nay* (Some issues in international politics in the present period) was published in 2012. This book was written by a group of lecturers and researchers at the IIR-HCMNAP. It explored significant contemporary issues of international politics such as globalization, the environment, the gap between the Northern and

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[45] Khac Nam Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations) (Hanoi: Hanoi National University of Vietnam Press, 2016), 5-9.

[46] Khac Nam Hoang (ed.), *Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te* (Theories of International Relations) (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2017).

[47] Institute of International Relations, *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te–Chuong Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri* (The lecture book of International Relations - Advanced program on political theories) (Hanoi: Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, 2004); Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba: Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13: Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge: Issues of political science and leadership, management, Volume 13: International Relations), (Hanoi: The Publishing House of Political Theory, 2014).

[48] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri: Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory: International Relations) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2018), 9-39.

Southern hemispheres, national sovereignty, and the war on terrorism.[49] Part of this publication also discussed the CPV's perception of how global issues would affect Vietnam's international integration and how the post-Cold War world order could affect Vietnam's independence and sovereignty.[50]

The second work was published in 2013, entitled *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current perspectives of our Party on international relations). In this publication, Vu The Hiep spent the major part discussing the history, variants, fundamental assumptions, and critical concepts as well as critiquing the three IR traditions of realism, liberalism, and Marxism. For the remaining part of the book, Hiep discussed the thoughts of Ho Chi Minh on the actors, the goals of actors, the nature and prospects of international relations,[51] the CPV's viewpoints on the prospects for the human race, fundamental contradictions of the era, war and peace, the revolution in science and technology, and globalization.[52]

The 2003 work of Doan Van Thang entitled *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (International Relations – Various approaches) also shares some relevance to the topic of this study. In this book, he presented his studies on many theoretical dimensions of IR, such as the origin and nature of international relations, the objects, and contents of IR discipline. He also developed specific conceptions such as international actors, national interest, national strength, international organizations, conflict and cooperation, and peace and war. In addition, he discussed Western IR theories such as realism, liberalism, idealism, and rationalism.[53]

In addition to the works mentioned above, there are others that are linked to the topic of this thesis and presented in Appendix 1. Notably, many of these works are informed by Western IR theories or literature, and some by Russian-related sources. They provide analyses with various levels of insight into the concepts of the international system, world order, power, cooperation, conflicts, national

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[49] Hoang Giap Nguyen et al., *Mot So Van De Chinh Tri Quoc Te Trong Giai Doan Hien Nay* (Some issues in international politics in the present period) (Hanoi: Truth-National Political Publishing House, 2012), 150-184.
[50] Ibid., 215-245.
[51] The Hiep Vu, *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current views of our Party on international relations) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2013), 116-137.
[52] Ibid., 139-147.
[53] Van Thang Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches) (Hanoi: Statistical Publishing House, 2003).

interests, and actors in international relations. Some of these works also discuss the salient features of the current situation of international relations and predictions on global trends.

In short, most of the existing IR-related works in the Vietnamese language deal with real-world relations among states. The number of works that discuss purely abstract characteristics of international relations is still very modest. The works that discuss the theoretical aspects of IR are mainly confined to a particular conception of IR rather than a system of IR concepts, except for the works of Hoang Khac Nam and Doan Van Thang.

Foreign Scholars on Vietnam's Worldview-related Matters

In addition to local Vietnamese scholars, many Western-based scholars have also contributed to Vietnam-related IR literature. However, the majority of their works are associated with the era of the Vietnam War, Vietnam's foreign policy, diplomacy,[54] or issues in connection to the ruling CPV.[55] Works that emerged from the West discussed Vietnam's perception of international security during the Cold War as well as the transformation of Vietnam's worldview at the juncture of the world around the 1990s.

In a 1984 book chapter on "Vietnamese Perspectives on International Security: Three Revolutionary Currents," Carlyle A. Thayer argued that at least from the 1970s, Vietnamese political leaders viewed world politics through the lens of the three revolutionary currents (the socialist camp, the national

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[54] Some typical works include: Michael C. Williams, *Vietnam at the Crossroads* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1992; Frank Frost, "Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dynamics of Change," *Regional Strategic Studies Program, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol 6. (1993); Mike Young, "New Thinking in Vietnamese Foreign Policy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 14, no. 3 (December 1992); James W. Morley and Masashi Nishihara, eds. *Vietnam Joins the World* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997); Kent Bolton, "Domestic Sources of Vietnam's Foreign Policy," in *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition,* eds. Carlyle A Thayer and Ramses Amer (Singapore: Institute of South East Asia Studies, 1999); Duncan McCargo, ed. *Rethinking Vietnam* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004); Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Nicholas Chapman, "Mechanisms of Vietnam's Multidirectional Foreign Policy," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 36, no. 2 (2017): 31-69; Carlyle Thayer, "Vietnamese Diplomacy, 1975-2015: From Member of the Socialist Camp to Proactive International Integration," *VNU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 3 (2015): 194-214.
[55] Lawrence E. Grinter, "Vietnam's Security Challenges: Dilemmas of Reform Communism," *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, Volume 29 (2007), 90-103; William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, New York: Routledge, 1996; Zachary Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001; Jonathan London, "Viet Nam and the Making of Market-Leninism," *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 3 (2009), 375-399.

liberation movement of the third world, and the struggle of the laboring class in capitalist countries).[56]

Similarly, in a 1984 journal article, "Hanoi's Strategic Perspective and the Sino-Vietnamese Conflict," Gareth Porter stated that Vietnam's strategic perspective was based on the idea of the "historical era," in which the world was believed to be in a transitional era from capitalism to socialism, which was considered by Vietnam to be the dominant system of the world.[57] In another work of 1990, Gareth Porter argued that Vietnam had shifted its worldview from endeavoring to fight against imperialism to emphasizing interdependence.[58]

In 1989, Ton That Thien, a US-based Vietnamese American scholar, discussed strategies and tactics that the CPV had adopted in dealing with the outside world during the Cold War. These included the methods to "seize power and consolidate it", "seize the opportunity", "gain international support", or "the use of violence", "flexible and moving tactics", and "the unity of the international communist movement."[59]

In his works "International Relations Theory and Vietnam" (1996) and "Coping with China: Vietnamese Elite Responses to an Emerging Superpower" (1998), Zachary Abuza contended that while Vietnam followed realist assumptions on IR, it was in pursuit of a strategy that comprised interdependence and global integration.[60] In a 1997 book, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations*, Eero Palmujoki held that Vietnam's efforts to integrate into Asia following the end of the Cold War could lead to the "disintegration of the Marxism-Leninism doctrine" which had served as the ideological foundation of Vietnam's foreign policy during the Cold War.[61]

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[56] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnamese Perspectives on International Security: Three Revolutionary Currents," in *Asian Perspectives on International Security*, ed. Donald Hugh McMillen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984) (57-76), 65.
[57] Gareth Porter, "Hanoi's Strategic Perspective and the Sino-Vietnamese Conflict," *Pacific Affairs 57*, no. 1 (Spring, 1984): 8.
[58] Gareth Porter, "The Transformation of Vietnam's World-View: From Two Camps to Interdependence," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (1990): 1-19.
[59] Ton That Thien, *The Foreign Politics of the Communist Party of Vietnam: A Study of Communist Tactics* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989), 57-63.
[60] Zachary Abuza, "International Relations Theory and Vietnam," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 17, no. 4 (1996): 406 and Zachary Abuza, "*Coping with China: Vietnamese Elite Responses to an Emerging Superpower*," (PhD, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1998), 15.
[61] Eero Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations, 1975-93* (Hampshire: MacMillan Press, 1997), 215.

In his doctoral dissertation "The Shaping of Foreign Policy: Vietnamese Grand Strategy After the Cold War" (2006), Alexander Lam Vuving argued that Vietnam's worldview had made remarkable changes throughout the history of Vietnam. He stated that Vietnam shifted dramatically from the traditional worldview of emphasis on the North (China) under the Dai Viet dynasties in feudal times to the orientalist worldview between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between the founding of the CPV in the early twentieth century and the early 1980s, Vietnam adopted an anti-imperialist view. The *Doi Moi* era has witnessed the emergence in Vietnam of the new outlook that focuses on national interest, interdependence, and multi-polarity.[62]

In a 2008 work, titled "Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy," Carlyle Thayer held that Vietnam changed its worldviews from "who would triumph over whom" during the Cold War to "integration" under the *Doi Moi* period. This represented a more comprehensive approach, compared to the previous period, to national security.[63]

Most of the Western-based works have pointed out that Vietnam has experienced a remarkable transformation from the Soviet-style line of thinking of the Cold War to the idea of interdependence and more socialization of itself into an increasingly globalized and interdependent world in the post-Cold War era. However, none of these existing works provide an in-depth survey of Vietnam's specific standpoints on matters that are of great concern to Vietnam's post-Cold War international relations such as national interest, international integration, cooperation, and conflict and so on.

In short, this study makes two arguments to justify its rationale. First, the emerging movement of indigenization of IR studies calls for IR studies from the non-Western world to "mitigate" the unbalanced situation of IR studies currently dominated by Western concepts.[64] Second, an inquiry into Vietnam's perspectives on IR in the post-Cold War era is still under-explored in both English and Vietnamese literature.

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[62] Alexander Lam Vuving, "The Shaping of Foreign Policy: Vietnamese Grand Strategy After the Cold War" (PhD diss., Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, München, 2005), 10-54.

[63] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy," in *Workshop on "Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*, (2008), 2-4.

[64] Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia*, 2.

Research Questions, Scope and Significance

This study mainly seeks to trace the emergence as well as the evolution of Vietnamese perspectives on IR between 1986 and 2016. This timeframe reflects Vietnam's thirty years of the *Doi Moi* spirit. The year 1986 marks Vietnam's introduction of *Doi Moi,* and the year 2016 is the cut-off point of the study. It is noted that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to build a Vietnamese theory of IR. Also, the comprehensive testing of IR theories is not the focus and beyond the scope of this study.

This study seeks to address this central question: Is there a distinct Vietnamese perception of IR? In addition to the main question, the study also attempts to answer the following sub-questions:

- What are the foundational factors that inform Vietnamese perspectives on IR?
- Why and how have Vietnamese perspectives on IR emerged and changed over time?
- What are the similarities and differences between Vietnamese perspectives on the one hand and realist and liberal IR theories on the other hand?

In order to address the central question, this study investigates Vietnamese IR fundamental concepts such as the international system, international actors and power, national interests, cooperation, and conflict in international relations. Notably, it also examines the idea of international integration that has also been put on top of Vietnam's political agenda in recent years and has been embraced empirically by the Vietnamese political elite in the *Doi Moi* period. The study makes some meaningful comparisons between the Vietnamese perspectives and mainstream IR theories, primarily realist and liberal IR traditions. These two traditions are the most influential in explaining inter-state interactions. Putting these perspectives in comparison would help clarify whether or not there is a distinct Vietnamese IR thinking.

In the account of Alexander Wendt, nations have their own identities and interests that are shaped by shared ideas rather than nature.[65] These drive the way that a state behaves towards other states in the international system.[66] As Peter M. Kristensen has argued, there is a link between intellectual (pre)disposition and a "geographical location," which refers not only to geographical features but

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[65] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.
[66] Krishna Swamy Dara, *"Postmodernism and Constructivism in International Relations," in International Politics: Concepts, Theories and Issues,* ed. Rumki Basu (India: SAGE Publications, 2012), 272.

also covers gender, ethnic, political, societal and cultural features.[67] This argument implies that Vietnam's international experience and internal factors significantly inform Vietnam's post-Cold War IR thinking. Hence, in order to explain Vietnam's IR thinking in the post-Cold War era, the study also investigates foundational factors such as Vietnam's history, culture, and ideology. Studying Vietnam's worldview in the Cold War era would help explain the evolution of Vietnamese IR thinking. Similarly, exploring the local context of Vietnam would also help explain the reason why a specific Vietnamese IR concept emerges or changes in a post-Soviet environment.

As Robert Cox has pointed out, "[t]heory is always for someone and for some purpose."[68] This implies that the non-Western countries, including Asian states, should have their own IR theories, based on their distinctive contexts, which speaks for their interests.[69] Hence, this thesis argues that Vietnam has its own "context," that shapes its way of IR thinking in representing its interests. Vietnam was under Chinese rule for around a millennium and French control for more than half the century. Vietnam has made a consistent commitment to national independence and socialism since 1945. As one of the hot spots of the Cold War, Vietnam has critically transformed itself from an outpost of the socialist bloc in a two-camp Cold War era, into a country embracing full integration into Asia and the world in a post-Soviet international environment. It has, for the first time in history, established relations with all great powers of the world in the post-Cold War era. Vietnamese political leaders believe that Vietnam is currently playing a growing role in the region and the world.[70]

Since Vietnam has a distinct "location" or context that is different from the West, there are arguably no single mainstream Western IR theories that can fully represent Vietnam's standpoints on IR. Also, as Vietnam has embraced the idea of international integration, it is also required to adapt itself to international institutions and norms dominated by the West. Hence, this thesis argues that whereas Vietnamese IR perspectives have characteristics that are shaped by the specific conditions of Vietnam,

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[67] Kristensen, "Conclusions: Wor(l)ds Beyond the West," 292.

[68] Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 207.

[69] Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia*, 3.

[70] Binh Minh Pham, "*Bai Viet cua Pho Thu Tuong, Bo Truong Ngoai Giao Pham Binh Minh Nhan Dip Ky Niem 20 Nam Vietnam Gia Nhap ASEAN Va 48 Nam Thanh Lap ASEAN*" (A paper by Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the anniversary of 20 years of Vietnam's accession to ASEAN and of 48 years of ASEAN founding), *Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, --*, http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/vi/mofa/cn_vakv/ca_tbd/nr150421102645/ns150727162811 (accessed Sept. 29, 2016).

they share similar views to realist and liberal IR theories in interpreting post-Cold War international relations.

This study is significant in two main ways. First, because a systematic presentation of Vietnamese perspectives on fundamental concepts of IR is currently underdeveloped, this study should fill a void in the research in both the English and Vietnamese languages. It will make a contribution to the efforts of the global movement of IR studies that encourages a more diversified background, an in-depth investigation of ideas from the non-Western world[71] to create "a more pluralistic or balanced situation" in IR studies globally.[72] Thereby, it helps enrich a global understanding of IR. Second, understanding Vietnamese IR concepts can serve as a framework for analyzing Vietnam's foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* era, especially in the context in which Vietnam engages in the ongoing South China Sea disputes.

Methodology and Data

Since the idea of the level of analysis was first introduced in the early 1960s,[73] debates have remained on the use of this approach in IR studies. However, the level-of-analysis approach is still a popular concept of IR studies. Generally, many global IR scholars converge on the three levels of analysis in IR: the systemic (inter-state, international) level, the state (domestic) level, and the individual level. However, in recognition of the effects of globalization on international politics, some scholars also adopt the "global" level of analysis, which refers to factors that are above and beyond relations between states. Therefore, they are different from the systematic level.[74] In addition to these basic levels of analysis, IR researchers can use other levels of analysis that are between these three levels, and are subject to the complexity of the object(s) and the emphasis that the research undertakes.[75] Many IR studies adopt the level-of-analysis approach to locate causes that make things happen in

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[71] Ching-Chang Chen, "The Absence of Non-Western IR Theory in Asia Reconsidered," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 1 (2011): 1.

[72] Ole Waever, "The Sociology of a Not so International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations," *International Organization* 52, no. 04 (1998): 688.

[73] Owen Temby, "What are Levels of Analysis and What Do They Contribute to International Relations Theory?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 4 (2015): 721.

[74] Scott M. Thomas, "The 'Levels of Analysis' and the Future International Politics of Religious Identity," *Policy Horizons Canada*, Feb 11, 2014, http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/%E2%80%9Clevels-analysis%E2%80%9D-and-future-international-politics-religious-identity (accessed August 4, 2016).

[75] Chan, *Chinese Perspectives on International Relations: A Framework for Analysis*, 94.

international relations. Similarly, since the nation-state is perceived as the principal actor in international relations, the state is adopted as the central unit of analysis in this study.

This study uses the historical, logical, interpretive, and comparative approaches to analyze the matter of investigation across chapters. It adopts process tracing as the primary method to explain how Vietnamese perspectives on IR have emerged or changed over time. According to George and Bennett, among the various methods utilized in the research of social sciences, process-tracing is "an invaluable method that should be included in every researcher's repertoire."[76]

Process tracing involves an "in-depth analysis"[77] of "causal mechanism"[78] that enables the investigator to identify "factors" (events, critical junctures, influences, and interactions) that cause the outcome of a social phenomenon. A causal mechanism is understood as a theorized system that consists of a series of parts. Each of these parts is made up of entities with their activities. These parts interact together and transmit causal forces that produce the outcome under inquiry.[79]

According to Derek Beach and Rasmus B. Pedersen, while the existing scholarship treats process tracing as a single method, there are, in fact, three different variants of process tracing, including theory-testing process tracing, theory-building process tracing and explaining-outcome process tracing methods. The first two variants are theory-centric, aiming at building a theory that can be generalized across cases;[80] hence, they are probably used to test against the presence of a causal mechanism or to build a theoretical causal mechanism in a particular case. The remaining variant is case-centric, attempting to explain only a specific case under investigation. Thus, it can be used to explain a particularly puzzling outcome of a single case.[81] In other words, the explaining-outcome process tracing is chosen when the researcher needs to explain "a particular interesting and puzzling outcome."[82]

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[76] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 224.

[77] --, "Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps", *Practice Paper Annex - Centre for Development Impact*, April 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08993ed915d3cfd000304/CDIPracticePaper_10_Annex.pdf (accessed September 15, 2016).

[78] Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines (*Ann Arbor*:* University of Michigan Press, 2013), 2.

[79] Ibid., 176.

[80] Ibid., 21.

[81] Ibid., 11-21.

[82] Ibid., 164.

Also, David Collier added that the identification of diagnostic evidence in process tracing is subject to prior knowledge. It means that the investigator needs to get access to a wider range of existing scholarship in order to grasp the theoretical background and avoid overstating the coherence of the research findings and prior understandings. Also, in order to produce appropriate analyses of changes and sequences, the investigator is required to determine key steps in the process. [83]

This study locates significant factors such as events, critical junctures, influences, and interactions, among others that cause the occurrence or change in Vietnamese IR thinking under the period of investigation. These factors include a wide range of domestically historical processes and events, political decisions at home, and momentous events and trends abroad.

The study will use both primary and secondary data in the Vietnamese and English language. Primary data consists of the official documents of the CPV such as the reports of national party congresses, guidelines, and the Politburo resolutions; Vietnamese leaders' memoirs and speeches; the government's treaties, reports, directives, and plans and so on. Secondary data include books, monographs, journal articles, conference papers, and national research projects, among others, issued by different institutions both in Vietnam and abroad. Of the resources, the *CPV Online Newspapers*, the *Communist Review* of the CPV, the *International Studies* of the DAV, the *National Defense Journal* and the *People's Army Newspaper Online* of the Ministry of National Defense of Vietnam, are excellent channels for this study. Additionally, informal discussions and consultations with Vietnamese IR scholars are useful as an additional source of reference for the study.

Throughout the chapters of the thesis, especially Part 1 (Chapters 2 and 3), the author tries to diversify the sources of reference as much as possible, both from the domestic sources and foreign-based sources. Such diversification of sources helps reduce potential bias in the judgment of events and assists in drawing the conclusions.

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[83] David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *Political Science and Politics 44*, no. 4 (2011):824.

Definition of Key Terms

In this study, the term "perspective" is used to refer to the point of view or the starting point that shapes the way of thinking or consideration of things or events.[84] Terminologies with similar meanings such as "viewpoint," "point of view" or "standpoint" are also used as an alternative to the term "perspective." The phrase "Vietnamese perspectives" typically represent the points of view of the CPV, the SOV, and local IR scholars. The author is aware that there are foreign-based Vietnamese scholars who have produced works that are linked to some Vietnamese worldview-related matters. However, such studies are beyond the scope of this study as they do not represent the interests of the Party-State system of Vietnam. Also, these works do not have substantial impacts on the process of the making of Vietnamese foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* period.

As Chapter 2 explains, the configuration of communist states, including Vietnam, attaches IR writers to the Party-State system where IR scholars are expected to protect or promote the interests of the system rather than challenging it. There are two main reasons why the perspectives of the CPV, the SOV, and domestic IR scholars are investigated in this study.

First of all, the CPV initiated a revolutionary movement that resulted in the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945 (now the Socialist Republic of Vietnam). The CPV is the only party that rules the government and society of Vietnam. Through the SOV, the CPV rules the society of Vietnam by guidelines and directions. The SOV manages the society under the direct leadership of the CPV. Therefore, the CPV and the SOV play a crucial role in shaping and implementing Vietnam's foreign affairs.

Second, IR academic writers in Vietnam are not as "autonomous" as their Western counterparts. They are expected to clarify and disseminate the policies and guidelines, and provide policy recommendations to the Party-State system. In other words, they are typically assumed to strengthen the system. As with the USSR and China, the IR community in Vietnam is closely connected to the Party-State system. Hence, it is the very fusion of the IR group and the Party-State system of Vietnam that this study includes both the perspectives of the CPV, the SOV and the domestic IR scholars in

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[84] "View," *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, --,
http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/view_1?q=view (accessed September 10, 2016).

presenting Vietnamese perspectives on IR. Stated another way, the interconnectedness of the IR community and the Party-State system makes it necessary to take into account the perspectives of both the CPV, the government of Vietnam, and domestic IR scholars in the examination of Vietnamese perspectives on IR in the *Doi Moi* period.

As far as the phrase "international relations" is concerned, the distinction among phrases such as "international relations", "international politics", "global politics", and "world politics" in Western IR studies is sometimes unclear.[85] Some scholars even use these terms interchangeably. Regarding the phrase "international relations," while some define it as "the diplomatic-strategic relations of states," others state it as "being about cross-border transactions of all kinds, political, economic and social."[86]

For IR studies in Vietnam, the phrase "international politics" and "world politics" are used interchangeably and refer to "political matters deployed on a global scale." According to Duong Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An, international politics is the product of mutual interactions among international actors of politics through activities that aim to serve national, regional and international objectives.[87] According to Hoang Khac Nam, "international relations" is understood as meaning "interactions across borders among international actors." In other words, the interactions refer to two-way or reciprocal actions.[88]

A Vietnamese textbook on IR defines international relations as:

> primarily political relations of nation-states (the synthesis of relationships in political, economic, cultural and social fields [,which is performed] by the active actors of the international community), which is related to the tasks that nation-states and political groups are involved, and is a collection of institutions and forms of international activities.[89]

As such, the idea of international relations is closely connected to domains such as politics, economics, international laws, technology, media, history, philosophy, foreign affairs, and the like.[90] The political dimension constitutes a significant part of the notion of "international relations." In

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[85] Chan, *Chinese Perspectives on International Relations*, 13.

[86] Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainley, *Understanding International Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1.

[87] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 7.

[88] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 14.

[89] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics' Institute of International Relations, *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te* (The lecture book of International Relations) (Hanoi: Political – Administrative Theory Publishing House, 2012), 7.

[90] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri: Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook for advanced political theories: International Relations), 10.

short, in Vietnamese IR literature, the notion of "international politics" is narrower than that of "international relations," as the latter denotes transnational interactions that are not limited to political terms but involves a broader range of domains such as the economy, trade, defense-security, culture and the like.

In this study, the initial letters are capitalized (International Relations) or abbreviated as IR to refer to the discipline or field of study. Lower-case letters are written (international relations) to point to the "real-world" phenomena of relations among international actors. Also, the phrase "international relations" in this study is intended to refer to interactions and relations among international actors (state and non-state actors) in political, economic, cultural and social terms, in which sovereign states are the main actors of the process, and interest-based relations constitute the core relations of states, which reflect the continuity of a state's domestic relations.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is made up of seven chapters, in addition to the introductory and concluding chapters. It is divided into two main parts. Part 1 (Chapters 2 and 3) discusses fundamental matters to the formulation of Vietnamese viewpoints of international relations in the *Doi Moi* era. Chapter 2 presents the nexus between the IR writers and the Party-State system in the communist states of the USSR, China, and Vietnam. It argues that the IR community under these regimes is attached to the ruling party and the government. Hence, the production of IR works is typically directed towards the reinforcement of the system.

Chapter 3 explores the foundational factors that have impacted the formation of Vietnam IR thinking in the post-Cold War era. They include geography, history, culture, and ideology. These factors are argued as the origins of the current Vietnamese worldview. This chapter also scrutinizes Vietnam's international experience of the Cold War, which is crucial to the revision of Vietnam's shift of the worldview during the late 1980s and informs Vietnam's post-Cold War perception of international relations.

Part 2, the central part of this thesis, examines Vietnamese perspectives on specific IR concepts such as the international system (Chapter 4), actors and power (Chapter 5), national interest (Chapter 6), cooperation and conflict (Chapter 7) and international integration (Chapter 8). These concepts are

investigated because not only are they fundamental to IR theories, but many of them such as national interest, cooperation and conflict, and international integration are also of growing interest to Vietnam's political agenda. Each chapter of Part 2 firstly introduces Vietnam's perspectives, then compares them with those of the IR realist and liberal traditions.

The concluding chapter contrasts the Vietnamese IR thinking with realist and liberal IR theories and explains the underlying factors that construct the unique features of Vietnamese perspectives on IR. It also states the contribution and limitation of the thesis and suggests areas for further studies.

Part 1

Foundational Matters to Vietnamese Perspectives on IR

Chapter 2

IR Scholars and the Party-State System in Communist States

The phrase "communist state" is usually used by Western scholars and media to refer to a single-party sovereign state that is ruled by the communist party under the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. However, in contrast to Western usage, a "communist state" describes itself as a "socialist state" (a lower phase of the development of communism).[1] In this thesis, the Party-State system refers to the government (the State) and the ruling communist party (the Party) of a communist state. The success of the 1917 October Russian Revolution led to the founding of the first communist state in the world, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), in 1922. After the Second World War, communism spread significantly to many parts of the world and by the 1970s covered more than a third of the world's population.[2] However, only twenty or seventeen communist states, by different definitions, survived in the late 1980s. The USSR, one of the two superpowers of the world during the Cold War, also came to collapse in 1991.[3]

In the post-Cold War era, only four communist states exist (China or People's Republic of China – PRC, Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba). While China, Vietnam, and Laos have carried out "radical market-oriented economic change" with different levels of success, Cuba has been facing widespread poverty.[4] It is noted that North Korea is no longer considered as a communist state because it has replaced Marxism-Leninism with the philosophical principle of *Juche* ideology since the 1992 constitution.[5]

This chapter aims to explore the nexus between IR scholars and the Party-State system in the communist states of the USSR, China, and Vietnam. It consists of two sections. The first section

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[1] J. Wilczynski, *The Economics of Socialism after World War Two: 1945-1990* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 21.

[2] Leslie Holmes, *Communism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17.

[3] Holmes, *Communism,* 118.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Dae-Kyu Yoon, "The Constitution of North Korea: Its Changes and Implications," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27, Issue 4, Article 2 (2003): 1298.

presents an overview of the relationship between the community of IR writers and the Party-State system in the USSR and China. The USSR was investigated because it was the most influential one among communist states under the socialist camp during the Cold War. Since the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSV) ruled the USSR between 1921 and 1991, the discussion on the nexus between the IR writers and the Party-State system in the USSR will also be confined to 1991 accordingly. Similarly, China was examined, as it is the largest remaining communist-controlled state in the world nowadays and has been under the ruling of the Communist Party of China (CPC) since the founding of PRC in 1949.

The second section first explores the current state of IR studies in Vietnam and then discusses how Vietnamese IR writers are connected to the Party-State system in Vietnam. The chapter concludes that it is popular in the communist states that IR scholars are intricately linked to and expected to serve, instead of working against, the Party-State system.

2.1. IR Scholars and the Party-State System in the USSR and China

In the West, political scholars, including IR scholars, are typically supposed to be autonomous and critical of state power.[6] In contrast, the structure under communist systems attaches academic writers to state-led agencies, academies or institutes where they are supposed to serve the interests of, instead of working against, the Party-State system.[7] As a result, it is usually difficult or impossible to draw a clear-cut line between IR scholars' viewpoints and those of the Party-State system on many matters of international relations.

2.1.1. In the USSR

According to Marina M. Lebedeva, IR studies in the USSR emerged to provide Soviet policymakers with policy advice and sustain Marxist–Leninist perspectives on international affairs. These

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[6] Stephen Noakes, "The Role of Political Science in China: Intellectuals and Authoritarian Resilience," *Political Science Quarterly* 129, no. 2 (2014): 246.

[7] Edward Gu and Merle Goldman, "Introduction: The Transformation of the Relationship between Chinese Intellectuals and the State," in *Chinese Intellectuals between State and Market,* eds. Merle Goldman and Edward Gu (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 6.

contributed to the promotion of Soviet ties with other communist parties worldwide.[8] IR studies in the USSR had started prior to the end of the Second World War. The Diplomatic Academy was founded in 1934 under the auspice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to train those who had had working experience in the Soviets or the party.[9] In 1943, the Moscow State University established the Faculty of International Relations, which was one year later converted into the Moscow State Institute of International Relations under the management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[10]

The end of the Second World War witnessed a new phase of IR studies in the USSR. In a journal article in 1969, entitled "International Relations in the Soviet Union: The Emergence of a Discipline," William Zimmerman stated that IR as a self-conscious discipline had already come into existence in the Soviet Union by 1962.[11] During the 1950s and the 1970s, the ruling communist party in the country established research institutes intending to produce specialists or experts on political relations or area studies on various parts of the world.[12] IR studies during this period aimed at facilitating the efforts of the Soviet Union in providing the analyses of the post-War international relations and supplying qualified staff to Soviet diplomatic corporations.[13] IR institutes and scholars were expected to be "of value in a policy advisory capacity and as producers of well-qualified recruits for relevant branches of the party and state apparatus."[14]

As Margot Light pointed out, Soviet IR studies followed a multi-disciplinary approach and were geographically based.[15] The multi-disciplinary approach, not inter-disciplinary, means the incorporation of history, economics, and law into the study of world politics. The geographical approach in IR studies can be deduced from the names of the research institutes[16] established in the USSR between the 1950s and the 1960s. They included the Institute for Chinese Studies (1956), which

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[8] Marina M. Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" *Global Society* 18, no. 3 (2004): 264.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 263.
[11] William Zimmerman, "International Relations in the Soviet Union: The Emergence of a Discipline," *The Journal of Politics* 31, no. 1 (1969): 55.
[12] Archie Brown, "Political Science in the Soviet Union: A New Stage of Development?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 36, no. 3 (1984): 320-321.
[13] Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" 264.
[14] Brown, "Political Science in the Soviet Union: A New Stage of Development?" 320-321.
[15] Margot Light, "The Study of International Relations in the Soviet Union," *Millennium* 16, no. 2 (1987): 287-296.
[16] Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" 264-265.

was affiliated into the Institute of Oriental Studies (1960), the Africa Institute (1959), the Institute of Latin America (1961), the Institute of Far East (1966), and the Institute of the USA and Canada (1968).[17] The Soviet government established these institutes in the hope of obtaining an understanding of various regions of the world, which could serve as a foundation for exerting its influence on international affairs.[18]

In order to strengthen the communist system, the ruling communist party and the Soviet government exercised their control over activities conducted by the community of IR writers in the country. As a result, Zimmerman described the field of IR studies under the Soviet regime as being "collectivized" and "politicized." The three elements represent the "collectivized" feature: (i) the concentration of IR experts in Moscow, (ii) the "state interests" as the criteria to determine if IR works could be published, and (iii) attempts to promote the production of collectively authored works. Such collectivization could make it easier for the "greater control" of the Soviet government in political terms.[19] In the words of Lebedeva,

> IR studies [in the Soviet Union] were tightly controlled by the state... There was no competition of ideas. Individual ideas, new approaches or whatever in IR studies were considered as political ones and were suppressed.[20]

Many Soviet IR writers were discouraged to research questions "whose answers are not known beforehand."[21] Consequently, there were almost no works that criticized the Soviet's foreign policy or the mistakes that the Party-State system had made.[22] Several cases were provided as examples of tight control that the Soviet government put on the IR community. In the case of Khrushchev, when he was dismissed from his position, his foreign policy was not investigated by Soviet IR writers, and the foreign policy of the Soviet government and the communist party were "uniformly correct."[23]

In the case of the closure of the Institute of World Economy and World Politics, established in 1924, E. S. Varga led for more than 20 years, and produced advice for high-ranking Soviet politicians on

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[17] Light, "The Study of International Relations in the Soviet Union," 289.

[18] Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" 264.

[19] Zimmerman, "International Relations in the Soviet Union: The Emergence of a Discipline," 58.

[20] Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" 270.

[21] Light, "The Study of International Relations in the Soviet Union," 289.

[22] Ibid., 292.

[23] Ibid.

international affairs and the world economy. However, in one piece of writing, Varga mentioned that "capitalism was not dying," which contrasted with Lenin's thesis on capitalism and the official party line at the time. As a result, the Politburo decided to shut down this institute in 1947.[24] As Light put it, "Varga's fate made it clear what penalties would be for disagreeing with Stalin." [25]

Archie Brown pointed out that Soviet scholars were believed to have more political influence on society than their counterparts in Britain, as the former was directly linked to the Party-State system.[26] By providing expert advice to the central committee of the ruling communist party, the influence that IR institutes under the Academy of Sciences in the USSR on the Party-State system was significant.[27] Since Marxism-Leninism was the dominant ideology of the Soviet society during the Cold War,[28] the interplay between IR studies and the Party-State system was, in Lebedeva's argument, a major factor that impeded the emergence of a Russian IR school.[29]

However, from the 1980s onward, IR studies in the Soviet Union were expanded to conclude studies on a wider range of issues and various aspects of IR, based on the foundational studies of the 1970s. The emerging topics of studies include integration, conflicts, the political psychology of IR, and negotiation analysis, among others.[30] Such an expansion of studies was connected to radical reforms taking place since the mid-1980s in the USSR, including an "openness" to freedom of speech and the press. Late 1991 marked the end of communist rule in the USSR and opened a new chapter for IR studies in the country.

2.1.2. In China

There has been a growing body of literature on IR studies in China over the past decades. Whereas much of the existing IR literature in the Chinese language covers policy-related matters and China's state of IR studies, those in the English language are confined to the early stages and trends of IR

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[24] Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" 265.

[25] Light, "The Study of International Relations in the Soviet Union," 289.

[26] Brown, "Political Science in the Soviet Union: A New Stage of Development?" 317.

[27] Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is There a Russian National School of IR Studies?" 264.

[28] Ibid., 268.

[29] Ibid., 267.

[30] Ibid.

research in China.[31] As David Shambaugh pointed out in 2011, IR studies in China have been experiencing three periods. The 1949-1978 period (a pre-reform) witnessed China's "poorly developed" IR studies.[32] The 1979-1999 period saw IR as a discipline being built for the first time in China,[33] particularly, since the early 1990s, when Chinese IR writers started the debate on whether there was a Chinese school of IR with many believing that the emergence of the Chinese theory of IR was "necessary and inevitable."[34]

The 1999-2009 period features the "increased diversity" of the subject matters of studies.[35] In 2011, 49 institutions were offering IR educational programs in China.[36] Currently, IR is a "well established" discipline in China.[37] Despite that, Jianwei Wang believes that IR studies in China are still under political control and face a shortage of qualified faculty and the matter of funding and ideational uncertainty.[38]

Many believe that IR studies in China have been put under the government's control and supervision. In an article entitled "International Studies in China: Problems and Prospects" (1997), Gerald Chan pointed out that the reason behind China's tight and strict control over IR studies was to make sure that academic activities were carried out in a "guided way."[39] He also noted that China's control over universities was established at every level of academic structure to make sure that activities under these institutions conform to the Party's line. The establishment of research institutes or the appointment of professors in China is "politically sensitive."[40]

Similarly, Wang wrote in 2002 that "IR teaching and research [in China] are still subject to government control and supervision."[41] The Chinese government's sanction over IR studies in China has been adopted since the pre-reform period. IR departments at the Peking, Renmin and Fudan

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[31] Patrice C. McMahon and Yue Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 01 (2011): 118.

[32] David Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific,* Volume 11 (2011): 342.

[33] Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," 344-345.

[34] McMahon and Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," 117.

[35] Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," 351.

[36] Ibid., 339.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Jianwei Wang, "International Relations Studies in China," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2002): 69.

[39] Chan, *Chinese Perspectives on International Relations: A Framework for Analysis*, 8.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Wang, "International Relations Studies in China," 86.

universities, established during the 1960s, were required to specialize in the particular areas of study, as depicted in Deng Xiaoping's "Three Worlds Theory,"[42] such as the developing world, the socialist world, and the developed world.[43]

Generally, these departments were tasked with promoting China's views of the communists' struggle and the world against the backdrop of the split between the USSR and China in the 1960s.[44] Before 1978, IR research in China was funded by the government to serve intelligence purposes.[45] Xiaoming Huang argued in 2007 that the government's sanction in political, ideological and theoretical, and methodological terms over IR studies made it "inter-windness" between policy-making authority and scholarly activities in the country.[46] It means that the political and IR community is closely linked to the Party-State system in China.

During the pre-reform phase, China's political problems and its international isolation impeded the growth of IR studies in the country.[47] However, China's introduction of its "open-up" policy in the late 1970s paved the way for the growth of IR studies in the country. Academic writers have been able to better access intellectual resources, IR methods, and obtain more space to navigate their research foci.[48] IR studies and teaching have been expanded to other places beyond Beijing and Shanghai.[49]

However, such reduced sanctions by the Chinese government over IR studies "does not necessarily mean less relevance to, or less engagement with, the government agendas."[50] The Chinese government's sanction of social science studies, including IR studies, has caused negative impacts on the development of the field. As McMahon and Zou argued, the 1989 Tiananmen incident was an example that the central government brought political sciences to "suspended" status.[51]

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[42] Xiaoming Huang, "The Invisible Hand: Modern Studies of International Relations in Japan, China, and Korea," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10, no. 2 (2007): 182.

[43] Ibid., 118.

[44] McMahon and Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," 117.

[45] Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," 341.

[46] Huang, "The Invisible Hand: Modern Studies of International Relations in Japan, China, and Korea," 182.

[47] Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," 341.

[48] Huang, "The Invisible Hand: Modern Studies of International Relations in Japan, China, and Korea," 182.

[49] Gerald Chan, "International Studies in China: Problems and Prospects," *Political Science* 49, no. 1 (1997): 19.

[50] Huang, "The Invisible Hand: Modern Studies of International Relations in Japan, China, and Korea," 182.

[51] McMahon and Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," 117.

IR studies in China are based on some government agencies and taught at top social science universities in China.[52] In addition to universities, China has also established a series of IR "think tanks," whose missions are to produce policy-related analyses of international issues.[53] One of the driving forces that have led to the boosting of IR studies in China since the 1990s was China's growing demand for the promotion of policy-oriented studies on international issues.[54] A survey indicated that the majority of China's IR articles between 1995 and 1998 focused on the analyses of current affairs.[55] Most IR works are policy-oriented rather than theory-related[56] and under the censorship of the CPC.[57] In a journal article, "The Role of Political Science in China: Intellectuals and Authoritarian Resilience," Stephen Noakes states that instead of challenging the ruling communist party and state power of China, the community of political scholars in the country has been working to strengthen the rule of the party through policy recommendations to the Party-State system.[58]

In general, IR academic writers in China have served as a force that "continues to be the interpretation and advocacy of party and government policies"[59] because the CPC establishes that social science studies must serve domestic politics and pay tributes to Marxism.[60] The control of the government implies that "no-go zones" exist on IR studies in China, including criticisms of China's foreign policy, human rights, and humanitarian intervention.[61] In the words of McMahon and Zou, "academia [in China] remains the last bastion of socialism; government support and connections, rather than scholarship or good teaching, remain the most important elements of professional success."[62]

2.2. IR Studies in Vietnam

IR education and research in Vietnam came much later than other countries, especially when compared to China, the USA, and other Western countries. This is because Vietnam's international

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[52] Ibid., 118.
[53] Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," 339.
[54] McMahon and Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," 117.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Chan, "International Studies in China: Problems and Prospects," 14.
[57] McMahon and Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," 118.
[58] Noakes, "The Role of Political Science in China: Intellectuals and Authoritarian Resilience," 258.
[59] Wang, "International Relations Studies in China," 86.
[60] Chan, "International Studies in China: Problems and Prospects," 15.
[61] Shambaugh, "International Relations Studies in China: History, Trends, and Prospects," 351.
[62] McMahon and Zou, "Thirty Years of Reform and Opening up: Teaching International Relations in China," 118.

relations were influenced by the Cold War. IR education at the time was a privilege to those people who were closely connected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam.[63] Many of the IR studies in Vietnam in the post-Cold War period are centered on Vietnam's foreign policy and diplomacy and practical dimensions, rather than the theoretical aspects of international relations, as they are supposed to directly support Vietnam's efforts in the effective formation and implementation of the policy of "multilateralization and diversification" in international relations. Vietnam's IR studies have arguably evolved into a nascent discipline since the 2000s. The growth of IR studies reflects Vietnam's increasing demand for more understanding of the world so that it can integrate into the world effectively.

2.2.1. IR as a Nascent Discipline

With regard to IR education, as a successor of the College for Foreign Affairs established in 1959, the Institute of International Relations under the auspice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the only institution in Vietnam that first introduced IR undergraduate programs in 1970.[64] Nevertheless, it was not until the mid-1990s, especially the early 2000s, when there was a slight increase in the number of educational institutions that provided IR programs in Vietnam. Up to 2008, there were only 11 establishments providing IR programs or international studies in Vietnam; however, most of these institutions only offered undergraduate programs which were first introduced in the early 2000s.[65]

Up to 2016, there have been three institutions providing IR masters programs, including the DAV,[66] the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, a member of the Vietnam National University - Hanoi (USSH-VNUHN),[67] and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, a member of the Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City (USSH-VNUHCM).[68] In early 2016, the IIR-

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[63] Pham, "Teaching International Relations in Vietnam: Chances and Challenges," 132.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 133.

[66] "*Chuong Trinh Dao Tao*" (Training programs), *Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*, http://www.dav.edu.vn/vi/dao-tao/chuong-trinh-dao-tao/sau-dai-hoc.html (accessed September 10, 2016).

[67] "*Gioi Thieu Khoa*" (Introduction of the faculty), *Faculty of International Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Hanoi*, http://www.khoaquoctehoc.edu.vn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&catid=2%3Akhai-quat-v-khoa&Itemid=38&lang=vi (accessed September 10, 2016).

[68] "*Chuong Trinh Dao Tao*" (Training programs), *Faculty of International Relations, University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Ho Chi Minh City*, http://fir.hcmussh.edu.vn/Default.aspx?TopicId=92a3d5e0-051d-40f7-884d-b4898ebf3f33 (accessed September 10, 2016).

HCMNAP started its first call for applications for an IR masters program.[69] Currently, the DAV and USSH-VNUHN are the only two institutions that have provided doctoral programs on IR since 2010[70] and 2014[71] respectively.

Regarding IR institutional landscapes and publications, almost all the IR-related research institutes in Vietnam are based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The three most dominant establishments of IR-related studies are the DAV, the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and the Vietnam National University (VNU). As a focal point of IR-related studies under the DAV, the Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies is comprised of three research centers (Centre for Political and Security Studies, Centre for Development and Economic Integration, and Centre for Regional and Foreign Policy Studies). These centers focus on international affairs, foreign policies, and security matters, fundamentally serving as "think tanks" on international issues to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CPV, and the state of Vietnam.[72] As for publications, the DAV*'s International Studies Review,* a leading journal on IR and foreign policy in Vietnam, was first published in 1993 and is currently published quarterly in Vietnamese and biannually in English.[73]

As a government agency, the VASS, which was first established in 1953, is now a leading national research institution of social sciences in Vietnam.[74] In addition to the strands of social sciences and human sciences, the VASS runs eight institutes of international studies, some of which were set up in the early 1990s and the remainder in the 2000s. They include the Institute of Chinese Studies, the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, the Institute for Northeast Asian Studies, the Institute for India and Southwest Asian Studies, the Institute for European Studies, the Vietnam Institute of American

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[69] "*Thong Bao Tuyen Sinh Dao Tao Trinh Do Thac Si Nam 2016*" (Notice on calling for MA programs in 2016), *Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics*, February 1, 2016, http://www.npa.org.vn/Home/Dao-tao/3820/Thong-bao-so-62TB-HVCTQG-ve-viec-tuyen-sinh-dao-tao-trinh-do-thac-si-nam-2016 (accessed September 10, 2016).

[70] Pham, "*Quoc Te Hoc O Vietnam: Co Hoi Va Thach Thuc*" (International studies in Vietnam: Challenges and opportunities), 214.

[71] "*Gioi Thieu Khoa*" (Introduction of the Faculty), *Faculty of International Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Hanoi*.

[72] "History and Development," *Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*, http://www.dav.edu.vn/en/introduction/history-and-development.html (accessed September 15, 2016).

[73] "International Studies Review," *Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*, http://www.dav.edu.vn/en/publications/international-studies-review.html (accessed September 15, 2016).

[74] "About VASS," *Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences*, http://en.vass.gov.vn/noidung/gioithieu/Pages/gioi-thieu.aspx (accessed September 15, 2016).

Studies, the Institute of African and Middle East Studies, and the Institute of World Economics and Politics.

These institutes cover area studies as their names suggest, and are expected to provide policy recommendations to the CPV and the state of Vietnam on the specific areas of their studies.[75] Through monthly published journals, the institutes introduce research on various areas of the world – China, Northeast Asia, India, Southwest Asia, Europe, America, Africa, and the Middle East – and issues related to world economics and politics.

VNU is made up of the two systems of member universities, the Vietnam National University - Hanoi (VNUHN), and the Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM). VNUHN consists of various member universities and research centers, including USSH-VNUHN. The USSH-VNUHN runs the Centre for Asian and Pacific Studies and International Affairs, and the Centre for Chinese Studies which were established in 1985 and 2002, respectively.[76] Similar to VNUHN, the VNUHCM is made up of various member universities and research centers, including the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH-VNUHCM). Under USSH-VNUHCM, there are two centers related to IR studies, including the Center for Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Studies, and the Center for International Studies which were set up in 1990 and 2015, respectively.

In addition to the three remarkable IR-related institutions mentioned above, Vietnam's Ministry of National Defense also founded the Institute for International Relations on Defense to conduct studies on the world's defense relations.[77] As part of research and training on political science, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics (HCMNPA) has a team of IR lecturers and researchers based at the Institute of International Relations (IIR), the Academy of Journalism and Communication and four IR faculties in various regions of the country.[78]

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[75] "Unit Members," *Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences*,
http://en.vass.gov.vn/noidung/cacviennghiencuu/Pages/default.aspx (accessed May 20, 2016).
[76] "Faculty of International Studies," *Faculty of International Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Hanoi*,
 http://www.ussh.vnu.edu.vn/d4/news/Faculty-of-International-Studies-6-9658.aspx (accessed May 2, 2017).
[77] "*Cac Vien Nghien Cuu Chu Yeu*" (Major research institutes), *Ministry of National Defence*, http://mod.gov.vn/ (accessed September 10, 2016).
[78] "*Co Cau To Chuc*" (Organizational structure), *Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics*, http://hcma.vn/Home/Co-cau-to-chuc/305/SO-DO-TO-CHUC-BO-MAY-HE-THONG-HOC-VIEN-CHINH-TRI-QUOC-GIA-HO-CHI-MINH (accessed April 2, 2017).

As seen from the IR-related institutional landscape in Vietnam, many of these institutions came into existence not so long ago (except for the DAV, IIR-HCMNPA, and some institutes at the VASS). IR research agendas in Vietnam are still modest. Up to 2008, only three out of 11 IR educational establishments in Vietnam have focused on IR per se; however, the lack of qualified IR faculty in these institutions also affects the quality of IR education. Notably, IR education programs in Vietnam are primarily related to area studies – mainly on European or American themes, and relations among nation-states.[79]

As Pham Quang Minh points out, IR education programs emphasize Vietnam's stance as an independent state in its relations with the outside world.[80] Regarding IR textbooks, except for the newly published textbook of Hoang Khac Nam in 2016, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), primary existing IR textbooks[81] in Vietnam only cover theoretical studies in a preliminary form[82] and lack in-depth or updated IR studies worldwide. According to Tran Ngoc Dung, domestic IR writers tend to be affected by the lens of "world order," and consequently need to diversify their approaches to the interpretation of the post-Cold War fast-changing world.[83]

In short, as Pham Quang Minh puts it, "IR as a field is a new discipline in Vietnam."[84] It was not until the mid-1990s that IR studies have received more attention in Vietnam. The growth of IR studies in Vietnam can be traced back to Vietnam's pursuit of the strategy of multilateralization and diversification in external relations since 1991, demanding the growing understanding of regional and international issues to serve external relations.[85] As a nascent discipline, much room for

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[79] Pham, "Teaching International Relations in Vietnam: Chances and Challenges," 133-134.
[80] Ibid., 141-142.
[81] Typical works include: Academy of International Relations, *Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (International relations of politics) (Hanoi: Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, 1998); Institute of International Relations, *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te–Chuong Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri (*The lecture book of International Relations - Advanced program on political theories) (Hanoi: Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, 2004); *Quan He Quoc Te* (International Relations) (Hanoi: The General Department of Politics, 2004); Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics).
[82] Tran, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Tinh Hinh Nghien Cuu Quan He Quoc Te Sau Nam 1945 O Viet Nam*" (Some thoughts on the situation of IR research after 1945 in Vietnam), in *Quan He Quoc Te Thoi Hien Dai – Nhung Van De Moi Dat Ra* (Contemporary international relations – emerging issues), eds. Thanh Binh Do and Ngoc Thanh Van (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2012), 463.
[83] Ibid., 464-466.
[84] Pham, "Teaching International Relations in Vietnam: Chances and Challenges," 151.
[85] Pham, "*Quoc Te Hoc o Vietnam: Co Hoi Va Thach Thuc*" (International studies in Vietnam: Challenges and opportunities), 211.

improvement remains concerning theoretical and methodological approaches, as well as the contents of IR studies.[86] As IR establishments in Vietnam are typically government-based, and aim at providing policy recommendations to the CPV and the state of Vietnam as well as disseminating guidelines and policies of the Part-State system, IR studies in Vietnam are affected by political issues,[87] which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2. *The Connection between IR Scholars and the Party-State System*

As in the USSR and China, the configuration of the Vietnamese state puts domestic scholars in an environment where they are expected to serve the state's interests and strengthen the ruling CPV. Brintnall argued in 1994 that there was no "independent association of social scientists or scholars generally" in Vietnam,[88] and political science in Vietnam is usually thought of as "how the government tells the public of its policies."[89] Vietnam's leading IR-related academies and its affiliated institutes such as the DAV, the VASS, IIR-HCMNAP, are all under the auspices of the Party-State system. Consequently, these organizations are designed to promote research agendas and methodology that are compatible with the interests of the government and the ruling party in Vietnam.

Specifically, as a leading national IR institution, the DAV and its affiliated centers are assigned as "think tanks" to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the CPV and the government of Vietnam.[90] Similarly, the mission of the VASS is to provide "scientific evidence for the Party and the State in developing guidelines, strategies, plans, and policies to serve a fast and sustainable socialist-oriented development of the country."[91] Also, apart from the mission of training mid- and high-ranking leaders for the Party-State system, HCMNAP and its affiliates, including the IIR, focus their studies

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[86] Ibid., 469.

[87] Tran, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Tinh Hinh Nghien Cuu Quan He Quoc Te Sau Nam 1945 O Viet Nam*" (Some thoughts on the situation of IR research after 1945 in Vietnam), 462.

[88] Michael Brintnall, "A Political Scientist Returns to Vietnam," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 27, no. 03 (1994): 629.

[89] Ibid., 631.

[90] "History and Development," *Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*.

[91] "About VASS," *Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences*.

on Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and issues in world affairs, which contribute to the recommendations of guidelines and policies to the Party-State system.[92]

One scholar at the VASS was quoted in an interview as saying that "within the Centre, our discussions are completely frank and open; when making presentations to the highest levels of the government, though one must be very well prepared."[93] As Mark Sidel pointed out, there are linkages between policy, policy research, and academic institutions and specialists in Vietnam. Chinese studies in Vietnam can be taken as an example of the connection between IR studies and the Party-State system in Vietnam. Researchers or academic writers at the Institute of Chinese Studies, a unit of the VASS, carry out policy studies and offer commentary and documentary translation on China-related issues to the Party-State system.[94] The CPV also very much depends on the DAV and other institutes for comments and research on China.[95]

The interconnectedness between IR-engaged scholars and the Party-State in Vietnam is also reflected in institutional terms. The CPV is "the leading force of the State and the society,"[96] "on all fronts and at every level"[97] in Vietnam. Such leadership is performed through memberships, appointments, and policy directives.[98] The appointments of party members at educational establishments or institutes aim to make sure that the activities are not against the Party's lines and the State's interests. The supervision of the Party-State system at universities and institutes in Vietnam is exercised by Party committees and members[99] who are responsible for effectively carrying out the assignments or duties without being against the guidelines and policies of the Party-State system.[100] For example, in December 2016, Nguyen Quang Thuan, the President of the VASS was concurrently the Party

[92] "About Us," *Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics*, May 13, 2015, http://english.hcma.vn/home/about-us/overview/introduce-13 (accessed September 10, 2016).

[93] Brintnall, "A Political Scientist Returns to Vietnam," 629.

[94] Mark Sidel, "The Re-emergence of China Studies in Vietnam," *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 523.

[95] Ibid., 524.

[96] "Political System," *Government Portal, Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/TheSocialistRepublicOfVietnam/AboutVietnam/AboutVietnamDetail?categoryId=10000103&articleId=10001578 (accessed September 10, 2016).

[97] Zachary Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 18-19.

[98] Ibid.

[99] "Political System," *Government Portal, Socialist republic of Vietnam*.

[100] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Quy Dinh Chuc Nang, Nhiem Vu Cua Dang Bo, Chi Bo Co So Trong Cac Don Vi Su Nghiep (Truong Hoc, Benh Vien, Vien Nghien Cuu…)*" (Regulations on functions, duties of the executive committee at professional/non-business units (schools, hospitals, institutes…) No. 97-QD/TW, March 22, 2004, *Thukyluat.vn*, http://thukyluat.vn/vb/quy-dinh-97-qd-tw-2004-chuc-nang-nhiem-vu-dang-bo-chi-bo-co-so-trong-don-vi-su-nghiep-2d245.html (accessed September 12, 2016).

Committee Secretary of the VASS,[101] and Hoang Khac Nam was head of the faculty and Party Cell Secretary of the Faculty of International Studies of USSH-VNUHN at the same time.[102]

As far as publications are concerned, since the communication of ideas under the Marxist-Leninist regimes is viewed as an "ideological task" and "motivation-oriented" rather than "information-oriented,"[103] all media in Vietnam, including printed publications, are under the control of the CPV, the government of Vietnam or CPV-approved mass organizations.[104] As in the USSR, where academic writers faced political constraints over what they could publish, the publications of studies, including IR studies in Vietnam, are supervised by Vietnam's Ministry of Culture and Information to make sure that these works are not against the Party's line.[105]

In short, the Vietnamese IR community is closely linked to the Party-State system of Vietnam. The official document of the CPV also states the contribution of the intellectual circle to the cause of national construction under the ruling of the Party-State system. In 2008, the 10th Central Committee of the CPV's Resolution 27 put it as:

> the intellectual in Vietnam has actively contributed to the building of a scientific foundation for the formulation of guidelines and policies of the Party and the State, for the clarification of the way for developing the country, and for addressing new problems arising during the *Doi Moi* process.[106]

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[101] "*Co Cau To Chuc*" (Organizational structure), *Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences*, --, http://vass.gov.vn/noidung/gioithieu/Pages/gioi-thieu-tong-hop.aspx (accessed September 10, 2016).
[102] "*To Chuc Cua Khoa*" (Organization of the faculty), *Faculty of International Studies - University of Social Sciences - Hanoi*, --, http://www.khoaquoctehoc.edu.vn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=10&lang=vi (accessed September 12, 2016).
[103] Russell Hiang-Khng Heng, "Media in Vietnam and the Structure of its Management," in *The Mass Media in Vietnam*, ed. David Mar (Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, RSPAS, Australian National University, 1998), 28.
[104] Ibid., 34.
[105] Carlyle A. Thayer, "The Apparatus of Authoritarian Rule in Vietnam," in *Politics in Contemporary Vietnam: Party, State, and Authority Relations,* ed. Jonathan D. London (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 139.
[106] The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Nghi Quyet Hoi Nghi Lan Thu Bay Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Khoa X Ve Xay Dung Doi Nghi Tri Thuc Trong Thoi Ky Day Manh Cong Nghiep Hoa, Hien Dai Hoa Dat Nuoc*" (The Resolution at the 7th plenum of the Tenth Party Central Committee on building the intellectual circle under the period of the country's enhancement of industrialization and modernization), signed August 6, 2008, *Thukyluat.vn*. http://thukyluat.vn/vb/nghi-quyet-27-nq-tw-xay-dung-doi-ngu-tri-thuc-thoi-ky-cong-nghiep-hoa-21ff6.html (accessed September 10, 2016).

Chu Hao, an acclaimed high-ranking state officer/academic writer also said that one of the salient characteristics of the Vietnamese intelligentsia is their "loyalty to the Party and peoples."[107]

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the nexus between IR scholars and the Party-State system (the ruling communist party and the government) in the communist states of the USSR, China, and Vietnam. It is standard under the countries investigated that IR scholars are closely connected to the Party-State system. As most IR academic writers in these countries are attached to state-led academies, institutes or public universities, they are expected to strengthen, rather than work against, the ruling communist party and the government.[108] As such, the purpose of IR studies in the Marxist-Leninist states appears to differ from that of the West because Western scholars, as Stephen Noakes has argued, are typically supposed to be independent of state power and work for the advancement of democracy, freedom, and fairness.[109] They are typically pluralistic, autonomous, and often critical of state power.[110]

Like China,[111] the government of Vietnam supervises national IR studies through various channels, including the Party's committee and membership to make sure that academic activities are not against the interests of the Party-State system. In the USSR, during the 1950s and 1970s, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (the ruling party) set up institutes of political science to produce specialists or experts on political relations and area studies. They were expected to be "of value in a policy advisory capacity and as producers of well-qualified recruits for relevant branches of the party and state apparatus."[112] Former Soviet political scholars were believed to have more political influence on the society than their counterparts in Britain, a non-communist country.[113]

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[107] Hao Chu, "*Thu Tim Hieu Tang Lop Tri Thuc Viet Nam*" (An attempt to learn the intelligentsia in Vietnam), *Chungta.com*, June 21, 2010, http://www.chungta.com/nd/tu-lieu-tra-cuu/thu_tim_hieu_tang_lop_tri_thuc_viet_nam.html (accessed September 10, 2016).

[108] Gu and Goldman, "Introduction: The Transformation of the Relationship between Chinese Intellectuals and the State," 6.

[109] Noakes, "The Role of Political Science in China: Intellectuals and Authoritarian Resilience," 240-241.

[110] Ibid., 246.

[111] "International Studies in China: Problems and Prospects," 8.

[112] Brown, "Political Science in the Soviet Union: A New Stage of Development?" 320-321.

[113] Ibid., 317.

IR studies in Vietnam came much later than China but have received more attention since the mid-1990s and have evolved into an emergent field of study. They have grown more vigorous in recent years. The IR community in Vietnam tends to focus its studies more on Vietnam's diplomacy or foreign affairs than the theoretical aspects of international relations, as they are more directly linked to Vietnam's implementation of foreign affairs and diplomatic activities. IR theory-related studies in Vietnam are still modest, and are done largely by senior researchers, lecturers, or officers, who are mainly based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The growth of IR studies in the country reflects Vietnam's efforts in promoting the domestic understanding of the world to serve the policy of multilateralization and diversification in foreign affairs and international integration. Although there has been an increase in the number of IR publications in Vietnam over the past decades, many of them have been translated from foreign sources such as China, America, and Britain. Most of them cover fundamental matters and comprehensive analyses of issues on IR.[114]

Like in the USSR and China, IR studies in Vietnam are predominantly affected by a "political lens."[115] Instead of challenging the ruling Chinese communist party and government, the community of political scholars in that country has been working to strengthen the rule of the CPC through their policy recommendations to the Party-State system.[116] Similarly, the community of IR scholars in Vietnam is generally state-led and institutionalized through various channels and is expected to serve the interests of the ruling party and the state of Vietnam. It is the very fusion of IR academic writers and the Party-State in Vietnam that this thesis investigates the perspectives of both the CPV, the government of Vietnam, and those of the domestic IR writers, as they all construct Vietnamese perspectives on international relations in the *Doi Moi* era. These issues will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

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[114] Tran, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Tinh Hinh Nghien Cuu Quan He Quoc Te Sau Nam 1945 O Viet Nam*" (Some thoughts on the situation of IR research after 1945 in Vietnam), 461-462.
[115] Pham, "*Quoc Te Hoc o Vietnam: Co Hoi Va Thach Thuc*" (International studies in Vietnam: Challenges and opportunities), 215.
[116] Noakes, "The Role of Political Science in China: Intellectuals and Authoritarian Resilience," 258.

Chapter 3

Foundational Factors

This chapter aims to explore the foundational factors that contribute to the formulation of Vietnamese perspectives on international relations in the *Doi Moi* (renovation) era. Located in a geo-strategic area in Southeast Asia, and built on a wet rice tradition, Vietnam has a long history of national safeguarding and construction. In the Cold War era, Vietnam joined the socialist camp in a divided two-camp world. However, on facing external and internal challenges, Vietnam decided to launch the *Doi Moi* cause at the dusk of the Cold War to continue its socialist-oriented goal against the backdrop of the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the post-Cold War era, Vietnam has made efforts to "actively and proactively" integrate into the region and the world.

From geo-epistemological perspectives, knowledge and processes of knowledge production are influenced by factors such as geography, history, and identity; thus, they are interconnected to space and time. As a result, the location and context of knowledge production should be taken into account in IR studies[1] as they are linked to the identities and conceptualizations of research agendas.[2] As Wemheuer and Peters note, the location includes a wide range of elements such as "political, geographic, gender, ethnic, religious or cultural nature."[3] George Lawson also states that "history never really went away as an important feature of IR's toolkit."[4] As such, the experience of Vietnam in historical, cultural, and ideological terms is closely connected to Vietnam's perception of the outside world. In other words, examining the "location" or the "context" of Vietnam would help shed light on Vietnam's perspectives of international relations in the *Doi Moi* era.

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[1] Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Ingo Peters, "Introduction: Global(izing) International Relations: Studying Geo-Epistemological Divides and Diversity," in *Globalizing International Relations: Scholarship Amidst Divides and Diversity*, eds. Ingo Peters and Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2016), 4-5.

[2] Ibid., 5.

[3] Ibid.

[4] George Lawson, "The Eternal divide? History and International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 2 (June 2012): 204.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first is to explore factors such as geography, history, culture, society and ideology as the origins of Vietnamese perspectives on international relations in the *Doi Moi* period. The second focuses on Vietnam's international experience in the Cold War period, explaining its involvement in great power politics at the time and its perception of the world, which arguably informs the way that the Vietnamese elite perceives the world in the post-Cold War era. The third investigates Vietnam's shift from the "two-camp" worldview before 1986, to the policy of comprehensive "international integration" in the *Doi Moi* era. The chapter concludes that geographical, historical, and socio-cultural factors, Marxism-Leninism, the Ho Chi Minh thought, Vietnam's international experience of the Cold War and the practical demand for national development in the *Doi Moi* spirit serve as the platform of Vietnam's thinking of international relations in the post-Cold War period.

3.1. Geographical Location, Historical Narrative, Socio-cultural Legacy and Ideological Factors

In discussing the relationship between history and the studies of international relations, George Lawson holds that "history is used by all parts of the International Relations (IR) discipline."[5] John M. Hobson also states that history can be adopted as "a means of problematizing and critically exploring the origins of modern domestic and international institutions and practices."[6] The geo-political version of the where-you-sit-is-where-you-stand argument[7] also implies that factors such as geography, history, culture, society and ideology would affect the way that people perceive the world around it. As a result, exploring the past of Vietnam in historical, socio-cultural and ideological terms, especially Vietnam's history in the Cold War, would help shed light on the way that Vietnam looks at the world in the post-Cold War era.

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[5] Lawson, "The Eternal divide? History and International Relations," 203.

[6] John M. Hobson, "Debate: The 'Second Wave' of Weberian Historical Sociology - The Historical Sociology of the State and the State of Historical Sociology in International Relations," *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1998), 286.

[7] Peter Marcus Kristensen, "Conclusions: Wor(l)ds Beyond the West," in *Globalizing International Relations: Scholarship Amidst Divides and Diversity*, eds. Ingo Peters and Wiebke Wemheuer-Vogelaar (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2016), 292.

3.1.1. Geographical Location

Located in the Indochinese peninsula of Southeast Asia, Vietnam is a strip of land that is shaped like the letter *S*. It has diverse forms of terrain, including large valleys, hills, densely forested highlands, coastal lowlands and deltas. Vietnam has tropical and temperate weather which is suitable for the growth of plants and animals. As a result, the remains and tools of the ape-men were found in Vietnam.[8]

Sharing the border with China to the north, and Laos and Cambodia to the west, Vietnam looks into the Eastern Sea (internationally called the South China Sea) of the Pacific Ocean to the east.[9] Vietnam is known as the "balcony over the Pacific."[10] As Vietnam's entire coastline embraces the South China Sea, it possesses a strategic position in the region, as the latter is "a critical commercial gateway," and "an important economic and strategic sub-region of the Indo-Pacific," playing a crucial part in the geo-politics of the Indo-Pacific.[11] With a total area of around 330,000 square kilometers, Vietnam is larger than neighboring Cambodia and Laos but quite smaller than the Arizona state of the USA, and very much smaller than China.[12] Nowadays, with a population of around 96 million people, Vietnam is approximately a middle-sized province of China.[13]

Besides the favorable conditions that come from the geographical factor, Vietnamese people have to face multiple challenges such as storms, droughts, floods, pests and other forms of disasters. Due to the possession of the strategic position and richness in natural resources, Vietnam has become the target of foreign aggressors throughout its long history. Persistent and continuous struggles against natural and foreign forces have unified Vietnamese people and train their characteristics early in the history. National awareness and sentiment have been early formulated, developed and passed down

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[8] Ninh Luong et al., *Lich Su Viet Nam Gian Yeu* (Simplified History of Vietnam) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2005), 8.

[9] "*Mot So Thong Tin Ve Dia Ly Viet Nam*" (Some information about Vietnam's geography), *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam*, June 1, 2016, http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/vi/mofa/tt_vietnam/geo/ (accessed July 2, 2018).

[10] Ton That Thien, "Cultural Issues in Vietnam's Transition," in *The Vietnamese Economy and its Transformation to an Open Market System*, ed. William T. Alpert (New York: ME Sharpe Inc., 2005), 15.

[11] "South China Sea," *Lowy Institute*, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/issues/south-china-sea (accessed October 16, 2018).

[12] Thien, "Cultural Issues in Vietnam's Transition," 15.

[13] Carlyle A. Thayer, "The Tyranny of Geography: Vietnamese Strategies to Constrain China in the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 33, no. 3 (December 2011): 349.

from generations to generations of the Vietnamese people. The growth of intellectual and talents is also witnessed in the process of struggle for survival and growth in the strip of land.[14]

3.1.2. Historical Narrative

The history of Vietnam is "long, exciting and fascinating" as it is "rich with legend, tradition, determination, and adaptation."[15] It is primarily related to the struggles against foreign invasions and the preservation of national independence and freedom. The first state of Vietnam, Van Lang, came into being under the rule of Hung Kings more than four thousand years ago, although the traces of Vietnamese inhabitants had existed long before that. Earlier in history, Vietnam was under China's direct rule, albeit repeated local uprisings, for more than a thousand years.[16] In 938, the victory of the Bach Dang battle against the Southern Han state of China opened up a new era of Vietnam's independent feudal state. [17]

For much of the next nine hundred years, between 939 and 1858, under various Vietnamese dynasties, Vietnam once again had to fight for twenty years (1407–1427) against the attempts of China, the giant northern neighbor, at reimposing its hegemonic ambition on the country.[18] In 1858, the French naval forces landed in Da Nang[19] and started to turn Vietnam into a semi-feudal colony under the name of "protectorate" for almost a century.[20] One more time, the Vietnamese took various approaches to resist the French rule.[21] In 1940, the Japanese fascists invaded Indochina to establish new bases against the Allies in the Second World War and launched a coup d'état to oust the French colonialists in Indochina in March 1945.[22]

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[14] Ninh Luong et al., *Lich Su Viet Nam Gian Yeu* (Simplified History of Vietnam), 8.

[15] Cuong Nguyen Le, "Viet Nam: Early History and Legend," *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America* (2018), <http://www.asian-nation.org/vietnam-history.shtml> (accessed October 16, 2018).

[16] James DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements, 5th* edition (Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 128.

[17] "Aspects of National Development," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam*, June 1, 2016, http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/vi/mofa/tt_vietnam/history/ (accessed October 16, 2018).

[18] Michael C. Williams, *Vietnam at the Crossroads* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1992), 5.

[19] Ibid., 7.

[20] "Aspects of National Development," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam*.

[21] DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, 135.

[22] Chi Minh Ho, *Selected Works* (Vol. 3) (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960–1962), 17–21, http://www.indiana.edu/~kdhist/H105-documents-web/week16/Minh1945.html.

The successful August Revolution of 1945 enabled Vietnamese people to expel foreign invaders, declared independence, and established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in September 1945. Soon after the declaration of independence, Vietnam faced the return of the French colonialists and officially fought an almost decade-long resistance war against the French, known as the First Indochina War. The Dien Bien Phu victory of 1954 forced the French colonialists to sign the Geneva Accord and leave Vietnam. However, the Geneva Accord temporarily separated Vietnam into two zones along the 17th parallel.

Between 1955 and 1975, North Vietnam was governed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a Viet Minh communist force, and South Vietnam was ruled by the Republic of Vietnam, a pro-American government. The USA engaged in the Vietnam War (the Second Indochina War) as it hoped to replace the role of the French in Vietnam and contain the spread of communism in Southeast Asia and beyond. After two decades of endeavors against the American aggression, the victory of the Spring Offensive in 1975 enabled Vietnam to put an end to the American involvement in South Vietnam and reunify the country.

In subsequent years, Vietnam's efforts to bring the entire country to a transitional period to socialism were distracted by the border wars (named as the Third Indochina War). Between 1975 and 1978, the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot, backed by China, conducted attacks on the southwestern frontiers of Vietnam. In 1979, China launched a "punitive" offensive on the six northern provinces of Vietnam to oppose Vietnam's military presence in Cambodia.

The early 1980s witnessed Vietnam's multifaceted challenges: international isolation due to Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia, a crippling economy because of the Western embargo, Vietnam's socialist allies' critical socio-political crises, and the domestically socio-political "bottom-hit" crisis. In 1986, the Sixth National Party Congress launched the *Doi Moi* policy to escape these crises and develop the nation. It also laid a foundation for Vietnam to revise its perception of international relations and embark on regional and international integration in the subsequent decades. The collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR between the late 1980s and early 1990s brought Vietnam to "a crossroads," causing it to enter the 1990s with a few real friends.[23]

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[23] Williams, *Vietnam at the Crossroads*, 5.

However, Vietnam's political leaders were still determined to pursue the construction of a "socialist-oriented" state. The 1990s witnessed Vietnam's normalization of relations, firstly with China in 1991, then with the USA in 1995, and joined ASEAN in the same year and many other regional and international institutions in the years that followed. Nowadays, though Vietnam is still in dispute with China and some other countries over the South China Sea issues, for the first time in history, Vietnam has established friendly relations with all great powers and been a member of many international and regional organizations.[24]

3.1.3. Socio-cultural Legacy

Vietnam has a long tradition that is formulated by the history of the national construction and defense. The formulation of Vietnamese culture, which can be traced back to the Dong Son culture that took place around 1000 BC, is strongly related to the history of Vietnam's national construction and safeguarding.[25] In other words, Vietnamese culture is influenced by the outside countries with which it interacts. As a result, Vietnamese culture has a strong influence of China's Confucian philosophical beliefs through around a thousand of years under Chinese rule, of Western culture through the French colonial rule and the American involvement in the Vietnam War, and of socialist culture under which Vietnam has been a member of the socialist bloc since around the middle of the twentieth century. Vietnam's absorption of the cultural quintessence of the humankind has been facilitated by its endeavor to integrate into the world over the past decades.

The dominant features of Vietnamese culture reflect a sense of village community, a favor of harmony, combinability and flexibility, which constitute the characteristics of patriotism, nationalism, and humanity – a sense of community and subtlety.[26] Concerning the philosophical thought, many believe that whether the philosophical thought of the Vietnamese is locally formulated or borrowed from abroad, it has evolved and been affected by the setting of Vietnam's geographical, historical,

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[24] The chronology of key events of Vietnam's international involvement is presented in Appendix 2.

[25] "Evolution of Culture," *Embassy of Vietnam in the United States of America*, https://web.archive.org/web/20110809085324/http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/learn_about_vietnam/culture/evolution/ (accessed September 9, 2018).

[26] Van Toan Le, "*Nhung Dac Trung Co Ban Cua Van Hoa Viet Nam*" (Fundamental distinctive features of Vietnamese culture), *Political Theory*, http://lyluanchinhtri.vn/home/index.php/bai-noi-bat/item/1363-nhung-dac-trung-cua-van-hoa-viet-nam.html (accessed May 12, 2018).

and socio-political features.[27] Regarding the mindset, the Vietnamese tend to focus on societal matters and human life rather than matters of natural science and forms of thinking.[28]

Following the Chinese rule for more than a thousand year, the nine centuries also witnessed Vietnam's notable families seeking to establish various dynasties, rule the country and fought against the Chinese and Mongol aggressors. Since around the tenth century that Vietnamese kings had started to develop its governments and administration. They introduced a system of taxation and panel punishment. When the French took control of Vietnam in 1884, Vietnam was separated into the south (known as Cochin China) under the "French protectorate" and the north where Vietnamese people run the government under a French Governor.[29] After the 1945 victory of Dien Bien Phu against the French colonialist, while the north of Vietnam was under communist led government, the south of Vietnam was run by a pro-American government. It was not until the victory of Ho Chi Minh Operation in 1975 that Vietnam was reunified and led by a government under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Concerning Vietnamese traditional values of politics, some Vietnamese scholars point to patriotism, peoples' independence, people's self-strengthening, self-respect, solidarity, humanism, people-centric ideas, and good treatment of the talented.[30] Patriotism has been the mainstream throughout the history of Vietnam, and served it as pride and motivation, and a powerful source of Vietnam in the course of building and safeguarding the country. An acclaimed Vietnamese scholar of history, Professor Tran Van Giau wrote that:

> patriotism is the red thread that connects the entire history of Vietnam from the old times to modern times, where the nature of Vietnam is reflected more clearly, [and] focused than at any other places.[31]

A Western scholar also put it:

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[27] Van Vinh Hoang, *Giao Trinh Lich Su Tu Tuong Viet Nam* (The textbook of Vietnam's history of thought) (Hue: Hue University Press, 2010), 7.

[28] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Lich Su Tu Tuong Viet Nam* (The textbook of Vietnam's history of thought), 8.

[29] Andrew L. Odell and Marlene F. Castillo, "Vietnam in a Nutshell: An Historical, Political and Commercial Overview," *International Law Practicum 21*, no. 2 (2008): 82.

[30] Ngoc Ha Nguyen and Van Chuc Pham, "*Cac Gia Tri Truyen Thong Cua Van Hoa Chinh Tri Viet Nam*" (Traditional values of Vietnam's political culture), *Information of Social Sciences*, no. 11 (2012): 11-15.

[31] Van Giau Tran, *Gia Tri Tinh Than Truyen Thuong Cua Dan Toc Viet Nam* (Traditional spiritual values of Vietnam's peoples) (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1980), 100-101.

common oriental cultural values emphasizing the importance of ancestors and heritage undoubtedly fertilized the ground from which grew a strong sense of nationalism and the willingness to sacrifice to preserve it.[32]

Vietnamese patriotism covers a wide range of aspects, from awareness and responsibilities to the race, community, peoples, knowledge of methods, the liberation of the nation, motivation and capabilities to regain the territory and rebuild the country, to the awareness of relations among peoples in the world.[33] In addition to patriotism, the awareness of self-reliance, unity, and the willpower to fight for good causes are also considered the moral standards of the Vietnamese. The hardship in normal life and the struggle against foreign invasion has trained the Vietnamese to be hard-working, creative, and patient.[34]

Out of Vietnamese traditional values, the philosophy of traditional diplomacy is crucial to the formation of how Vietnam engages with other countries. The Vietnamese people have developed a diplomatic tradition that serves as an important means of national defense and construction, named by some as the "Vietnamese school of diplomacy" (*truong phai ngoai giao Viet Nam*),[35] or "bamboo-tree diplomacy" (*ngoai giao cay tre*).[36] Traditionally, as Vietnam faced asymmetry in terms of economic, political, and military capabilities in favor of foreign aggressors, Vietnam's diplomats stressed the cause of peace and friendliness when dealing with powerful foreign aggressors. Besides this, the Vietnamese ruling elite also embraced the idea of humanity, righteousness, and justice in dealing with foreign domination.[37] Vietnamese leaders appreciated the "hard-and-soft" (*cuong va nhu*)

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[32] Galen B. Jackman, "Through the Eyes of the Dragon: Vietnamese Communist Grand Strategy during the Second Indochina War," (Executive Research Project S50, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Washington D.C., 1992), 9-10.

[33] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Lich Su Tu Tuong Viet Nam* (The textbook of Vietnam's history of thought), 8.

[34] "Aspects of National Development," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam.*

[35] Duong Huan Vu, "*Mot Vai Suy Nghi Ve Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam,*" (Some reflections on the school of Vietnamese diplomacy) in *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Den Nam 2020* (The strategic orientation of Vietnam's foreign policy towards 2020*)*, ed. Binh Minh Pham (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2010), 96.

[36] Phu Trong Nguyen, "*Ngoai Giao 'Cay Tre' Phat Huy Suc Manh Mem Cua Dan Toc Viet Nam*" ('Bamboo-tree' diplomacy promoting the soft power of Vietnam's peoples), *Laodong Online Newspaper*, August 23, 2016, https://laodong.vn/thoi-su/ngoai-giao-cay-tre-phat-huy-suc-manh-mem-cua-dan-toc-viet-nam-585826.bld (accessed December 9, 2018).

[37] For example, in 1428, following the victory against the Chinese Ming Dynasty's aggression, by the order of King Le Loi, Nguyen Trai wrote "*Binh Ngo Dai Cao*" (Great proclamation upon the pacification of the Wu) to inform the defeat of the Chinese invaders and declare the independence of Dai Viet. Part of this work reads "*Viec nhan nghia cot o yen dan – Quan dieu phat truoc lo tru bao*" (The essence of humanity and justice is mainly to ensure peace for the people – The aim of our soldiers is to eliminate brutality). As such, Dai Viet just wanted to maintain peace for the people and a long-lasting peace for the country. Nguyen Trai also stated: "*Dem dai nghia de thang hung tan – Lay chi nhan de thay cuong bao*" (Bring great humanity to win cruelty – Take human goodwill to replace fierce violence). King Le Loi of Dai Viet, after the victory in late 1427, still provided the general and soldiers of China's Ming dynasty with horses, boats, and food

approach in dealing with other countries. For those issues that were related to the principles or the objectives (for example, independence, sovereignty), the Vietnamese people were "hard" or consistently fought for the preservation of these principles.[38] However, as a small power, adopting the "hard" approach only was not effective in many cases. Alternatively, Vietnam had to be "soft" or flexible at certain times in dealing with other nations. In other words, the "hard" and the "soft" must go hand-in-hand; the 'soft'' was to serve or complement the "hard" in order to achieve the best outcome.[39]

Similar to the "hard and soft" approach, under the Ho Chi Minh era, the principle of "the invariable decides the variables" (*di bat bien, ung van bien*) has been observed in Vietnam's engagement with the outside world. In the context of Vietnam's relations with other states, "the invariable" is national independence, sovereignty, and interests; "the variables" refer to policies that can be deployed to maintain and uphold the "invariable."[40] While the "invariable" must not change, the "variables" must be flexible and dependent upon specific circumstances so that the latter can work best to serve the former.[41] During the resistance war against the American involvement, the Vietnamese adopted the diplomatic philosophy of "fighting and negotiating at the same time" (*vua danh, vua dam*), which was

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and even a guide to help them return to their home country. Such an act was intentionally conducted to help the Chinese invaders "save face" and thus could prevent them from taking revenge in the future.

[38] Duong Huan Vu, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Tu Thuo Dung Nuoc Den Cach Mang Thang Tam 1945* (Vietnam's diplomacy between the national build-up and the August Revolution of 1945) (Hanoi: Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, 2001).

[39] The "hard and soft" approach has been applied by Vietnamese rulers since the early history of national construction and defense. For instance, in the feudal era, whereas Dai Viet rulers made efforts to construct their nation, they still paid tribute to Chinese dynasties. The Dai Viet rulers called themselves as King in addressing China, but as Emperor in addressing the domestic population. These acts aimed to make Chinese dynasties find no excuses to invade Vietnam. However, whenever the country's sovereignty was violated, the "hard" approach was deployed. For example, when Dai Viet fought against the first invasion of China's Song dynasty, Ly Thuong Kiet, a Vietnamese general and admiral in the Ly dynasty, asserted the sovereignty of Dai Viet and showed determination to destroy the invaders, which were reflected in *"Nam Quoc So Ha"* (Mountains and rivers of the southern country), being considered as the first declaration of Vietnam's independence.

[40] Khoan Vu, "Ho Chi Minh – The Founding Father of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Diplomacy," *National Defense Journal*, August 31, 2015, http://tapchiqptd.vn/en/theory-and-practice/ho-chi-minh-%E2%80%93-the-founding-father-of-the-vietnamese-revolutionary-diplomacy/8026.html (accessed August 22, 2017).

[41] One example of such adoption is when Vietnam faced the return of French colonialism in late 1945, the circumstance of Vietnam was like "a thousand pounds hung by a thread," facing both internal and external enemies. In this case, the "invariable" was to uphold national independence and the survival of the government against all internal and external foes; the "variables" were to perform flexible strategies and tactics in order to secure "the invariable." As a result, the "variables" went from the signing of Vietnam – France Preliminary Agreement (March 1946) to Vietnam – France Provisional Agreement (September 1946), then the declaration of a resistant war against the French (December 1946) as the last resort. Vietnam's adoption of such an approach between 1945 and 1946 not only showed Vietnam's peace-loving attitude towards the French but also enabled Vietnam to postpone an imminent conflict so that it could mobilize forces and be ready for the worst scenario.

a comprehensive approach to deal with a much more powerful foe. It involved the combination of fighting in both military and political/diplomatic fronts.[42] To sum up, in the long history of undaunting struggles against foreign aggression, the Vietnamese people always thirst for peace, independence and freedom, reflecting humanism and the spirit of "confronting barbarity with justice, and fighting truculence with humanity."[43]

Vietnam has 54 ethnic peoples in which the Kinh accounts for the majority. Some of these ethnicities are native people, others are immigrants. The population of the ethnicities also varies, ranging from hundreds of people to millions of people. However, each ethnic group has their own traditions, values. Throughout many centuries, they have lived in harmony with each other in building life and fighting against enemies to protect the homeland.[44]

With regard to religions, Vietnam is rich and diverse in traditional religions. For early Vietnamese people, as humans needed to be multiplied and crops good so as to maintain and develop life, Vietnam's traditional beliefs on the cult of nature and the worshipping of people came into existence. As ancient Vietnamese people lived on wet rice agriculture, they worshipped plant and animals. For human worship in Vietnam, it is a polytheism, respectful of goddesses. A research in 1984 on Vietnamese beliefs listed 75 goddesses, mainly mothers, the Mothers (not only God, but also the Goddess).[45] Vietnamese people also have a long tradition of worshipping their ancestor. [46]

Vietnamese beliefs are strongly affected by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. According to Hue-Tam Ho Tai, during the feudal times, Vietnamese scholars emphasized Confucian teachings, while ordinary people preferred Buddhism and Taoism.[47] In the later period of Vietnam's feudal times,

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[42] This approach was adopted in the Vietnam War when Vietnam still fought in the battlefield and sat at the negotiating table at the same time (between 1968 and 1972). This strategy eventually caused the US to agree to sign the Paris Peace Accords (1973) and bring an end to its involvement in Vietnam.

[43] "Foreign Policy," *Consulate General of Vietnam in Houston*, http://vietnamconsulateinhouston.org/en/learn-about-vietnam/foreign-policy (accessed June 2, 2017).

[44] Thi Ngan Nguyen, "*Doi Net Ve 54 Dan Toc Viet Nam*" (Some aspects of the 54 ethnicities of Vietnam), *Online World of Heritage*, http://thegioidisan.vn/vi/doi-net-ve-54-dan-toc-viet-nam.html (accessed October 24, 2020).

[45] Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, "*Khai Quat Ve Van Hoa Viet Nam*" (Overview of Vietnam's Culture), *Vietnam ASEAN 2020*, https://asean2020.vn/web/asean/van-hoa-xa-hoi**,** (accessed October 22, 2020).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Hue-Tam Ho Tai, "Religion in Vietnam: A World of Gods and Spirits," *Asiasociety.org*. **--,** https://asiasociety.org/education/religion-vietnam (accessed October 22, 2020).

Christianity was introduced into Vietnam and has become an important part of Vietnamese religious life. The two most known indigenous religions in Vietnam are Caodaism and Hoahaoism.[48]

While Vietnamese people absorbed the external religions, they did not abandon their indigenous folk beliefs, yet mixed them altogether and made some transformation of these religions to suit the local beliefs. For instance, the Confucianism in Vietnam does not downplay the role of a woman. Instead, the worship of Mother is very popular in Vietnam. The polytheism, democracy, and community in Vietnam are reflected in the group worship of the ancestors and pairs of gods. A pagoda or temple in Vietnam worships not only Buddha but also many other gods and even real people. Such worshipping perhaps represents the distinctive feature of Vietnamese beliefs.[49]

3.1.4. Ideological Factor

Despite many discussions and disputes over the social and political theories, the Marxist ideology which was advanced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, has served as a foundation for communist movements all over the world during the twentieth century[50] and is still observed in some parts of the world nowadays. The Marxist-Leninist doctrine has been adopted in various forms, as national ideology and political rhetoric in China, Cuba, and Vietnam in the post-Cold War era.[51] Ho Chi Minh was the first person who introduced the doctrine to Vietnamese people in the early days of the Vietnamese revolution in the early twentieth century. As the soul of the revolution, Ho Chi Minh successfully led Vietnam's August revolution of 1945, the Dien Bien Phu victory of 1954 against French colonialists, and the resistance war against the American engagement until his passing in 1969.

The ideas of Ho Chi Minh on issues related to the Vietnamese revolution, much known as Ho Chi Minh Thought since the 1990s, are still regarded in Vietnam as an ideological foundation for

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[48] "*Tin Nguong – Ton Giao*" (Beliefs – Religions), *Vietnam ASEAN 2020*, https://asean2020.vn/web/asean/tin-nguong-ton-giao (accessed 22 October 2020).

[49] Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, "*Khai Quat Ve Van Hoa Viet Nam*" (Overview of Vietnam's Culture).

[50] Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino, "Marxism," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 1495.

[51] Eero Palmujoki, "Ideology and Foreign Policy: Vietnam's Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and Global Change," in *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, eds. Carlyle A. Thayer and Ramses Amer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 26.

Vietnam's revolution these days. The official documents of the CPV over the past decades always reconfirm that the CPV takes Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought as "the ideological foundation" and "principle" (*kim chi nam*)[52] for the Vietnamese revolution.

The orthodox Marxist doctrine was fundamentally developed during the middle and late nineteenth century mainly by Karl Marx with the support of Friedrich Engels, and was elaborated later by various advocates all over the world.[53] The doctrine is basically made up of theories, concepts, and ideas about the historical development of humankind, the capitalist crisis, and the communist revolution.[54] As Makhova-Gregg points out, Marxist ideology can be classified into two strands: (1) the critique of the existing capitalist system and its "inevitable" collapse, and (2) a depiction of the futuristic egalitarian society of the human race.[55]

Notably, the Marxist doctrine states that the development of human society evolves through five stages: (i) primitive society, (2) slave society, (3) feudal society, (4) capitalist society, and (5) communist society, the highest form of human society. In February 1848, Marx and Engels published the "Communist Manifesto" which called for unity among different workers' organizations. In 1867, in *Capital, Volume I* (*Das Kapital*), Marx analyzed the surplus value and capitalist crisis, pointing out that a capitalist society was unjust and divided as the bourgeoise class controlled the means of production and exploited the proletariat, as the latter did not possess the means of production; as a result, the proletariat's revolution was "inevitable."[56]

As a foundational component of Marxism, the concept of dialectical materialism was introduced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and later developed by Vladimir Lenin and other successors.[57] Dialectical materialism can be mainly grouped into two perceptions, materialist perception of the reality world and that of society. Marxists believe that "the material world, perceptible to the senses,

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[52] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XI* (Documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011), 88.

[53] Badie, Berg-Schlosser and Morlino, "Marxism," 1496.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Makhova-Gregg and N. Anna, "Leninism, Communism, Stalinism, and Maoism," in *21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook*, eds. T. John Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2011), 666.

[56] Badie, Berg-Schlosser and Morlino, "Marxism," 1498.

[57] Ministry of Education and Training, *Giao Trinh Triet Hoc - Dung Cho Hoc Vien Cao Hoc Va Nghien Cuu Sinh Khong Thuoc Chuyen Nganh Triet Hoc* (Textbook of Philosophy – Designed for non-philosophy majored postgraduate and Ph.D. students) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2007), 287.

has objective reality independent of mind or spirit."[58] Like every object and phenomena in the natural world being of the materialist root, the evolution of the human kind is also determined by materialist forces.[59] As such, dialectical materialism accepts that an object or phenomenon constantly evolves and must be put into consideration in relation to other object or phenomenon. The dialectical approach is believed to help not only understand but only improve the real world.[60]

Marxist conception of contradiction is worth mentioning here. Under the Marxist doctrine, "all things contain contradictory sides or aspects, whose tension or conflict is the driving force of change and eventually transforms or dissolves them".[61] According to dialectics, opposites are those that tend to transform against each other. All things have opposites. The interaction between them creates an inner conflict in things. Dialectical contradiction is pervasive, objective, inherent in things. Things are both united and contending with each other at the same time. However, the unity is relative, temporary and the contending is absolute and forever. The unity and contending among the opposites are the source and driving force of movement and development of things. The adoption of dialectical approach is helpful in discovering and analyzing the conflicts of things as well as devising methods to settle these conflicts and promote the growth of things.[62]

Subscribing to the Marxist theory of the class struggle, Vladimir Lenin applied Marxist's thesis into the context of the Russian Revolution of October 1917 and founded the Soviet Union in 1922. Contributing to the Marxist doctrine, Lenin critiqued capitalistic imperialism[63] and introduced resolutions to emerging issues relating to the process of the proletarian revolution and the construction of a socialist regime.[64] He also developed the idea of "a party of a new type" or

[58] Brian Duignan, "Dialectical Materialism," *Britannica*, --,https://www.britannica.com/topic/dialectical-materialism (accessed October 18, 2020).

[59] Ministry of Education and Training, *Giao Trinh Triet Hoc - Dung Cho Hoc Vien Cao Hoc Va Nghien Cuu Sinh Khong Thuoc Chuyen Nganh Triet Hoc* (Textbook of Philosophy – Designed for non-philosophy majored postgraduate and Ph.D. students), 291.

[60] Ibid., 302.

[61] Duignan, "Dialectical Materialism."

[62] *Giao Trinh Triet Hoc - Dung Cho Hoc Vien Cao Hoc Va Nghien Cuu Sinh Khong Thuoc Chuyen Nganh Triet Hoc* (Textbook of Philosophy – Designed for non-philosophy majored postgraduate and Ph.D. students), 331.

[63] Badie, Berg-Schlosser and Morlino, "Marxism," 1500.

[64] Makhova-Gregg and Anna, "Leninism, Communism, Stalinism, and Maoism," 666.

"vanguard party" and the principle of "democratic centralism" in the construction of the communist party.[65]

Similar to Lenin, who adapted Marxist theories to the specific condition of the Russian revolution and the construction of the first socialist regime in the world, Ho Chi Minh creatively applied Marxist-Leninist theses into the condition of the Vietnamese revolution since the inception of the founding of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1930. Given the significance of Ho Chi Minh to the Vietnamese revolution, Ton That Thien, a Vietnamese American scholar, wrote that "[w]ithout a good knowledge of Ho Chi Minh's life, thoughts and personality, it is not possible to have a full understanding of Vietnamese communism."[66] Born in 1890, Ho Chi Minh[67] grew up in the context in which Vietnam had been under the French rule and witnessed failures in the Can Vuong Movement of the late nineteenth century and other patriotic movements led by Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh in the early twentieth century.[68]

From an early age, Nguyen Tat Thanh, later renamed Ho Chi Minh, was aware of "the injustice and hardship" that the Vietnamese endured under the French rule.[69] In 1911, he started his more-than-three-decade-long journey for national salvation, and came to Marxism-Leninism in July 1920 when he read Lenin's thesis on national and colonial questions and found Marxism-Leninism as "the necessity", "the road to liberation", "the lighthouse that gives light to all oppressed peoples to move towards liberation."[70] The encounter and acceptance of Marxism-Leninism was later described in "The Path Which Led Me to Leninism." In this short essay, he wrote that "Lenin's thesis made me such emotion, enthusiasm, clear-sightedness and confidence! I was overjoyed to tears. Sitting alone in

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[65] Christopher Read, "Lenin and Leninism," in *Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought,* ed. Gregory Claeys (California: CQ Press, 2013), 500.

[66] Ton That Thien, *The Foreign Politics of the Communist Party of Vietnam: A Study of Communist Tactics* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989), 25.

[67] Ho Chi Minh has several names: Nguyen Sinh Cung as his birth name, Nguyen Tat Thanh as his schoolchild, Nguyen Ai Quoc between 1919 and 1945, and Ho Chi Minh from 1945 onwards.

[68] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu 2: Doi Loi Cach Mang Cua Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Tap 5: Lich Su Dang Cong San Viet Nam* (The textbook of advanced political theory, The second knowledge strand: The revolutionary line of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Volume 5: The history of the Communist Party of Vietnam) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2014), 15.

[69] David L. Anderson, *The Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), 13.

[70] Institute of Ho Chi Minh and Party Leaders - Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tap Bai Giang Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh - He Cu Nhan Chinh Tri* (The lecture book of Ho Chi Minh Thought – BA program in political science) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2004), 21.

my room, I shouted out aloud as if I were addressing a large crowd: "Dear martyr compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!""[71]

It is arguable that Marxism-Leninism is the most fundamental basis in the formulation of Ho Chi Minh thought. It is the Marxist doctrine that helped Ho overcome the crisis of seeking the way for national liberation facing many Vietnamese patriots at the time and set out the proletariat revolution to liberate the peoples. In other words, the patriotism led Ho to Marxism-Leninism; the latter lifted the former to a higher level, which generated a substantial transformation of national liberation movement in Vietnam. Ho put it:

> "At first, patriotism, not yet communism, led me to have confidence in Lenin, in the Third International. Step by step, along the struggle, by studying Marxism-Leninism parallel with participation in practical activities, I gradually came upon the fact that only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery."[72]

Marxism-Leninism was introduced into Vietnam mainly by Ho (then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc).[73] The introduction of Marxism-Leninism into Vietnam had made a significant transformation of the revolutionary movement in Vietnam since the mid 1920s. In 1925, he wrote *Duong Cach Menh* (The revolutionary path). Then, he founded the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), later renamed as the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), while in Hong Kong in 1930. He established the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh) in 1941 when he returned to Vietnam for the first time after the journey. In 1945, Ho Chi Minh led Vietnamese people to revolt, seize power, declare independence, and founded the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. He was the mastermind of the Vietnamese resistance war against the return of French colonial and continued to be so in the Vietnam War till his passing in 1969.[74]

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[71] Chi Minh Ho, *Toan Tap – Tap 10* (Complete Works - Volume 10) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2000), 127.

[72] Chi Minh Ho, "The Path Which Led Me To Leninism," *Ho Chi Minh Internet Archive (marxists.org)*, 2003, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh/works/1960/04/x01.htm (accessed October 10, 2020).

[73] Ngoc Tan Ta, "*Kien Dinh Va Van Dung Sang Tao Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin, Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi O Nuoc Ta*" (Firmly upholding and creatively applying Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought in the transitional period to socialism in our country), *CPV Online Newspaper*, October 07, 2015, http://dangcongsan.vn/tu-lieu-van-kien/c-mac-ph-angghen-v-i-lenin-ho-chi-minh/ho-chi-minh/nghien-cuu-hoc-tap-tu-tuong-ho-chi-minh/doc-010720153340456.html (accessed July 27, 2018).

[74] "*Tieu Su Chu Tich Ho Chi Minh*" (Biography of President Ho Chi Minh), *CPV Online Newspaper*, January 16, 2018, http://dangcongsan.vn/tu-lieu-van-kien/c-mac-angghen-lenin-ho-chi-minh/ho-chi-minh/tieu-su/books-51012201511214146/index-010122015112131461.html (accessed May 3, 2018).

Since Ho Chi Minh was acknowledged as "the founder, leader and trainer" of the CPV,[75] his thoughts were formulated during approximately half a century between his first article on the eight-point petition at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 and his last article in 1969.[76] The thoughts of Ho Chi Minh were, for the most part, developed during Vietnam's resistance wars against foreign invasions.[77] As a body of ideas scattered in his speeches and writings,[78] Ho Chi Minh Thought is molded by a wide range of factors, including Vietnam's patriotism and cultural traditions, traditional diplomacy, the acquisition of the Eastern and Western cultures and his international experiences, and Marxist viewpoints and approaches.[79]

Out of the 70 proposals of the definition of Ho Chi Minh Thought by various Vietnamese scholars and the Party-State political elite,[80] the Political Report of the Ninth Party National Congress in 2001 defined Ho Chi Minh Thought as:

> a system of comprehensive and profound views on the fundamental issues of Vietnam's revolution, resulting from the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism into the concrete conditions of our country, the inheritance and development of the good traditional values of our peoples, the absorption of humankind's cultural quintessences.[81]

Ho Chi Minh Thought covers a wide range of issues, but is mainly related to national, class and human liberation, the construction of the communist party, national independence and socialism,

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[75] Duan Le, "*Dieu Van Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam Do Dong Chi Le Duan, Bi Thu Thu Nhat, Doc Tai Le Truy Dieu Trong The Ho Chu Tich, Ngay 9 Thang 9 Nam 1969*" (The eulogy of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Vietnam, read by comrade Le Duan, the first secretary, at the solemnly memorial ceremony for Ho Chi Minh on September 9, 1969), *Electronic Bulletin of Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Management Board*, http://www.bqllang.gov.vn/tin-tuc/tin-tong-hop/1605-di-u-van-c-a-ban-ch-p-hanh-trung-uong-d-ng-lao-d-ng-vi-t-nam-do-d-ng-chi-le-du-n-bi-thu-th-nh-t-d-c-t-i-l-truy-di-u-tr-ng-th-h-ch-t-ch-ngay-9-thang-9-nam-1969.html (accessed July 4, 2018).

[76] Huy Rua To, "The Value of Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts Will Last Forever," *Voice of Vietnam*, November 2, 2008, https://english.vov.vn/world/the-value-of-ho-chi-minhs-thoughts-will-last-forever-19568.vov (accessed October 23, 2017).

[77] To, "The Value of Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts Will Last Forever."

[78] Sophie Quinn-Judge, "Ho Chi Minh Thought," *Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought*, ed. Gregory Claeys (California: CQ Press, 2013), 398.

[79] Dy Nien Nguyen, *Tu Tuong Ngoai Giao Ho Chi Minh* (The diplomatic thought of Ho Chi Minh) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2002), 42-85.

[80] Institute of Ho Chi Minh and Party Leaders - Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tap Bai Giang Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh - He Cu Nhan Chinh Tri* (The lecture book of Ho Chi Minh Thought – BA program in political science), 6.

[81] Communist Party of Vietnam, *"Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa VIII Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quan Lan Thu IX Cua Dang"* (The political report of the Eighth Central Committee at the Ninth National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, September 24, 2015, http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-ix/bao-cao-chinh-tri-cua-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang-khoa-viii-tai-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-ix-cua-dang-1545 (accessed April 4, 2019).

state-building, national defense, and foreign affairs.[82] Notably, Ho Chi Minh's ideas on diplomacy and international relations are believed to be foundational in Vietnam's formulation and implementation of foreign policy under the *Doi Moi* cause.

Since its inception in 1930, the CPV has fundamentally adopted the Marxist-Leninist doctrine as an ideological foundation for the Vietnamese revolution. When Ho Chi Minh was alive, he creatively applied the doctrine into the specific case of Vietnam. Under Ho Chi Minh's leadership, the CPV not only applied the theory into a particular circumstance to solve the specific tasks of the Vietnamese revolution but also developed the theory to be compatible with the emerging characteristics of the country and the world.[83] Despite Ho Chi Minh's passing, his thoughts have remained treasured by the Vietnamese revolution up till now, and even with the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the Vietnamese ruling elite still embraces the construction of a socialist-oriented country.

In the *Doi Moi* era, the political elite of Vietnam is still loyal to Marxism-Leninism, and states that Vietnam still "persists with Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought."[84] It officially confirms that Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought remain as the spiritual foundation and guideline for the actions of the nation.[85] In 1994, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPV issued a decision on the publication of the second edition of *Ho Chi Minh - Toan Tap* (Ho Chi Minh - Complete Works), stressing that "deep absorption and precise adoption of the thought of Ho Chi Minh is of significant importance."[86]

Since 2006, the CPV has launched a series of national movements calling on Party members and civil servants to study and follow the examples of good morality and practices of Ho Chi Minh as part of

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ta, "*Kien Dinh Va Van Dung Sang Tao Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin, Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi O Nuoc Ta*" (Firmly upholding and creatively applying Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought in the transitional period to socialism in our country).

[84] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VIII* (Documents of the Eighth National Party Congress) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1996), 70.

[85] Quinn-Judge, "Ho Chi Minh Thought," 398.

[86] Institute of Ho Chi Minh and Party Leaders – Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tap Bai Giang Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh – He Cu Nhan Chinh Tri* (The lecture book of Ho Chi Minh Thought – BA program in political science), 8.

its attempts at revamping the Party.[87] Until now, throughout various official documents, the CPV has always reconfirmed that "the Party takes Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought as the ideological foundations and guidelines for action."[88]

In short, since its inception, the Vietnamese revolution has been shaped by Marxist-Leninist ideology under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh when he was alive and later by Ho Chi Minh Thought after he passed away. Despite the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist based-socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Vietnamese political leaders continue to embrace Marxism-Leninism, together with Ho Chi Minh Thought, as "the principles for action" (*kim chi nam cho hanh dong*) of Vietnam's revolution in the cause of *Doi Moi* to build a socialist-oriented country.

3.2. Vietnam in the Cold War

The salient feature of Vietnam's international experience in the Cold War era was the fighting of a series of resistance wars and the involvement in great power politics. The defeat of French colonialists, backed by the USA at the battlefield of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, not only lost their "sole claim to a presence in Indochina" but also "marked the end of the colonial period and the beginning of the era of third-world independence."[89] As one of the defining events of the twentieth century, the end of the Vietnam War "not only heralded the end of an era but also the start of a new one," ushering in "a phase of self-confidence and self-respect for a continent [Asia] that had suffered a long, bitter history of colonialism."[90] As the "outpost" of the socialist camp in Southeast Asia, Vietnam fell into the strategic calculations of tripolarity around the heyday of the Cold War. Vietnam's

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[87] "Following President Ho Chi Minh comes from within," *NhanDan Online*, May 17, 2016, http://en.nhandan.org.vn/politics/editorial/item/4290502-following-president-ho-chi-minh-comes-from-within.html (accessed June 2, 2017).

[88] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi (Bo Sung, Phat Trien Nam 2011)*" (The platform for national building in a transitional period to socialism (Supplemented and developed in 2011)), *Online Party Building Journal*, March 24, 2011, http://www.xaydungdang.org.vn/Home/vankientulieu/Van-kien-Dang-Nha-nuoc/2011/3525/CUONG-LINH-XAY-DUNG-DAT-NUOC-TRONG-THOI-KY-QUA-DO-LEN.aspx (accessed May 16, 2018).

[89] Alain Ruscio, "Dien Bien Phu, Symbol For All Time: The Fall of the French Empire," *Le Monde diplomatique*, July 2004, republished in *Global Policy Forum*, https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/155/25981.html (accessed July 2, 2018).

[90] Jacques Martin, "War That Set off an Asian Earthquake," *The Independent*, Apr 29, 1995. https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/docview/312317756?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=8424 (accessed July 4, 2018).

international experience undoubtedly shapes the way it looks at the world at the time and affects the way it perceives international relations in the post-Cold War era.

3.2.1. Vietnam in Great Power Politics

The 1945 August Revolution marked a turning point in the history of Vietnam, bringing an end to the French colonialists' rule and Confucianist-based monarchy, and officially founding a communist government, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.[91] As a newly independent state, Vietnam faced "internal foes, external aggressors" and was in a state of "a thousand pounds held by a hair" (*ngan can treo soi toc*). Soon after Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence in September 1945, the French colonialists returned intending to recolonize the country. After efforts to save peace for Vietnam had failed, Ho Chi Minh read a national resistance order in December 1946, calling for Vietnamese people to use all means they could possess to fight the resistant war.

The order marked the start of Vietnam's almost-a-decade struggle against the French until 1954 when Vietnam won at Dien Bien Phu and forced the French to enter into the Geneva Peace Agreement and leave Vietnam. After Mao's declaration of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China and the USSR were the first two nations in the world that recognized the state of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Vietnam's resistance war against French colonialists took place in the dawn of the Cold War when the USA and the USSR were entering a fierce competition for influence on a global scale. The conjunction of these happenings, as Herring argued, affected the way that the Vietnam War (1954-1975) was fought and its outcome.[92] Since 1949, the USA viewed the First Indochina War as a struggle under the socialist camp led by the Kremlin, and feared a "domino theory." The USA also predicted that the existence of communism in Vietnam would spread to the rest of Southeast Asia and beyond; as a result, the USA began its containment of communism in Vietnam by assisting the French in the First Indochina War. However, the 1954 French defeat prompted the USA to escalate into the Vietnam War (the Second Indochina War) until the last departure of American personnel upon the fall of Saigon in

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[91] Kim Khanh Huynh, "The Vietnamese August Revolution Reinterpreted," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 4 (August 1971), 762.

[92] George C. Herring, "The Cold War and Vietnam," *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (October 2004): 18.

1975. For American people, the engagement in the Vietnam War was "long, costly, and divisive," but it was "even longer and more costly for the Vietnamese."[93]

During the 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split went from bad to worse, culminating in the 1969 border skirmishes between the two countries,[94] as they competed for leadership in the world communist movement.[95] Since Moscow and Beijing competed to have more influence over Hanoi, both of them were compelled to assist Hanoi.[96] As a result, similar to the resistance war against the French, the USSR and China were the principal patrons of Vietnam for the two-decade war against American engagement.

Since the early 1970s, global politics witnessed the formulation of a USA-Soviet-China strategic triangle as a result of a significant level of strategic interdependence among these great powers, in which the security of one state is significantly contingent on the other two.[97] Vietnam needed to deal with this triangular relationship effectively, as both the USSR and China were crucial in assisting Vietnam to win the war. However, each of the three great powers also pursued their strategic calculations. Following the 1969 Sino-Soviet border war, the USSR considered China as its most significant security threat, which in turn caused China to seek a stage of rapprochement with the USA.[98] In China's calculations, the signing of the Shanghai Communique (between the USA and China) in February 1972 would bring about multiple advantages: opening the way for China to counter the Soviet Union,[99] enabling China to join the UN Security Council, paving the way for China to settle the Taiwan issue, and escaping from international isolation.[100]

In return, the Nixon administration hoped that improved relations with China would help limit China's assistance to Vietnam, and encourage China to put pressure on North Vietnam so that the

[93] Anderson, *The Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War*, 3.
[94] "Timeline of U.S. Relations With China: 1949 – 2018," *Council for Foreign Relations*, https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-relations-china (accessed May 3, 2018).
[95] Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China 1969–1980," *Comparative Strategy* 4, no. 2 (1983): 114.
[96] Herring, "The Cold War and Vietnam," 20.
[97] Rober S. Ross and Herbert J. Ellison, "Introduction," in *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union: Tri-polarity and Policy Making in the Cold War*, ed. Robert S. Ross (New York: M.E. Sharpe: 1993), 3-4.
[98] "Timeline of U.S. Relations with China: 1949 – 2018," *Council for Foreign Relations.*
[99] Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China 1969–1980," 135.
[100] Duong Ninh Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2015), 235.

latter would compromise at the Paris negotiation table.[101] The USA pursued such a strategy because it wished to exit the Vietnam War and achieve "peace with honor."[102] In addition, the USA tried to promote rapprochement with China to encounter the USSR, and hoped to gain advantages in dealing with both China and the USSR concurrently.[103] In contrast, the USSR hoped that détente with the USA would bring about awaiting high-level meetings for strategic weapons disarmament, and pull the USA to its side to circle China.[104] Also, the USSR hoped that maintaining a relationship with Vietnam would support its promotion of a strategic position against both China and the USA.[105]

Vietnam needed to receive spiritual and material support from the two main patrons, so it managed to adopt an attitude of neutrality in the Sino-Soviet conflict between 1965 and 1968,[106] and tried to pursue its line of independence in the early 1970s[107] when there were signs of détente in the relationships of the USA-China and the USA-the USSR. Despite the promise from both China and the USSR of their support to Vietnam's resistant war, after Nixon's visits to Beijing and Moscow in 1972, Vietnam realized that the handshakes in Beijing and Moscow heralded challenges that Vietnam had to face. As the situations unfolded, from the Vietnamese perspective, Vietnam had become a "commodity" for bargains among the three great powers.[108] The Vietnam side perceived Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 as China's "treacherous" act towards Vietnam. In fact, Vietnam was concerned that its frictions with China would result in China putting more pressure on Vietnam to compromise with the USA on the war.[109]

As predicted, after the visit of Nixon to Beijing, the USA broke off its Paris peace negotiations, which had started in 1968, and increased its military operations in North Vietnam. Despite such reality, the Vietnamese side was aware of the connection between the priority of national reunification and the

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[101] Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China 1969–1980," 132.
[102] "Peace With Honor: Nixon's Broadcast on Vietnam," *Watergate.info*, Jan 23, 1973, http://watergate.info/1973/01/23/nixon-peace-with-honor-broadcast.html (accessed June 2, 2018).
[103] Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China 1969–1980," 139.
[104] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 235.
[105] Stephen J. Morris, "The Soviet – Chinese – Vietnamese Triangle in the 1970s: The View from Moscow," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, Working Paper no. 25 of Cold War International History Project (April 1999): 40, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACFB2E.pdf (accessed July 7, 2017).
[106] Morris, "The Soviet – Chinese – Vietnamese Triangle in the 1970s: The View from Moscow," 5.
[107] Herring, "The Cold War and Vietnam," 20.
[108] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 239.
[109] Morris, "The Soviet – Chinese – Vietnamese Triangle in the 1970s: The View from Moscow," 15-17.

support from the USSR, China and other socialist countries to ensure the success of the war against the USA.[110] As a result, while both the USSR and China pressured Vietnam to compromise with the USA at the negotiation tables, they still provided Vietnam with military aid to fight against the American military in the final years of the Vietnam War.[111]

In the early 1970s, China was unhappy about Vietnam's preference towards the USSR, which was viewed by China as "their most dangerous enemy."[112] From the late 1970s, China began its advancement of Cambodians to promote its ties with the USA, Japan, and ASEAN to circle Vietnam in its attempts to serve the implementation of "four modernizations."[113] As a result of China's weakened influence over Vietnam after Vietnam's high-level visit to the USSR in 1973,[114] and Vietnam's removal of pro-Chinese elements in the Politburo in 1976,[115] China had signaled its anger towards Vietnam by declining aid and withdrawing Chinese specialists from Vietnam.[116] By Vietnam's reunification in April 1975, Sino-Vietnamese ties were exacerbated by the emergence of conflicts between the communist leaders of Vietnam and Cambodia.[117] Soon after the fall of Saigon, pro-Chinese Khmer Rouge troops[118] launched attacks on many southwestern border provinces of Vietnam (between May 1975 and December 1978).[119]

In response, though Vietnam was not interested in early 1975 in joining the USSR-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON),[120] it decided to join the COMECON in June 1978, and Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November the same year,[121] marking Vietnam's full integration into the Soviet bloc. Responding to a call from the Kampuchea United Front for National Salvation, Vietnamese troops entered Cambodian soil in late December 1978 and defeated the pro-

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[110] Ibid.

[111] Herring, "The Cold War and Vietnam," 20.

[112] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, "The Truth about Vietnam – China Relations over the Last 30 Years [Condensed]," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 10, no. 3 (1980): 325.

[113] Quang Co Tran, "*Hoi Uc Va Suy Ngam*," (Memoirs and Reflections), https://anhbasam.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/hoi-ky-tran-quang-co.pdf (accessed May 1, 2018).

[114] Morris, "The Soviet – Chinese – Vietnamese Triangle in the 1970s: The View from Moscow," 20.

[115] Ibid., 33.

[116] Ibid., 31-33.

[117] Ibid., 37.

[118] Herring, "The Cold War and Vietnam," 21.

[119] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 275.

[120] Morris, "The Soviet – Chinese – Vietnamese Triangle in the 1970s: The View from Moscow," 21.

[121] Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China 1969–1980," 128.

Chinese Khmer Rouge forces, and supported the founding of the People's Republic of Kampuchea on 8 January 1979, starting the ten years of controversial Vietnamese military presence in Cambodia.

Vietnam's entry into Cambodia, backed by the USSR and some other socialist countries,[122] was justified by the Vietnamese government as helping the Cambodian people escape the Khmer Rouge's genocidal regime, while China, the USA, and others criticized it as an "invasion" of Cambodia. In a retaliatory act, just two weeks after the visit of Deng Xiaoping to the USA (29/1-5/2/1979), China launched an offensive attack on the six northern provinces of Vietnam,[123] to "teach Vietnam a lesson" as a Chinese leader stated.[124]

However, the Vietnamese perceived that China's attack was carried out for multiple purposes. China attempted to save the defeat of the China-backed Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, and clear the way for China to expand into Southeast Asia to seize the power vacuum left by the USA after 1975. At the same time, China wanted to turn public attention away from the internal conflict as a result of the failure of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Additionally, waging war against Vietnam was China's "gift" to the USA after the first visit of Deng Xiaoping to the USA,[125] which still led the West in imposing an embargo on Vietnam.

In the 1980s, under the Reagan doctrine, a steadfast anti-communism concept, the USA started to accelerate its crackdowns on socialist regimes, backing the remaining Khmer Rouge forces, and promoting the policy of encirclement against the USSR and Vietnam. Reagan's concept of "peace through strength" urged China to rethink its US-tilted policy and seek to balance relations with both the USA and the USSR.[126] As a result, China managed to normalize relations with the USSR as it "come[s] to realize [that] it is against China's national interests to have a powerful enemy across its long border."[127] In the mid-1980s, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the USSR sought to

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[122] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 279.

[123] Ibid., 269.

[124] Xiaoming Zhang, "China's 1979 War with Vietnam: A Reassessment," *The China Quarterly*, no. 184 (December 2005): 581.

[125] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 278.

[126] Huu Quyet Nguyen, "Vietnam's ASEAN Strategic Objectives since the 1986 *Doi Moi* Reform" (PhD diss., National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, 2013), 16.

[127] Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China 1969–1980," 140.

reconcile with the USA and China to secure a peaceful environment for the implementation of the comprehensive domestic reforms known as *perestroika* and *glasnost*.[128]

While great power politics came to a stage of detente, Vietnam's relations with the USA and China remained strained by disagreements over Vietnam's engagement in Cambodia.[129] The 1980s also witnessed the persistence of military activities along the Vietnam-China border, including a naval battle between Vietnam and China over the Spratly Islands in 1988.[130] As of the mid-1980s, coupled with the collapse of the tripolarity agreement, the crisis of the socialist regimes across Eastern Europe became severe. Vietnam also faced a domestic socio-economic crisis and decided to introduce *Doi Moi* policies. The launching of renovation opened a new chapter for Vietnam to repair relations with the outside world against the backdrop of the fall of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the Cold War.

3.2.2. *Vietnam's Perception of the World*

The experience of the revolutionary war for national independence, reunification and construction in a hostile, divided environment of the Cold War influenced the way that Vietnam perceived international relations at the time.[131] The Cold War, initiated not long after the end of the Second World War, was marked by the "Truman doctrine" and "Zhdanov doctrine," known as the two doctrines that divided the world into two camps. On March 5, 1946, at the Westminster College of the USA, Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered an "Iron Curtain Speech" arguing that the "iron curtain" that the USSR had descended across Europe, and calling on the prevention of "communism dangers." Such an idea was formalized in March 1947 by the "Truman doctrine" which declared the American role in leading the free world and helping other countries contain the "communist wave" and the expansion of the USSR.[132]

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[128] Alexander Lam Vuving, "The Shaping of Foreign Policy Vietnamese Grand Strategy after the Cold War," PhD diss., ---, 2005), 38.

[129] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 280.

[130] "China and Vietnam: A Timeline of Conflict," *CNN*, June 28, 2011, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/06/27/china.vietnam.timeline/index.html (accessed July 12, 2018).

[131] Frank Frost, "Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dynamics of Change," *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, Regional Strategic Studies Program, vol. 6 (1993): 18.

[132] Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 102.

In response to the "Truman doctrine," Andrei Zhdanov, an ideologist of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union introduced the idea later known as the "Zhdanov doctrine" at a conference of Cominform, an information bureau, in September 1947. The idea was that "the world was divided into two irreconcilable camps: an 'imperialist and anti-democratic' camp led by the United States and an 'anti-imperialist and democratic' camp led by the USSR."[133] The two "doctrines" represented the two opposing ideological views that divided the world and served as bases for the two camps of the Cold War era.

As a communist state, Vietnamese political elite adopted Marxism-Leninism as its "ideological foundation" throughout the various phases of revolution for national liberation, unification, and construction since the early period of the founding of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Therefore, prior to 1986, Vietnam's perception of the world was based on orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Accordingly, the class struggle was the driving force of historical development and the current epoch, marked by the 1917 Russian revolution, featured the struggle between the proletariat representing socialism, and the bourgeoisie representing capitalism in which the former would prevail eventually.[134]

For almost half a century, between 1945 and 1986, the dominant worldview of the Vietnamese communist leaders could be described as "anti-imperialist."[135] Since 1945, Vietnam viewed its fighting against French colonialists as "only part of the struggle between post-World War II anti-imperialist and imperialist anti-democratic blocs."[136] Before the mid-1960s, Vietnamese political theoreticians viewed international politics through the lens of the "two camps" competition: an "imperialist and anti-democratic" camp led by the USA and an "anti-imperialist and democratic" camp led by the USSR.[137] In 1960, the communist elite of Vietnam perceived Vietnam as "the outpost

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[133] "Andrey Zhdanov," *Global security.org*, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/zhdanov.htm (accessed September 12, 2018).

[134] Gareth Porter, *Vietnam: The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 188.

[135] Vuving, "The Shaping of Foreign Policy Vietnamese Grand Strategy after the Cold War," 26.

[136] Frost, "Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dynamics of Change," 20.

[137] "Andrey Zhdanov."

of socialism in the South East of Asia," "part of the socialist democratic, peace forces," and "a member of the great socialist family, led by the great Soviet Union."[138]

Between the 1970s and the mid-1980s, in Vuving's explanation, Vietnamese leaders' perception of global politics could be described as "two camps," "four contradictions," "three revolutionary currents,"[139] and the struggle to determine "who would triumph over whom" (*ai thang ai*). The four contradictions of the current epoch, marked by the 1917 Russian Revolution and the founding of the first Soviet state in the world and the current time are the ones (i) between imperialist countries and the USSR, (ii) between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, (iii) between oppressed peoples and colonialism, (iv) among imperialist countries themselves.

Concerning the concept of "three revolutionary currents," it was first introduced in 1969 in the USSR[140] and adopted in Vietnamese political discourse from the early 1970s. Accordingly, the three currents were made up of (i) the socialist countries, (ii) the movement of national liberation, and (iii) the struggle of the working class and laboring people in capitalist countries.[141] From the Vietnamese perspective, "these three currents constitute[d] the great revolutionary forces and were "the spearhead of the struggle against imperialism."[142] These were the forces that were "deciding the main content, the main direction and the key characteristics of the humankind's historical evolution, the forces that were driving the transition of the world from capitalism to socialism. Out of these currents, the first current, the world's socialist system, was increasingly working as a determinant to the humankind's development," as it was the stronghold of the world's proletarian revolution, dedicated support for the struggle for peace, national independence, and social progress.[143]

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[138] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Dien Van Khai Mac Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu III Cua Dang*" (Opening speech of the Third National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, April 16, 2018, http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-iii/dien-van-khai-mac-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-iii-cua-dang-1456 (accessed September 14, 2018).

[139] Vuving, "The Shaping of Foreign Policy Vietnamese Grand Strategy after the Cold War," 28-29.

[140] Ibid., 28.

[141] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnamese Perspectives on International Security: Three Revolutionary Currents," in *Asian Perspectives on International Security*, ed. Donald Hugh McMillen (London: Palgrave Macmillan,1984), 65.

[142] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IV*" (The political report of the Central Committee at the Fourth National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, September 24, 2015, http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-iv/bao-cao-chinh-tri-cua-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-khoa-iii-tai-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-iv-cua-dang-1513 (accessed April 4, 2019).

[143] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IV*" (The political report of the Central Committee at the Fourth National Party Congress).

The concept of "who would triumph over whom" representing the two roads of socialism and capitalism was "a fundamental idea" covering all aspects between socialist forces and capitalist forces regarding the economy, culture or foreign policy.[144] In a political report of the Central Committee of the CPV at the Fourth National Party Congress in 1976, Le Duan stated that:

> in the world, the struggle to settle the issue of "who would triumph over whom" between socialism, national independence, democracy and peace, and imperialism, counter-revolutionary [and] hawkish forces is evolving in an aggressive and complicated manner.[145]

Given the Soviet-Sino split as a consequence of the competition for more influence in the international revolutionary movement, Vietnamese political elite called on "the restoration and consolidation of solidarity within the socialist system, the movement of communist and the international working class, based on Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism."[146] Up to the mid-1980s, the concept of "who would triumph over whom" was still observed in Vietnamese political vocabulary. The political report of the CPV in 1986 stated that "Vietnam has to experience a phase of complicated class struggle, the struggle between the two roads of socialism and capitalism in all aspects of social life in order to solve the issue of "who would triumph over whom."[147] Around the mid-1980s, the fast change of international relations and the emergence of fundamental domestic factors urged Vietnam to revise its worldview and launch the *Doi Moi* process, which will be discussed in the section that follows.

3.3. Vietnam in the *Doi Moi* Era

The 1980s witnessed emerging fundamental factors that required Vietnam to renovate itself and reconsider its worldview for survival and growth. Internationally, Vietnam was almost isolated due to its involvement in the Cambodian issue. As a result, Vietnam mainly relied on the Soviet bloc for

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[144] Palmujoki, "Ideology and Foreign Policy: Vietnam's Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and Global Change," 30.
[145] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IV*" (The political report of the Central Committee at the Fourth National Party Congress).
[146] Ibid.
[147] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VI*" (The political report of the Central Committee at the Sixth National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, February 24, 2017,
 http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-vi/bao-cao-chinh-tri-cua-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang-khoa-v-trinh-tai-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-vi-cua-1491 (accessed April 4, 2019).

political and economic assistance.[148] However, the Vietnamese political circle was anxious because aid from the USSR to Vietnam was decreasing, and Eastern European countries had evolved into a prolonged socio-economic crisis. Around the mid-1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR introduced "new political thinking" and conducted domestically comprehensive reforms. At the time, China had initially achieved economic success as a result of the open-door policies started in 1978. Also, the Vietnamese government gradually became aware of the success of the economic model of capitalist economies (newly industrialized countries) in East Asia.[149]

Domestically, the deficient performance of Vietnam's post-war economy resulted in severe socio-economic distress, threatening the survival of the regime. As Vietnam faced both international and local challenges, the Vietnamese political elite decided to launch *Doi Moi* policies at the Sixth National Party Congress in December 1986. It aimed at revitalizing the economy, turning a poor performance of Soviet-styled centrally-planned economic model into a "socialist-oriented market economy," and strengthened the political system under the framework of Marxism-Leninism.[150] In dealing with the outside world, the 1986 National Party Congress also stressed the necessity of changing the mindset on foreign relations and adopting the policy of "more friends, fewer enemies" in order to break international isolation and embargoes, and expanding Vietnam's international affairs.[151]

3.3.1. A Transformation of Worldview

According to Porter, the origin of the Vietnamese shift in worldview and the introduction of *Doi Moi* can be traced back to Vietnam's perception of global economic interdependence.[152] In the mid-1980s, although the CPV was increasingly aware of the phenomenon of economic interdependence, it did not abandon everything in the concept of the "two camps" worldview.[153] The advent of the revived

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[148] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution," in *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition,* ed. Carlyle A. Thayer and Ramses Amer (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999), 2.

[149] Gareth Porter, "The Transformation of Vietnam's World-View: From Two Camps to Interdependence," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 12, no. 1 (1990): 3.

[150] Palmujoki, "Ideology and Foreign Policy: Vietnam's Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and Global Change," 31.

[151] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tap 2: Duong Loi Cua Dang Cong San Vietnam, Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Danh Cho Lop Boi Duong Du Nguon Can Bo Lanh Dao, Quan Ly Cap Tinh, Thanh Pho* (Volume 2: The line of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Study materials for the training course of potential managerial and leadership officers of provincial and municipal levels) (Hanoi, Political Theory Publishing House, 2014), 212.

[152] Porter, "The Transformation of Vietnam's World-View: From Two Camps to Interdependence," 3.

[153] Porter, *Vietnam: The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism*, 190.

worldview was "smooth"[154] as both the "conservatives" and "reformers" within the CPV wanted to

keep the socialist regime, but they diverged on how to implement it.[155]

Towards the end of the 1980s, as the crisis in Eastern Europe became critical, Vietnamese political

leaders found it imperative for all nations to make economic and political adjustments due to global

economic interdependence.[156] The then Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, a

leading advocate of the reform, presented a new worldview that omitted the emphasis of conflict

between the social forces and the capitalist forces, and that the economic factor superseded the

ideological factor. As Nguyen Co Thach explained, since economic interdependence broke down the

division of the two opposing blocs of the Cold War,[157] economic imperatives require all countries to

"restructure their economies" in order to join "the international division of labor."[158] He also pointed

out in 1988 that various countries in the world were linked together and integrated into the world

economy.[159]

In May 1988, the CPV Politburo issued Resolution No. 13 officially embracing the idea of

interdependence.[160] The resolution stressed "the maintenance of peace and economic growth" when

addressing "the duties and foreign policies in the new situation,"[161] and introduced the idea of "more

friends, fewer enemies" (*them ban, bot thu*) to replace previous concepts such as "our selves-our

adversaries" (*ta-dich*) or "friends-enemies" (*ban-thu*). As such, the focus of Vietnam's foreign policy

shifted from an ideological factor to pragmatic diplomacy based on the promotion of national interest

(*loi ich dan toc*)[162] for the first time.[163] Accordingly, Vietnam changed the priority in foreign policy

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[154] Thayer, "Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution," 1.

[155] David WP Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11.

[156] Porter, "The Transformation of Vietnam's World-View: From Two Camps to Interdependence,"14.

[157] Porter, *Vietnam: The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism,* 192.

[158] Ibid., 191.

[159] Frost, "Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dynamics of Change," 20.

[160] Zachary M. Abuza, "Coping with China: Vietnamese Elite Responses to an Emerging Superpower," (PhD diss., The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1998), 219.

[161] Dy Nien Nguyen, "*Chinh Sach Va Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Thoi Ky Doi Moi*" (The policy and activities of foreign affairs in the *Doi Moi* era), *Communist Review,* no. 740, September 17, 2005, republished by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/en/mofa/cs_doingoai/pbld/ns050923160500 (accessed July 12, 2018).

[162] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy," Paper presented to Workshop on "Viet Nam, East Asia & Beyond," *Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*, (December 11-12, 2008): 3.

[163] Thayer, "Vietnamese Diplomacy, 1975-2015: From Member of the Socialist Camp to Proactive International Integration," 194-214.

from political-military factors to economic factors, and stressed the need to establish ties with all countries that had different political regimes based on respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, mutual interests and non-interference in each other's domestic matters.[164]

The development of the socio-political situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union towards the end of the Cold War urged Vietnamese leaders to revise the "two camps" worldview. The political report of the Sixth National Party Congress in 1986 stated that: "We promote and support the policy of peaceful coexistence among countries with different socio-political regimes."[165] In early 1988, a CPV academic journal suggested Vietnam abandon the concept of "two camps, four contradictions" due to changes in the structure of global politics.[166] The CPV's Politburo's Resolution No. 13 in May 1988 marked Vietnam's shift in its worldview from the "two camps" to "an interdependent world," from confrontation to accommodation.[167]

In 1989, the CPV issued a resolution shifting diplomatic activities mainly from political relations to political-economic relations.[168] The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union put Vietnam's "two camps" worldview to an end as the CPV confirmed Vietnam's policy of cooperation for mutual benefits with all countries "regardless of differences in socio-political regimes on the basis of the principle of peaceful coexistence."[169] At the Seventh National Party Congress in June 1991, the CPV stated that "Vietnam wants to be a friend of all countries in the international community, striving for peace, independence, and development."[170]

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[164] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tap 2: Duong Loi Cua Dang Cong San Vietnam, Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Danh Cho Lop Boi Duong Du Nguon Can Bo Lanh Dao, Quan Ly Cap Tinh, Thanh Pho* (Volume 2: The line of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Study materials for the training course of potential managerial and leadership officers of provincial and municipal levels), 213.

[165] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VI*" (The political report of the Central Committee at the Sixth National Party Congress).

[166] Frost, "Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dynamics of Change," 20.

[167] Thayer, "Upholding State Sovereignty Through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy," 8.

[168] Nguyen, "*Chinh Sach Va Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Thoi Ky Doi Moi*" (The policy and activities of foreign affairs in the *Doi Moi* era).

[169] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi*" (The platform for national building in a transitional period to socialism), *CPV Online Newspaper,* February 22, 2017, http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-vii/cuong-linh-xay-dung-dat-nuoc-trong-thoi-ky-qua-do-len-chu-nghia-xa-hoi-1558 (accessed October 12, 2018).

[170] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VII* (Documents of the Seventh National Party Congress) (Hanoi: Truth Publishing House, 1991), 147.

Palmujoki noted that Vietnam's revised perspective on global politics was reflected in the borrowing of Gorbachev's vocabulary of "new political thinking" such as "interdependence," "trend of internationalization," "world's scientific-technological revolution," "international order" and "scientific-technological revolution."[171] As Elliott argued, it was not a single "external shock" or an extended domestic crisis that caused Vietnam's immediate change in the worldview, but changes unfolded until the next decade when the CPV's debate on the matter was over.[172]

3.3.2. In Pursuit of International Integration

Vietnam's transformation of the worldview between 1986 and June 1991 paved the way for the shaping of new foreign policies between 1992 and 2006. In the early 1990s, despite the failures of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, Vietnam was still determined to uphold its socialist commitment and remain a socialist country.[173] The Seventh National Party Congress in 1991 reconfirmed Vietnam's policy of expansion of international relations.[174] With regard to external relations, between 1986 and 1991, Vietnam embarked on a reconciliatory course with the neighboring countries (China and ASEAN) to pave the way for a period of regional and international integration in a later stage.[175] As of late 1991, the ideological factor played a little or no role in the making of Vietnam's foreign policy.[176] The Third Plenum of the Seventh Central Committee (6/1992) introduced Vietnam's four principles of handling international affairs, aiming at the consistent implementation of foreign affair activities.[177]

During the 1990s, Vietnam gradually developed a socialist-oriented economy under state control, liberalized domestic production forces, and encouraged the contribution of all economic sectors to the growth of the national economy. Initial success in the implementation of the economic policy eased

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[171] Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World*, 174

[172] Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, 14.

[173] Frost, "Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dynamics of Change," 23.

[174] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VII* (Documents of the Seventh National Party Congress), 147.

[175] Porter, *Vietnam: The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism*, 215.

[176] Williams, *Vietnam at the Crossroads*, 59.

[177] The four principles are: (i) secure righteous national interests, [and] combine patriotism with the internationalism of the working class; (ii) firmly hold independence [,] self-reliance, self-strengthening, and enhance multilateralization and diversification in external affairs at the same time; (iii) firmly hold the dual aspects of cooperation and struggle in Vietnam's international relations; and (iv) participate in regional cooperation, concurrently, expand relations to great powers. Consulted in Vu, *Lich Su Quan He Doi Ngoai Viet Nam 1945-2010* (History of Vietnam's external relations between 1945 and 2010), 283.

Vietnam's socio-economic strains. By the mid-1990s, Vietnam had overcome an economic crisis since the 1980s and started its fast growth phase, broke down economic embargoes and political isolation, and expanded international collaborations, all of which contributed to the maintenance of socio-economic stability.[178] As a result of the adoption of the foreign policy line of "multilateralization and diversification," Vietnam normalized its relations with China in 1991, restored Japan's official aid in 1992, normalized ties with the USA in 1995, joined the ASEAN, and entered into a framework agreement with the EU the same year.[179]

At the Eighth National Party Congress (1996), the Vietnamese political elite mentioned the idea of "international integration," aiming to "build an open economy, accelerate the process of international and regional integration," and stated that "Vietnam is ready to be a friend, a reliable partner of countries in the international community."[180] In 2001, the Politburo issued Resolution No. 7 on "active in international economic integration." Following the 9/11 event in the USA, the Eighth Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee (2003) introduced the concepts of 'object of cooperation' (*doi tac*) and the 'object of struggle' (*doi tuong*) in Vietnam's international relations.[181] The detail of these concepts will be represented in a section in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

The Eleventh National Party Congress (2011) stressed for the first time that the most important objective of Vietnam's foreign affairs is "for the sake of the national interest," and raised the request of expansion from "international economic integration" to "proactive and active in international integration." On the duties of foreign affairs, the Eleventh National Party Congress also emphasized the task of both "securing the peaceful environment, favorable to the acceleration of industrialization and modernization" and "strongly safeguarding independence, sovereignty, unification and territorial integrity."[182] In April 2013, the Politburo issued Resolution No. 22 on international

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[178] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba: Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13: Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge: Issues of political science and leadership, management, Volume 13: International Relations) (Hanoi: The Publishing House of Political Theory, 2014), 184-185.

[179] Thayer, "Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution," 5.

[180] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IX* (Documents of the Ninth National Party Congress) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2001), 119.

[181] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnamese Diplomacy, 1975-2015: From Member of the Socialist Camp to Proactive International Integration," Presentation to International Conference on "Vietnam: 40 Years of Reunification, Development and Integration (1975-2015)" at Thu-Dau-Mot University, Vietnam (April 25, 2015), 9.

[182] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XI* (Documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress), 236.

integration, marking Vietnam's expansion of international integration, not only limited to the economic domain but expanding to political-national defense, cultural and societal domains (comprehensive integration). Against the backdrop of increasing tensions over the South China Sea dispute to which Vietnam is a party, the Twelfth National Party Congress (2016) added that Vietnam needed to "firmly safeguard the Homeland, [and] secure a peaceful and stable environment."[183]

After the three decades of *Doi Moi* policies, Vietnam has made a remarkable transformation in the worldview from "an outpost of the socialist camp" to "an active, responsible member of the international community," based on the foreign policy line of "independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation, and development."[184] Vietnam has embarked on a significant transition from "a rigidly orthodox Marxist-Leninist state" and an "intransigent member of the socialist camp"[185] to "a middle-income country with a dynamic market economy."[186] Vietnam has turned itself from international isolation in the late 1980s into comprehensive integration into the world in recent decades. For the first time in history, Vietnam has established ties with all great powers of the world and been a member of many international and regional organizations.

Such a significant transformation of Vietnam is undoubtedly connected to Vietnam's change of its worldview from "two camps" to "an interdependent world" and its pursuit of "multilateralization and diversification" in international relations. Despite that, the Vietnamese political circle is paying attention to the handling of the relation between "independence, self-reliance" and "international integration."[187] The CPV is always concerned about the USA-led "peaceful transition" (*dien bien hoa binh*) strategy aiming to change Vietnam's communist-led regime, as it perceives this strategy as one

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[183] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa XI Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII Cua Dang*" (The political report of the Central Committee of the Eleventh National Party Congress at the Twelfth National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, March 31, 2016, http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-xii/bao-cao-chinh-tri-cua-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang-khoa-xi-tai-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-xii-cua-dang-1600 (accessed April 4, 2019).

[184] Manh Hung Nguyen, "*Thuc Hien Nhat Quan Duong Loi Doi Ngoai Doc Lap, Tu Chu, Hoa Binh, Hop Tac Va Phat Trien*" (Consistently implementing the foreign policy of independence, self-control, peace, cooperation and development), *CPV Online Newspaper*, September 30, 2015, http://dangcongsan.vn/tu-lieu-van-kien/tu-lieu-ve-dang/gioi-thieu-van-kien-dang/doc-493020151514256.html (accessed August 2, 2018).

[185] Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, 4.

[186] World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, *Vietnam 2035: Toward Prosperity, Creativity, Equity, and Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank. 2016), xvii.

[187] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi (Bo Sung, Phat Trien Nam 2011*" (The Platform for national building in a transitional period to socialism, Supplemented and developed 2011).

of the four threats to the survival of the regime these days. This strategy and the four threats will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

Given its geographical position, Vietnam has had to confront "the tyranny of geography,"[188] featuring an attraction to foreign invaders, since its early history. The history of thousands of years against foreign domination has contributed to the formulation of the historical "character and will" [189] of the Vietnamese people in modern times. The August Revolution of 1945 marked a turning point in Vietnam's history when the Vietnamese liberated themselves from "the double yokes of the French and the Japanese," and established a democratic republican regime, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.[190] Around the dawn and the heyday of the Cold War, Vietnam was involved in an almost three-decade war in the cause of national independence and reunification against the return of the French colonialists and then the engagement of Americans.

In the latter half of the 1970s, Vietnam's attempts to "build socialism" were distracted by the border wars with the Khmer Rouge regime of Cambodia and then with China, which was followed by Western isolation led by the USA. The emergence of unfavorable international and domestic factors urged Vietnam to launch *Doi Moi* in the mid-1980s, aiming to maintain the socialist goal against the backdrop of the crises and collapse of Vietnam's allies, the Soviet bloc, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Vietnam entered the post-Cold War era in the 1990s with the *Doi Moi* spirit and evolved into a phase of "international integration" in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

This chapter has discussed fundamental factors contributing to the formulation of Vietnamese perspectives on international relations in the *Doi Moi* era. As Jackman explains it, "the Vietnamese view the present and the future as an extension of the past, and they view them with great patience."[191] This chapter has argued that geographical location, historical and socio-cultural

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[188] Thayer, "The Tyranny of Geography: Vietnamese Strategies to Constrain China in the South China Sea," 349.
[189] Jackman, "Through the Eyes of the Dragon: Vietnamese Communist Grand Strategy during the Second Indochina War," 7-8.
[190] Chi Minh Ho, *Cac Tac Pham Chon Loc – Tap 3* (Selected Works – Vol. 3) (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 17–21.
[191] Jackman, "Through the Eyes of the Dragon: Vietnamese Communist Grand Strategy during the Second Indochina War," 8.

traditions have contributed to the way that Vietnamese perceive the world in the Cold War era. The Marxist-Leninist doctrine was introduced to Vietnam from the early 1920s mainly by Nguyen Ai Quoc (later known as Ho Chi Minh), adapted to suit the specific setting of Vietnam, and served as the foundational ideology for the Vietnamese revolution since the founding of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1930. As a mastermind of the Vietnamese revolution, until his passing in 1969, the ideas of Ho Chi Minh on Vietnamese revolution, together with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, while affecting the way that Vietnam viewed the world in the Cold War, continue to be confirmed by the CPV as the foundational ideology for the Vietnamese revolution in the *Doi Moi* era.

This chapter has also explored Vietnam's involvement in the USA-Soviet-China strategic triangle of the Cold War. As a communist state, Vietnam perceived itself as an "outpost" of the socialist camp in Southeast Asia in the international hostile and divided environment of the Cold War era. Before the introduction of *Doi Moi*, Vietnam's worldview was undoubtedly influenced by the Soviet-styled "two camps," "four contradictions" thesis in the struggle to determine "who would triumph over whom" between the two roads of socialism and capitalism. Vietnam, however, shifted its worldview from confrontation to accommodation when Vietnamese leaders were increasingly aware of the concept of "global economic interdependence" towards the end of the Cold War. Vietnam's shift of the worldview went hand-in-hand with the launching of *Doi Moi* policies in an effort to integrate itself into the region and the world, thus breaking down its international isolation and overcoming the domestically severe socio-economic crisis which had commenced in the early 1980s.

As "knowledge is dependent upon space and time,"[192] examining Vietnam's international experience during the Cold War era helps shed light on how the Vietnamese political community perceives international relations in the post-Cold War era. The historical context, traditional values, the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and Ho Chi Minh Thought can serve as the underlying factors that inform Vietnamese perspectives on international relations in the *Doi Moi* era. The course of *Doi Moi* under the spirit of international integration works as a background that formulates Vietnamese perspectives on international relations, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

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[192] Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Peters, "Introduction: Global(izing) International Relations: Studying Geo-Epistemological Divides and Diversity," 2.

Part 2

Vietnamese Perspectives on IR: Fundamental Concepts

Chapter 4

The International System

International relations are closely connected to the international system. Through the existence, actions, linkages and influence, inter-state relations formulate the international system. Many global IR scholars agree that the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 marked the formation of the modern international system.[1] However, in a journal article, "The Idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History," Buzan and Little pointed out that whereas the concept of the international system was fundamental to IR studies, there was no "standard definition" of as well as no "consensus on the necessary and sufficient conditions" for what was called "the international system."[2] They further stated that "[w]ithout a concept of international system, it would be difficult to justify international relations as a discipline."[3] As Hoang Khac Nam argued in 2014, studying the international system would help shed light on the causes and conditions of the evolution of inter-state relations, enabling nation-states to make predictions on international events and adjust their foreign policies appropriately.[4]

This chapter aims to examine the Vietnamese perception of the international system. It is made up of two sections. The first section discusses Vietnamese scholars' conception of the international system. It firstly introduces Vietnam's definition of the international system, followed by the attributes and cycle of an international system. The second section investigates the idea of "world order," and the idea of "world configuration," as these two ideas are closely connected to the concept of the international system. As will be shown, while the world order is related to the mindset of power and hierarchy in the structure of the international system, the world configuration, which is perceived as a "slice" (or cross-section) of the world order, reflects the general picture of the world in a specified, short duration of time. This section includes the investigation of Vietnam's perspectives on the

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[1] Martin Griffiths, *Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 455.

[2] Barry Buzan and Richard Little, "The Idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History," *International Political Science Review* 15, no. 3 (1994): 231.

[3] Ibid., 232.

[4] Khac Nam Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2014), 322-323.

construction of a new world order in the post-Cold War era. This chapter also puts the perspectives of Vietnamese scholars in comparison with those of the Western scholars where appropriate.

4.1. Conceptualizing the International System

In a journal article, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of international relations), Vu Duong Huan, former president of the DAV, holds that, terminologically, both the phrase "international system" (*he thong quoc te*) and "the system of international relations" (*he thong quan he quoc te*) have the same meaning. However, the phrase "international system" is different in meaning to the phrase "world system" (*he thong the gioi*), as the latter does not reflect relations, the nature of inter-state relations. The "international system" also differs from the "global system" (*he thong toan cau*), as the latter is not widely accepted, especially by those regionalists who refute the phenomenon of globalization.[5] In Vietnamese IR literature, and also in this thesis, the phrase "international system" and "the system of international relations" are used interchangeably. Many Western IR scholars also draw the "seminal"[6] distinction between "international system" and "international society." As Buzan argued in 1993, the former is logically "the more basic, and prior, idea," and it "can exist without a society," but "the converse is not true."[7]

Defining the International System

Many Vietnamese IR writers define the international system by fundamentally basing it on the general systems theory, which stresses the constituent elements or units and the relationship among them. In 2011, Vu Duong Huan defined the international system as "a full entity with components that were interrelated to one another and the environment."[8] He noted that the environment was one that influenced the system and caused mutual impacts between itself and the system, and was comprised of the internal environment and the external environment.[9] In his 2014 book, *Mot So Van*

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[5] Duong Huan Vu, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of the international system), *International Studies* 84, no. 1 (March 2011): 199.
[6] Richard Little, "The English School's Contribution to the Study of International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 3 (2000): 405.
[7] Barry Buzan, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organization* 47, no. 3 (1993): 331.
[8] Vu, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of the international system), 203.
[9] Ibid., 198.

De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), Hoang Khac Nam[10] put it: "the international system was the aggregation of international actors and interactions among them which were structured by certain rules and patterns."[11] In 2015, Luu Thuy Hong perceived the international system as "a vividly full whole made up of a set of international actors [...] and their inter-related ties in a certain structure."[12]

Reflecting on the general systems theory, Hoang Khac Nam points out the following characteristics of an international system which are presented in terms of the constituent unit, the interaction, the environment, the structure, the function, the stability, and the process of the system. For the constituent unit, an international system is made up of state actors and non-state actors, in which the former is the most important in the making of the system. It is these actors and interactions among them that formulate the system. As a result, significant changes in key actors result in changes in the system and vice versa. Concerning the interaction, interactions in the system are represented by the patterns of relations and interdependence among actors, which reflects trends, principles, and methods of relations among actors. Regarding the environment, it consists of the external and internal environment. The former is made up of the ecological environment, international economic environment, international societal environment, and so on, which surrounds and is beyond, but interacts with the system. The latter or the context of the system is the aggregation of the actors' binding ties with the system, which is framed by the trends of relations, shared interests, viewpoints, values, norms and principles, all of which affect the system and shape the nature and orientation of the system.

As regards to the structure, an international system is represented by the distribution of power among actors, a network of international organizations and the system of international laws. As far as the function is concerned, the reactions of the system enable the actors to adjust their behaviors in order for them to be more adaptable to the system. The stability of the system is maintained by the prolonged patterns of interactions and behaviors established by the actors. Regarding the process, it

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[10] Khac Nam Hoang is now a professor at the Faculty of International Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, a member of Vietnam National University - Hanoi.

[11] Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), 322-323.

[12] Thuy Hong Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2015), 23.

is the evolution of the patterns or forms of interactions among the actors in which conflict and cooperation are the two primary processes.[13]

As such, the domestic IR writers comprehend the international system as a "whole" or "aggregation" of units (or actors), rather than a simple combination of units, that are interrelated to, and interact with one another and to the environment by way of certain rules or patterns in a stable manner.[14] In other words, an international system is made up of (i) the actors, and (ii) the interactions among actors themselves and with the environment. The interactions are defined by rules or norms of behaviors. An international system does not exist when all states in the world are self-sufficient.[15]

Vietnamese scholars' comprehension of the international system appears to be similar at some points to that of their Western counterparts. In the seminal work, *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth N. Waltz stated that "a system is composed of a structure and of interacting parts," and that the "structure is defined by the arrangement of its parts."[16] The *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* also confirms that:

> [t]he international system is made up of individual, constituent units and an ordering principle that arranges the structure of those units, together forming a whole toward an outside environment.[17]

As such, in Western literature, the international system is made up of the core elements: (i) the units, (ii) the structure, and (iii) units-structure interactions and unit-unit relations.[18] Concerning the interactions, Buzan and Little also hold that interactions are exhibited in the military, political, economic and cultural sectors.[19] The interactions among actors are central to the making of the international system as "[w]ithout interaction, the parts or units are disconnected and free-standing."[20] In *The Great Powers and the International System: Systemic Theory in Empirical Perspective,*

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[13] Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), 306-317.

[14] Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations), 22-23.

[15] Vu, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of the international system), 236.

[16] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 80.

[17] Kjell Engelbrekt, "International System," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 1323.

[18] Ibid., 1324.

[19] Buzan and Little, "The Idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History," 243.

[20] Ibid., 242.

Braumoeller F. Bear states that the behavior of one of the key actors has an impact on the behavior of the rest.[21] In a journal article, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," Buzan explains that,

> [i]n the international system, the units are states (or independent political communities). The interactions among them include war, diplomacy, trade, migration, and the movement of ideas.[22]

Concerning the relationship between the structure of the system and the units, in Vietnamese IR literature, the structure of the international system affects the behaviors of actors (units). As the structure of each international system varies, actors behave differently under various structures. There is a wide range of elements of an international system that affect the actors' behaviors. They include the number of actors, the distribution of power among actors, the correlation of cooperation and conflict, the ability to pursue the actors' goal (the use of force or persuasion) acceptable in the system, the extent that an actor is influenced by the external environment, and actors' differences in international position.

Concerning the interdependence, actors are interdependent of each other in the system. Changes in one primary constituent unit will result in significant reactions or consequences to other units within the system. The interdependence is represented by at least two aspects. The first is that one actor or unit of the system is sensitive to other actors' behavior because the behavior would cause effects on the system. The extent of sensitivity is subject to the severity that an actor's behavior affects the system. The second is that actors are susceptible to the impacts caused by other actors' behavior. Such effects are represented by events or costs that the external changes impose on an actor's behavior. The extent of interdependence under various international systems varies corresponding to the differences in the extent of sensitivity and effects that the actors of the system experience.[23]

As far as the properties and the structure of the international system are concerned, both Vietnamese and Western scholars emphasize the "interdependence" or "mutual bond" among the actors as well

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[21] Bear F. Braumoeller, *The Great Powers and the International System: Systemic Theory in Empirical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 24.

[22] Buzan, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," 331.

[23] Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations), 28-31.

as the relationship between the actors (units) and the system. They also stress the role of the actors (units) and the interrelations among them in the formulation of the system as a whole. Engelbrekt puts it:

> [r]elational concepts of the international system ascribe most importance and explanatory power to the units that together form a whole, as well as to the mutual bonds that are forged among them.[24]

Regarding the scale of the international system, in the Vietnamese literature, the modern history of international relations experience various systems, including the Westphalia system, the Vienna system, the Versailles-Washington system, the Yalta system and the current system (the post-Cold War system).[25] Hoang Khac Nam tends to share the viewpoints of Buzan and Little who have argued that the international system has now reached a global scale. In the words of Buzan and Little, the international systems have evolved from "very small, through regional and inter-regional to global in scale and that almost the entire history is dominated by sub-global systems."[26] They state that:

> [o]ne can say with considerable confidence that a global international system now exists because both strategic and economic relations are conspicuously global in reach and organization. The balance of power, the process of diplomacy, the organization of trade, production and finance, and networks of transportation and communication, all operate on a global scale.[27]

Attributes and the Cycle of an International System

Vu Duong Huan points out the two attributes across the systems of international relations. The first is the balance of power within the system, which is maintained by the balance of power. In addition to the relative capabilities of actors, the stability of norms or regulations of the system, the balance of power is key to the maintenance of the system. The balance of power refers to the fact that the power center(s) or state(s) dominate(s) the system and prevent(s) other power centers or states from behaving in a way that affects the interests of the dominant power center(s). It is the balance of power that maintains the stability of the system and impedes the breaking of fundamental factors that have formulated the system.

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[24] Engelbrekt, "International System," 1324.

[25] Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations), 31.

[26] Buzan and Little, "The Idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History," 239.

[27] Ibid., 242.

The second is related to the life cycle through which an international system goes. An international system always evolves and goes through a cycle in nature.[28] The status of an international system is "static," "transformational," and "shaky." The static status (*trang thai tinh*) is relative, not absolute. Variables of the system (the number of dominant actors, the patterns of interactions, and so on) regularly change, though such changes are usually slow and take place over time; as a result, there is no apparent change to the system right away. The transformational status is the transition from one system to another. Such a transition takes place when there are changes in the quality of the system as a result of the breakdown of norms and rule games that used to be the basis for the operation of the system. The breakdown results in the formation of two or more systems, or smaller sub-systems, which inevitably leads to competition among these systems and, to a certain point, brings about the formation of a new hierarchical system or order. The shaky status is one when all power centers or "polars" of the system are in a recession. This status witnesses the collapse of the current hierarchical system, the breakdown of interdependence among actors, and the state of disorientation and anarchy in inter-state relations. The shaky status takes place when actors seek new directions or influence in replacement of the collapsing system.[29]

In comparison with the previous international systems, Hoang Khac Nam argues that the current international system, which is marked by the end of the Cold War, has new traits. The balance of power of the current system is described as "one superpower – multi-major powers" in which the superpower is the USA, the major powers are China, Russia, the EU, Japan, and India. Regarding the scope of the system, the current system is, in nature, on a global scope instead of a regional scope, as in the previous systems. The current one features more multiple facets due to the overlapping between the international political system and that of economics, in addition to interactions across international societal and cultural domains. The actors of the current system are more diversified with a growing role of non-state actors that contribute to changes in the way of interactions among actors. As compared to the previous systems, the process of the current one tends to be more cooperative because the trend of cooperation and integration takes place on both regional and global scales, and dominates relations among major powers of the world. Interactions and interdependence

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[28] Vu, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of the international system), 242.
[29] Ibid., 241-242.

among actors in the existing system are increasing and growing more complicated than the previous ones. The present system also extends more influence on its actors than the previous systems.[30]

Regarding the cycle of an international system, in the accounts of Vu Duong Huan, the structure of an international system does not exist forever but changes and goes through a cycle. Constant changes in the number of variables such as the number of international actors, strengths, resources, population and so on, to a certain extent, will lead to changes in the quality, and be likely to make a breakthrough in the structure of the system. It is the constant change of the system that inevitably causes the demise of the old system, which is replaced by a new one, which, in turn, would be replaced by a newer one over time.[31] In other words, no international systems would last forever.[32]

Vu Duong Huan also points out the four phases of the cycle of an international system: formation, consolidation, prosperity, and disintegration-decay. The *formative phase* is related to the rise of a great power out of the existing ones to the extent that it becomes pre-eminent, resulting in the formation of a hierarchical division followed by new directions of interactions among international actors. The *consolidation phase* is the result of the evolution of the existing system, in which the strength of a rising power tends to increase, exert more influence on and attract attention from other actors, challenging the established dominant power. In this phase, the hierarchical division, or challenging of the order of the power of the ongoing system, led by the rising power, comes to a reasonably stable state.

The *prosperity phase* witnesses a rising power that has reached its radical capabilities and established its dominant role in the hierarchical ranks of the system. The newly established patterns of interactions come to a consistently stable state, meaning that the system comes into its full shape. The *disintegration-decay phase* is a long-term and complicated process. This phase usually has three periods. For the first period, while the existing power center or "polar" tends to experience stagnation in the growth of strength, a new power center emerges to the degree that would challenge the existing power center. For the second period, the growth of the strength of the new power center reaches a level that is similar to that of the existing power center, which leads to the "classical" two-

[30] Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), 340-341.

[31] Vu, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of the international system), 235-236.

[32] Ibid., 242.

polar international order. For the third period, while the strength of the new power center continues to grow, that of the existing one tends to decline and eventually comes to disintegration when the new system is formulated.[33] However, this new system is not similar to the previous one, but it is usually more complicated, in nature, as it possesses different variables such as the distribution of power, directions, and trends of interactions among the actors.[34]

4.2. World Order and World Configuration

The concept of the international system is closely connected to "world order" (*trat tu the gioi*) and "world configuration" (*cuc dien the gioi*). From the realist IR tradition, the distribution of hard power among groups of states results in different types of orders such as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar.[35] The world order represents a relatively sustainable structure of correlative forces (between and among international actors) in a specific duration of time.[36] When put in relation to world order, world configuration is viewed as a "slice," reflecting a general picture of the world in a short duration of time. In Vietnamese IR literature, there are just a few pieces of Vietnamese writings on the theoretical aspects of the international system; however, the topic of world order and world configuration tends to draw more interest to Vietnamese domestic writers because it is relevant to the relative forces among great powers which have remarkable effects on Vietnam's foreign policy.

4.2.1. World Order

The conception of "world order" is closely linked to the term "polar" in the model of the power structure of an international system. The power structure of the international system is the distribution of power that represents the positions, linkages, and behaviors of the actors in the system, affecting the stability of the system in a particular order. In nature, the power structure is maintained by the balance of power among the main actors or power center(s) of the system, known

[33] Vu, "*Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Some understandings of the system of the international system), 236-237.

[34] Ibid., 237.

[35] Gabriela Marin Thornton, "Democracies and World Order," *Oxford Bibliography*, June 30, 2014, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0067 (accessed March 9, 2018).

[36] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Danh Cho Cac Lop Boi Duong Cap Nhat Kien Thuc Doi Tuong 3, Nam 2014-2015 (Luu Hanh Noi Bo)* (Study materials for knowledge updating course of group 3, year 2014-2015 (Internal use)) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2014), 96.

as "polar."[37] In other words, a polar of the world order is a great power or power center in the power structure of the international system, exerting significant influence on inter-relations on a regional or global scale. A "polar" can be a superpower (or emperor as in traditional perception) or a group of states in an alliance or a bloc (the EU as an example).[38] However, Nguyen Dinh Luan, from the Academy of Diplomacy notes that the term "polar" can only be adopted in a relative, or not absolute, manner. He points out that the use of such a term could be easily accepted in IR studies prior to the end of the Cold War as it represented the nature of international relations at the time. However, the nature of "power politics" in international relations or the international system has experienced much changes since the post-Cold War era. Therefore, the use of this term should be careful.[39]

 The phrase "world order" is usually adopted by both the academic circle and policymakers worldwide to describe, evaluate, or predict the world status in a given duration of time. In Vietnam, the term "world order" is also widely used by both the academic circle and policymakers. Some Vietnamese scholars use the term "international order" (*trat tu quoc te*) in denoting the same idea. In the Vietnamese language, the term "order" (*trat tu*) means "an arrangement in a certain order or rule" or "a state of stability with arrangement and discipline."[40]

Defining World Order

In Vietnamese IR writings, an international order or world order is "the structure of the distribution of power"[41] or "the distribution of international power"[42] or "the arrangement of the leading international actors in accordance to their power scale"[43] that "reflects the organization of the whole international society in a certain principle"[44] to maintain the stable status of the international

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[37] Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations), 22-23.

[38] Ibid., 23-24.

[39] Dinh Luan Nguyen, "*Ve Ba Dac Diem Cua He Thong Quoc Te Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*" (Concerning the three characteristics of the international system in the first two decades of the 21st century), *International Studies* 81, no. 2 (June 2010): 162-163.

[40] Phe Hoang, *Tu Dien Tieng Viet* (A Vietnamese dictionary) (Hanoi: Vietnam Institute of Social Sciences, 1992), 1012.

[41] Thai Viet Pham, *Toan Cau Hoa: Nhung Bien Doi Lon Trong Doi Song Chinh Tri Quoc Te Va Van Hoa* (Globalization: Big changes in international political life and culture) (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2006), 9.

[42] Bach Hieu Tran, *Cuc Dien Chinh Tri Dong A Giai Doan 1991-2016* (The political configuration of East Asia between 1991 and 2016) (Hanoi: Truth-National Political Publishing House, 2017), 9.

[43] Minh Quan Le, *Ve Mot So Xu Huong Chinh Tri Chu Yeu Tren The Gioi Hien Nay* (Concerning some major political trends of the world at present) (Hanoi: Truth-National Political Publishing House, 2014), 66.

[44] Le, *Ve Mot So Xu Huong Chinh Tri Chu Yeu Tren The Gioi Hien Nay* (Concerning some major political trends of the world at present), 66.

system.[45] In the making of world order, great powers play a decisive role. According to Pham Binh Minh, superpowers or great powers are crucial in the construction of the international system. He explains that a world order is related to the mindset of power, representing the most influential actors in the formation and application of "the game rules" (the rules of behaviors among actors) in international relations, reflecting the division of power among superpowers and great powers in a long-term period, and affecting the whole world or system.[46]

A world order changes when there are shifts in the hierarchy of superpowers or power centers, usually as a result of the shift in the relative power of superpowers or power centers, due to a wide range of factors such as great crises, wars, natural disasters, or pandemics. As such, world order is firmly attached to the power structure, representing power distribution among great powers in a given time.[47]

Regarding the conditions of the formation of world order, Le Minh Quan argues that a world order comes into shape only when these three factors converge: (1) ideological values as the platform, (2) hierarchical order of superpowers or great powers, and (3) rules acknowledged by the actors.[48] However, Vu Le Thai Hoang, from the Department of Foreign Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, echoes neorealism and the English school in his perception of the world order. He states that a world order only exists when it meets the five conditions of the "game rules" which are perceived as the principles or standards of behaviors (rights and responsibilities), rules, procedural processes, and international laws.

The five conditions are as follows. The first is that there exists a set of clearly defined game rules negotiated or built up by the main actors. The second is related to the game rules that have to be acknowledged (willingly or obligatorily) and committed to obeying by the actors involved, especially the main actors. The third is the actors' behavior that has to be reflective of the game rules in an

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[45] Pham, *Toan Cau Hoa: Nhung Bien Doi Lon Trong Doi Song Chinh Tri Quoc Te Va Van Hoa* (Globalization: Big changes in international political life and culture), 9.

[46] Binh Minh Pham, "*Bao Cao Tong Hop Ket Qua Nghien Cuu Cua De Tai Ma So KX.04/06-10: Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam*" (Summarized report of the research project code of KX.04/06-10: Trends of the development of the world configuration towards 2020 and Vietnam's orientation of strategy for foreign affairs), --, Hanoi, 66.

[47] Ibid., 67.

[48] Le, *Ve Mot So Xu Huong Chinh Tri Chu Yeu Tren The Gioi Hien Nay* (Concerning some major political trends of the world at present), 66.

acceptable frame of behaviors because frequent violations of the rule will erode the game rules. The fourth is that behaviors violating the game rules have to be punished, as set out in punitive regimes and international laws even the use of coercive means where possible, the purpose of which is to secure the game rules. The fifth is that the game rules can be modified subjectively by the main actors to meet the challenges or changes from other actors (medium or small powers or rising powers), or to reflect changes in the objectives or benefits of the whole system. However, in reality, in the accounts of Vu Le Thai Hoang, as the growing trend of democratization of the international life, small state actors and non-state actors can exercise, to some extent, influence on the architecture of the game rules of the new world order.[49]

A New World Order under Construction

The collapse of the bipolar world order has encouraged worldwide states to review their international positions and developmental strategies. The theme of the international system has become a topic of interest for many scholars in countries such as the USA, Russia, China, and India among others in the 1990s and early 2000s, as these countries have been pushing for the construction of a new world order.[50] Since the end of the bipolar world order, many IR scholars around the globe have different perspectives on the model of the world order of the twenty-first century such as "unipolar order," "no-polar order," "one polar-multi-sectors," "multi-centered order," "one superpower -- multi-major powers." Scholars appear to diverge on the projection of the new world as they base their interpretations and predictions on the changes of the relative forces of the main actors rather than the process related to matters such as the formation of the game rules, the main actors involved, and other variables in the building of the upcoming system.[51]

In the Vietnamese literature, the world is now in a transitional period to a new world order. Charles Krauthammer, an American writer, was quoted in the article of Nguyen Viet Thao as saying that the

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[49] Le Thai Hoang Vu, "*Ban Ve Cach Tiep Can Cua Ly Luan Phuong Tay Ve Trat Tu The Gioi*" (A discussion on the Western approach to the world order), *International Studies*, no. 85 (June 2011), republished in *nghiencuuquocte.org*, June 23, 2014, http://nghiencuuquocte.org/2014/06/23/ban-ve-cach-tiep-can-cua-ly-luan-phuong-tay-ve-trat-tu-the-gioi/ (accessed October 12, 2017).
[50] Thai Viet Pham, "*He Thong Quan He Quoc Te Duong Dai*" (The contemporary system of international relations) in *Trat Tu The Gioi Sau Chien Tranh Lanh: Phan Tich Va Du Bao* (The post-Cold War world order: Analyses and predictions), eds. Lai Van Toan et al. (Hanoi: Social Science Information – Specialty, 2001), 6.
[51] Vu, "*Ban Ve Cach Tiep Can Cua Ly Luan Phuong Tay Ve Trat Tu The Gioi*" (A discussion on the Western approach to the world order).

"unipolar moment"[52] that the USA enjoyed in the immediate collapse of the USSR does not last long.[53] Vietnamese scholars hold that the world now is not a unipolar order, but has not been a multipolar one yet.[54] The USA, a dominant actor of the international system, has pushed for the formation of unipolar world order; however, other actors (Russia, China, Japan, India, and the EU) are against such ambition of the USA and fighting for multipolar world order.[55]

The new world order under construction has not taken its full shape yet, but it would be predicted to be different from the previous world order due to differences in such variables of the system as the number of actors, the structure and diversified forms of interactions among actors.[56] Whereas the hegemonic position of the USA will likely decline over time, the emergence of China, Russia, Japan, the EU and so on, will encounter the ongoing USA-dominated balance of power in some point of time.[57] Sooner or later, the multipolar order will prevail and will be under the control of great powers such as the USA, China, Russia, the EU, Japan, and India. However, medium states, international and regional organizations will play a more significant part in addressing global issues.[58]

However, according to Nguyen Tien Nghia, in addition to the USA and other great powers, there has emerged a third group of force involved in the making of the new world order. This group includes the majority of the rest (small or developing nation-states) which have a desire to establish a new

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[52] Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, --, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1991-02-01/unipolar-moment (accessed September 9, 2018).

[53] Viet Thao Nguyen, "*The Gioi 25 Nam Sau Chien Tranh Lanh: Mot So Net Noi Bat*" (The world's 25 years after the end of the Cold War), *Communist Review*, January 4, 2017, http://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/The-gioi-van-de-su-kien/2017/42862/The-gioi-25-nam-sau-Chien-tranh-lanh-Mot-so-net-noi.aspx (accessed September 26, 2018). He quotes Charles Krauthammer's three reasons as the explanation for the argument. Firstly, the fact that the USA-led unipolar world order will not last long is inevitable as other states will grow fast, and their rise to polar(s) is inevitable, uncontainable, exerting influence on regions and global scales, challenging American hegemony. Secondly, American blunders in policy have prompted the emergence of other power center(s), which is accompanied by American decline. Thirdly, globalization causes negative consequences to American hegemony.

[54] Duong Huan Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1) (Hanoi: Administrative-Political Publishing House, 2009), 168.

[55] Quoc Hung Nguyen, "*The Gioi Sau Chien Tranh Lanh – Mot So Dac Diem Va Xu The*" (The post-Cold War world: Some characteristics and trends), *Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam*, March 28, 2012, https://www.dav.edu.vn/en/news/64-thong-tin-tu-lieu/tap-chi-ncqt/nam-1999/436-so-28-the-gioi-sau-chien-tranh-lanh-mot-so-dac-diem-va-xu-the.html (accessed November 12, 2018).

[56] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 173.

[57] Pham, "*He Thong Quan He Quoc Te Duong Dai*" (The contemporary system of international relations), 32-33.

[58] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 173.

democratic and equal world order in which all states, regardless of their size and power, have equal voice and rights in solving important matters of the world.[59]

According to Trinh Muu and Nguyen Hoang Giap, the fight of this group focuses on two primary areas. The first is to fight for the architecture of an equal, democratic world order in political terms because they are now facing an unfair international system of politics where superpowers or great powers maneuver to impose their conditions and interfere in small states' internal affairs. Specifically, this group pushes for the reform of the United Nations to make it more just and equal in solving international affairs, and to establish a peaceful and democratic world as set out in the objectives and principles of the UN Charter. The primary objective of the fight in the first area is to safeguard their national independence in the new era. The second is to struggle for an international economic order that is equal and for mutual benefits. The struggle involves the fight against these matters: (i) unfairness in the implementation of principles, institutional regulations of international economics and financial institutions favoring advanced industrial states, (ii) injustice in economic cooperation, trade exchanges and technological transfer, and (iii) the use of globalization as a means to implement new colonialism.[60]

For the emerging new world order, from Vietnamese viewpoints, and in spite of the existence of some more dominant actors, the growing interdependence among actors will impede efforts of hegemonic ambitions.[61] For past world orders, superpowers with outstanding military capabilities played a decisive role in the operation of the system. In the emerging order, the comprehensive national strength plays a crucial part in determining the position and role that each actor plays in the new order.[62] While great powers still play a key role in solving important world matters, they are not able to manipulate the system as they did previously due to: (1) states' comprehensive approaches to national security, especially economic security, (2) a growing demand for multilateral cooperation to address global issues and non-traditional security matters, and (3) the trend of democracy in

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[59] Tien Nghia Nguyen, "*Trat Tu The Gioi Sau 'Chien Tranh Lanh': Nhung Quan Niem Khac Nhau*" (World order after the Cold War: various perspectives), *Communist Review*, no. 20 (November 2006): 62.

[60] Muu Trinh and Hoang Giap Nguyen, *Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Viet Nam Hien Nay (Hoi Va Dap)* (International relations and Vietnam's foreign policy at present (Questions and answers)) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2007), 59-60.

[61] Pham, "*He Thong Quan He Quoc Te Duong Dai*" (The contemporary system of international relations), 32-33.

[62] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 171.

international life.[63] The democratization of international life will make it less likely for an actor to impose its will on the rest; instead, the formation of international law will be based on negotiations among many actors.[64] These emerging factors are more likely helping small and less developed states play a more important role in addressing global matters.[65]

Regarding the "game rules" of the world order under construction, in the account of Vu Duong Huan, they will be fundamentally based on bilateral agreements, especially negotiations among actors. While existing rules and international institutions such as the UN, WTO, G7, NATO, and the like, are to be maintained, many new rules will be introduced in order to be compatible with the structure of emerging inter-state forces. However, regardless of how the "rules" are devised, they will fundamentally aim to serve the interests of the main actors. Vu Duong Huan maintains that the new rules might not be as clearly stated or transparent as they could be in the past world orders, but they are typically justified in the name of "the community" due to the democratization of international life in the new era. While the matter of peace and security is still to be a matter of significant concern, economic and social issues will be given more priority in the architecture of the new world order.[66]

4.2.2. World Configuration

The idea of world configuration is connected to that of world order. However, whereas a world order represents the static status, a world configuration reflects the moving status of the international system. The textbook of International Relations of 2018 defines world configuration as the "correlative forces between or among superpowers or great powers as well as between and among other international actors, [it is] the appearance (*dien mao*) of the world, [with] specific operational institutions and their trend of evolution in a relatively short duration of time."[67] However, there might exist various world configurations within a certain phase of a world order. The world configuration represents relative forces between and among great powers and other actors mainly in terms of politics, economy, military, and security.[68]

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[63] Ibid., 170.

[64] Pham, "*He Thong Quan He Quoc Te Duong Dai*" (The contemporary system of international relations), 32-33.

[65] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 170.

[66] Ibid., 173.

[67] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri: Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced political theory: International relations), 41-42.

[68] Ibid., 42.

According to Pham Binh Minh, a world configuration can be described by the three main elements: (i) the international structure based on comparative powers between and among great powers or power centers; (ii) the main characteristics of international relations; and (iii) the system of institutions or mechanisms of cooperation and governance at global, inter-regional, regional and sub-regional levels. These elements reflect the general picture of the world and the region, and relative forces between and among great powers and centers of power in all aspects at multiple levels.[69]

Tran Bach Hieu states that if the world order is considered as a big picture of a slightly extended duration of time, the world configuration is the layout and appearance of the power among actors in a short period, and is changing or unstable over time.[70] Upon analysis of the world configuration, Vietnamese scholars suggest that it is important to reflect upon the following four main points which can represent a big picture of the world in a given duration of time.[71] The first is the power structure of the international system based on relative power among great powers or power centers in different aspects, including multilateral and bilateral interactions. The second is the main trends and features of international relations. The third is the characteristics of the system of international, regional, and inter-regional institutions. The fourth is the position and role of international organizations as well as flashpoints, and emerging global issues.[72]

From the Vietnamese viewpoints, distinguishing a world order from a world configuration is necessary. Whereas both of them represent the distribution and relative power of international actors, they differ at two different points. The first is that while a world order is a relatively stable structure of the operational principle and interactional mechanisms among international actors in a rather long duration, a world configuration reflects the status quo of the international system with fluctuation in the relative power of actors in a given or brief period.[73] Put it in another way, whereas addressing a

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[69] Pham, "*Bao Cao Tong Hop Ket Qua Nghien Cuu Cua De Tai Ma So KX.04/06-10: Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam*" (Summarized report of the research project code of KX.04/06-10: Trends of the development of the world configuration towards 2020 and Vietnam's orientation of strategy for foreign affairs), 66.

[70] Tran, *Cuc Dien Chinh Tri Dong A Giai Doan 1991-2016* (The political configuration of East Asia between 1991 and 2016), 10.

[71] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Danh Cho Cac Lop Boi Duong Cap Nhat Kien Thuc Doi Tuong 3, Nam 2014-2015 (Luu Hanh Noi Bo)* (Study materials for knowledge updating course of group 3, year 2014-2015 (Internal use)), 96.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 97.

world order tends to lean over the hierarchical system in a more extended period,[74] that of a world configuration refers to a "slice" of the world order in a given time. The second is that world order is not always exhibited in full shape as it can be in a transitional period. In contrast, a world configuration can be fully displayed at any given time.[75] From a philosophical perspective, the relationship between the world order and the world configuration is the one between the "quality" and "quantity" of the evolution of movement and development of an entity.[76]

In the accounts of Pham Binh Minh, the evolution of the world configuration in the next several decades is affected by a wide range of factors. They include a competition on science-technology among international actors; the acceleration of globalization in terms of politics, economy, and society; changes in developmental mindset; new thinking on war and peace; competition and cooperation on natural resources and the environment; and the shift in relative strength of main actors and regions of the world.[77]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Vietnamese perspectives on the international system. According to Kjell Engelbrekt, "[d]epending on the characteristics of the particular theory, the international system is a concept infused with some ontological premise as to its purpose, function, or design."[78] Though Vietnamese literature on this matter has been modest, authors such as Hoang Khac Nam, Vu Duong Huan, Nguyen Viet Thao, Pham Binh Minh, Vu Le Thai Hoang among others, have contributed their significant parts in the current Vietnamese perception of the matter. As Buzan stated in 2002, the concept of the international system was underdeveloped. The Vietnamese IR community has made their initial steps in studying the international system because understanding the system would help

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[74] Pham, "*Bao Cao Tong Hop Ket Qua Nghien Cuu Cua De Tai Ma So KX.04/06-10: Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam*" (Summarized report of the research project code of KX.04/06-10: Trends of the development of the world configuration towards 2020 and Vietnam's orientation of strategy for foreign affairs), 66.

[75] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Danh Cho Cac Lop Boi Duong Cap Nhat Kien Thuc Doi Tuong 3, Nam 2014-2015 (Luu Hanh Noi Bo)* (Study materials for knowledge updating course of group 3, year 2014-2015 (Internal use)), 97.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Pham, "*Bao Cao Tong Hop Ket Qua Nghien Cuu Cua De Tai Ma So KX.04/06-10: Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam*" (Summarized report of the research project code of KX.04/06-10: Trends of the development of the world configuration towards 2020 and Vietnam's orientation of strategy for foreign affairs), 67.

[78] Engelbrekt, "International System," 1324.

"grasp the times" or comprehend the world, and devise appropriate national strategies in international relations.

Vietnamese perception of the essential elements of the international system appears to be similar to that of structural realists who argue that the international system is made up of units (state actors) and interactions among them which are structured in a particular order.[79] However, Vietnamese scholars also stress the interactions not only between and among state actors but also non-state actors themselves and with the external environment of the system. Since the international system is a social system, which is intangible, it can be recognized only through cognition and analysis. Emphasizing the role of dominant actors (great powers and power centers) in the making of the international system, Vietnamese scholars tend to recognize human factors in the formation of the international system. Such perception echoes the English school advocates who believe that it is mistaken to conceive social systems, including an international system, as a natural system and ignore the human traits in the formulation of the social system.[80] Also, as explained in Vietnamese IR literature, the international system does not last forever but transforms and collapses over time, subject to the variables that operate the system.

In legal terms, the actors of the current international system share equal roles in the spirit of respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. In practical terms, however, big countries or great powers with their outstanding capabilities and policies influence the evolution and results of the relations of smaller states. While great powers and power centers still play a crucial role and compete with one another in the existing system, small and less developed states are still facing disadvantages and are influenced by great powers and center powers. As a result, the international system needs to be modified towards the two main ways. The first is to meet the growing demand for dealing with global challenges, and compatible with changes in relative capabilities and interests of great powers or power centers. The second is to grow more democratic to make it more effective in the promotion of cooperation and conflictual reconciliation among actors in all aspects of international life.

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[79] Buzan and Little, "The idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History," 232.
[80] Little, "The English School's Contribution to the Study of International Relations," 404.

According to Thornton Gabriela Marin, there has been no consensus among IR scholars on the meaning of the term "world order." From a realist perspective, world order is related to the distribution of hard power among groups of states, resulting in diverse types of orders such as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar. From liberal, constructivist and globalist perspectives, the world order is "a process" in which states or dominant classes are not the only actors but transnational institutions, norms and values continuously contribute to the formulation of global politics.[81] From the Vietnamese perspective, the world order is reflective of the power structure of the international system or the distribution of power among actors[82] in which great powers or power centers play a vital role. Studies on world configuration would help provide a general picture of international relations in a specified short duration of time.

The end of the Cold War has brought about the collapse of the bipolar world order. The world now is in a transitional period to a new world order, which is predicted to have new traits as compared with the previous one. As Vietnamese IR writers have argued, the fight for the new world order is fierce and complicated, and it tends to lean towards the formation of multipolar world order in recent years.[83] In practical terms, the Party-State system in Vietnam highly values the roles and the support of the efforts of developing countries through Vietnam's international activities in the fight for the formation of a democratic, just and equal world order.[84]

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[81] Thornton, "Democracies and World Order."

[82] Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations), 22-23.

[83] Nguyen et al., *Mot So Van De Chinh Tri Quoc Te Trong Giai Doan Hien Nay* (Some matters of international politics at the present time), 247-248.

[84] Ibid., 253.

Chapter 5

International Actors and Power

The notion of "international actors" is key to many theories of international relations. As different IR theories base their assumptions or hypotheses on various philosophical premises, they diverge on many aspects of the notion.[1] Despite that, studying international actors is necessary for the understanding of international relations as they are those who formulate the international system, and they can exert significant impacts on inter-state relations.[2] From a power perspective, international actors are those who possess resources or capabilities and carry out cross-national activities to achieve their goals. In a journal article, "Power and Foreign Policy," Joseph S. Nye states that though the term "power" is popularly adopted in international relations, it is "surprisingly elusive and difficult to measure."[3] A Vietnamese scholar describes "power" vividly as 'the blood of life' because it is central to inter-state relations.[4] As "a contested concept,"[5] power has been a matter of great interest to many global IR scholars for a long time, and Vietnamese IR scholars for recent decades.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section explores Vietnamese scholars' perception of "international actors" in international relations. It discusses who international actors are as well as the attributes of international actors. The idea of "big countries" (*cac nuoc lon*), the dominant actors of international relations, and some issues around them are also discussed. The second section examines the Vietnamese perception of power in international relations. It presents Vietnamese scholars' approach to the term "power" and the exercise of power in the context of international relations. In connection with a global IR "power as resources" approach, Vietnamese views of comprehensive national strength are also introduced. It is then followed by the Vietnamese idea of combining the

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[1] Phuong Nghi Ngo, "*Ban Ve Chu The Trong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Discussion on actors in international relations), *International Studies* 94, no. 3 (September 2013): 203.
[2] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 41.
[3] Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy," *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (April 2011): 9.
[4] Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), 245.
[5] Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy," 10.

national strength with epochal strength. Besides this, the chapter puts Vietnamese scholars'
perspectives in comparison with those further afield where appropriate.

5.1. International Actors

In the Vietnamese language, the term "entity" (*chu the*) is more popularly used than "actor" (*dien vien*)
when addressing those who have the capacity to exercise and exert influence on international
relations. The term "actor" in the phrase "international actor" is adopted in Western IR scholarships,
as it can describe the similarity between those who are involved in a play and those who participate
in global politics. It does not matter whether an actor is in a main or supporting position, he or she
plays a certain role in the play; similarly, sovereign nation-states, significant organizations or
individuals can play various roles in international relations. Similar to interactions among main and
supporting actors in a play, interactions among those who engage in world politics take place in a
certain form. However, as a Vietnamese scholar points out, the term "actors" can result in various
interpretations across distinct cultures and languages. Vietnamese scholars tend to prefer the term
"entities" in the context of international relations, as they can bring about similar comprehension
across cultures.[6] This thesis adopts the term "international actors" in place of "entities of international
relations" (*chu the quan he quoc te*) to reduce the possibility of terminological confusion.

5.1.1. Conceptualizing International Actors

Some Vietnamese IR writers offer their definition of international actors differently. Doan Van Thang
looks at international actors as those who contribute to the making of relations between and among
states. He defines international actors as:

> nation-states, international organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-
> governmental organizations, operating in all domains domestically or cross-national borders,
> who generate and develop inter-state ties.[7]

He also notes that international actors are diversified, inclusive of all societal entities – in political,
economic, military, and socio-cultural domains – which work across borders or perform activities that
have impacts across national borders.[8] Luu Thuy Hong defines international actors as "the forces that

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[6] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 44.
[7] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 68.
[8] Ibid., 69.

construct the international system through its direct involvement in inter-state relations, and have an impact on the growth of the international system."[9]

Hoang Khac Nam stresses the role in the definition of international actors: "[i]nternational actors are those entities that play a visual/recognizable[10] role in international relations."[11] He explains that the "entities" refer to a wide range of international actors such as nation-states, organizations, social groups, and individuals. He also notes that, in reality, though many individuals and organizations are engaged in inter-state relations, many of them do not play a visual/recognizable role in international affairs.[12] He further explains that only when an entity has a goal does it manage to build up its role, which serves as a means to achieve the goal. The more critical the goal is, the more an international actor engages in international relations. The position of an actor is formulated by the relations it has established with other actors, and acknowledged by other actors. The capability is the foundation for an actor to build up and maintain its position; only when an actor influences other actors does it attain a role in international relations; the more influential an actor is, the more vital role it can play in international relations.[13]

As far as the classification of international actors is concerned, Luu Thuy Hong classifies international actors into three groups: (1) nation-states; (2) international organizations (intergovernmental organizations); and (3) the movement of people's liberation (transnational actors).[14] Based on the state-centered approach, Hoang Khac Nam puts international actors into two groups: state actors and non-state actors. The former consists of states or nation-states. The latter is made up of those that are not the state, and to some extent, independent of the state, and perform activities across national borders. They include international organizations, transnational corporations; socio-political groups (international organizations of religions, the movement of national liberation, international terrorist groups); local governments, and individuals.[15]

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[9] Thuy Hong Luu, "*Suc Manh Quoc Gia Va Su Dung Suc Manh Do Cua Trung Quoc*" (National strength and China's use of it), *Vietnam Social Sciences* 108, no. 11 (2016): 22.
[10] The original Vietnamese expression is "*Co The Nhin Thay.*"
[11] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 43.
[12] Ibid., 44.
[13] Ibid., 43.
[14] Luu, "*Suc Manh Quoc Gia Va Su Dung Suc Manh Do Cua Trung Quoc*" (National strength and China's use of it), 22.
[15] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 45-46.

Despite acknowledging the significant role that non-state actors play in international relations, Vietnamese IR scholars hold that the nation-state is the most fundamental actor in international relations. Doan Van Thang explains that all international activities are fundamentally sourced to the demands of nation-states in terms of the identification of national interests as well as the methods to pursue these interests through foreign policy.[16] Though international organizations, or derivative entities, play a more important role in international relations these days,[17] they are still affected by governments' policies.[18]

According to Hoang Khac Nam, the objective that nation-state actors get involved in in transnational activities is more comprehensive and wider than that of non-state actors. State actors possess better capabilities regarding overall strength, tools to achieve the objective, independence, and autonomy than those of non-state actors. Besides this, state actors have been engaging in international relations in an earlier, more comprehensive, constant, and influential way on international relations than non-state actors.[19]

A group of IR researchers at the IIR-HCMNAP argue that inter-governmental organizations are just a tool for member states to pursue their interests.[20] While transnational corporations would be powerful in economic terms, they are contingent on the host state's laws.[21] In many cases, the laws of the host states can also restrict non-governmental organizations that work for socio-economic or humanitarian purposes.[22]

Hoang Khac Nam argues that, out of non-state actors, transnational corporations[23] (TNCs) are one of the most important groups of non-state actors because TNCs extend significant influence on nation-states, and can cause enormous changes in international relations.[24] TNCs, under the account of

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[16] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 72.
[17] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 38-39.
[18] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 72.
[19] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 64-66.
[20] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 38-39.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Though, international corporations, multilateral corporations and transnational corporations are different in economic terms, Hoang uses the term "transnational corporations" to refer to all these types of corporations whose activities take place on an international scale. Source: Khac Nam Hoang, "*Cong Ty Xuyen Quoc Gia – Chu The Quan He Quoc Te*" (Transnational corporations – actors of international relations), *VNU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, no. 24 (2008): 158.
[24] Ibid., 157.

Hoang Khac Nam, are qualified as international actors due to the following reasons. Regarding engagement, TNCs participate in international relations through connections with nation-states, other TNCs, and through their own internal relations (between the head office and overseas representative offices). Such engagements cover a wide range of domains such as in economic, scientific, cultural, and societal ones. The wide-ranging inter-state relations, especially in the economic field, enable TNCs to become more involved in the political and social aspects of international relations.

Regarding goals, all TNCs work for profits that drive TNCs to expand their activities to a global scale. Regarding capabilities, despite being under the influence of the regulations and rules of the host nation-states, TNCs possess enormous financial and human resources, facilitated by the trend of financial and economic liberalization globally, which are welcomed by nation-states for investments. Regarding influence, the possession of a major source of finance and personnel, accompanied by the growing importance of economic factors in inter-state relations in the post-Cold War era, has elevated TNCs in the international stage. As a result, some TNCs have significant impacts on nation-states and international relations. In some circumstances, they can even influence the internal or external policies of the host nation-states.[25] Hoang concludes that TNCs are essential actors in international relations because they can make both positive and negative impacts on nation-states.[26]

5.1.2. Attributes of an International Actor

There are similarities and differences among Vietnamese IR writers on the perception of the attributes of an international actor, which reflects the evolution of the Vietnamese scholarly perceptions over time. Specifically, in 2003, Doan Van Thang wrote that international actors are those who had two attributes:

1. Independent activities, sovereignty, and specific goals; and
2. Certain ability to affect the growth of international relations.[27]

It is noted that the argument of Doan Van Thang that an international actor has the attribute of "sovereignty," does exclude non-state actors in the perception of international actors. In 2008, Duong

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[25] Ibid., 163-165.
[26] Ibid., 165-166.
[27] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 69.

Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An, echoed by Luu Thuy Hong in 2015, pointed out that an international actor possesses three properties:

1. Taking international responsibilities independently;

2. Exerting influence, to some extent, on international life and other actors; and

3. Being an entity of interest to other actors' strategic calculations and being acknowledged by other actors.[28]

However, in 2016, Hoang Khac Nam argued that an international actor had four distinctive features:

1. Having goals or rationale when participating in inter-state relations, reflected in the interests that the actor aims at in the relations.

2. Engaging in inter-state relations to which it is one party.

3. Possessing the capability to implement its international relations, which means that it has the ability, independence or autonomy to some extent; those actors who are not independent or autonomous are just tools for other actors, and are not qualified as international actors.

4. Having impacts on international relations through its behavior and decisions; in other words, their behaviors do matter to other actors' foreign policy.[29]

As such, an international actor is one who has the following characteristics: (1) engaging cross-national, independent activities for specific goals; (2) having impacts on international relations; and (3) being acknowledged by, or mattering to, other actors.

As seen in the Vietnamese IR literature, whereas state actors are the fundamental actors of international relations, non-state actors are playing a growing role in international relations as a result of the growing number of non-state actors under the acceleration of globalization. Such a perception shares the view with the liberal IR perspective, which states that the growing role of non-state actors, especially of international institutions in global politics, is undeniable.[30] Similarly, from a transnational perspective, besides the nation-state, non-state entities or actors such as business

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[28] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 39.

[29] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 42-43.

[30] Helen V. Milner, "Power, Interdependence, and Non-state Actors in World Politics: Research Frontiers," in *Power, Interdependence, and Non-state Actors in World Politics*, eds. Helen V. Milner and Andrew Moravcsik (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 6.

corporations, mass media organizations, civil society organizations, political parties, and individuals can exercise their power on the world stage, and have impacts on international relations.[31]

In a book chapter, "Non-state Actors in World Politics: a Framework," Daphne Josselin and William Wallace hold that "any interpretation of international relations and global politics must now take the significance of non-state actors, operating transnationally, into account."[32] Similarly, on the dominant actors of the contemporary world politics, Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater put it:

> traditionally this was the sovereign state, but the list now includes transnational corporations (TNCs), transnational classes and 'casino capitalists,' international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International, new social movements including women's and ecological movements and international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda.[33]

On the contrary, from the realist perspective, only nation-states can operate as international actors as they can affect relations between and among states in international politics. Since non-governmental bodies (business corporations, civil society organizations, and the like) are always subject to the full control of national governments, and fundamentally operate as tools of the governments' policy, they have no significant impacts on world politics, except when nation-states allow them.[34]

5.1.3. The Idea of Big Countries

Out of state actors, big countries (or '*cac nuoc lon*' in the Vietnamese language) or power centers exert considerable influence on inter-state relations.[35] Given an important role that big countries play in real-world international relations, the topic of big countries has attracted a great deal of attention from Vietnamese IR scholars.

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[31] Jan Aart Scholte, "Non-state Actors," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, edited by Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 1712-1713.

[32] D. Josselin and W. Wallace, "Non-state Actors in World Politics: A Framework," in *Non-state Actors in World Politics*, eds. D. Josselin and W. Wallace (Palgrave Macmillan, London: 2001), 1.

[33] Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, "Introduction," in *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd edition, eds. Scott Burchill et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 12.

[34] Scholte, "Non-state Actors," 1712.

[35] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 72.

The Notion of Big Countries

While Vietnamese IR scholars converge on the outstanding capabilities that big countries possess and the influence they exert, as compared with smaller countries, on the contemporary inter-state relations, they diverge on identifying big countries. Generally, Vietnamese IR writers tend to identify a big country based on its comprehensive national power or strength and its international influence. However, they do not elaborate on how comprehensive national power is calculated or measured.

In 2006, Nguyen Xuan Son and Nguyen Van Du held that a major power (*cuong quoc*) is a big country that plays a vital role in international relations. A superpower (*sieu cuong*) is a vast country with outstanding strength in political, military, and economic terms, as compared with others in the international community. As such, a "major power" is less powerful than a "superpower.'' It is noted that not all major powers are categorized as "big countries," but a superpower is undoubtedly classified as a "big country." In other words, a group of "big countries" is made up of superpowers and some dominant major powers of the contemporary world.[36]

Nguyen Xuan Son and Nguyen Van Du explained that big countries were traditionally recognized by two indicators: (i) their large scale of territory and population; and (ii) their national strength. The authors, however, also pointed out that such a perception does fit the contemporary perception of big countries. While the first indicator is traditionally vital to determine the making of a big country, it has not always been the case up to the beginning of the twentieth century when there were countries which possessed a large population or territory, but were not recognized as big countries (for example, China or Australia). Specifically, up to the early twentieth century, whereas China was the most populous country and ranked second in the world's total land area, it was not perceived as a big country; similarly, though Australia covers the entire area of more than 7 million square kilometers, it is currently not counted as a big country. The second indicator refers to military and economic strengths.[37]

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[36] Xuan Son Nguyen and Van Du Nguyen, *Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Cac Nuoc Lon Va Quan He Voi Viet Nam Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky XXI* (Big countries' strategies of foreign affairs and [their] relations to Vietnam in the first two decades of the 21st century) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House: 2006), 14.

[37] Nguyen and Nguyen, *Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Cac Nuoc Lon Va Quan He Voi Viet Nam Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky XXI* (Big countries' strategies of foreign affairs and [their] relations to Vietnam in the first two decades of the 21st century), 15.

Nguyen Xuan Son and Nguyen Van Du concluded that, in modern times, big countries are those that possess two attributes:

1. Possessing outstanding national synergy or comprehensive national power when put in comparison with other countries; and

2. Being the wealthiest, most influential of major powers, which are usually connected with terms such as "power," "coercive force," "capability of control," and "capability of influence" in globally IR discourse.[38]

The authors also explained that a superpower (the current USA as an example) was a country with strength that played a decisive role in *all* important matters of the world. Big countries, including France, Germany, the UK, Russia, China, and Japan were countries that played a vital role beyond their geographical regions, and had a strong influence on some domains of global issues.[39] They also argued that big countries in the contemporary world were not defined by their "moral values," but by their economic, political and military strength.[40]

Echoing the view mentioned above, a group of authors from the IIR-HCMNAP stated in 2014 that big countries were those that demonstrated "outstanding national synergy and real influence" in the international community.[41] While the textbook did not elaborate specific criteria, it suggested the list of twelve countries as big countries: the USA, Canada, Brazil, Russia, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, China, Japan, India, and South Africa. They noted that these countries were the world's top list in economic, scientific, technological, and military terms.[42]

In 2018, Nguyen Viet Thao and Ngo Chi Nguyen from the National Academy of Politics wrote that big countries possess superior resources, strength and capabilities of influence in political, military, diplomatic, economic and cultural terms. As a result, they have the ability to exert influence, control and shape other countries' behaviors and policies as well as have an impact on the evolution of the international system, international trends, and solve global issues. The authors, however, noted that

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[38] Ibid., 16.

[39] Ibid., 15.

[40] Ibid., 16.

[41] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba, Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13, Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge, Issues of the political science and leadership, management, Volume 13, International relations), (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House 2014), 20.

[42] Ibid.

the categorizing of big countries are not absolute because some countries are perceived as "small" in relation to some other countries, but "big" in comparison with others. They listed a group of seven big countries: the USA, Russia, China, the UK, France, Japan, and German. They further explained that countries such as Brazil, Canada, India, and Australia are currently regional powers who demonstrate the potential to become big countries.[43]

Despite the differences in the grouping of big countries, Vietnam IR writers converge on the dominant role that big countries play in international relations. Though the stake that each big country has in the world's power structure varies, big countries are undoubtedly the most influential actors in the system. Remarkable shifts in relative capabilities among great powers usually lead to changes in the world's political context. [44] Real-world international relations pivot on relations between and among big countries regardless of what the world order is. As big countries have a remarkable influence on the international economy, politics and inter-state relations,[45] they play a decisive role in determining whether or not the whole system is stable,[46] and are instrumental in the architecture of the upcoming world order.[47] Some Vietnamese writers even argue that some big countries can even change the will of smaller countries and set the norms of behavior for the rest in international relations.[48]

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[43] Viet Thao Nguyen and Chi Nguyen Ngo, "*Quan He Nuoc Nho-Lon Trong The Gioi Hien Nay*" (Relations of big-small countries in the current world), *Political Theory*, April 27, 2018, http://lyluanchinhtri.vn/home/index.php/bai-noi-bat/item/2487-quan-he-nuoc-nho-nuoc-lon-trong-the-gioi-hien-nay.html (accessed October, 12, 2018).

[44] Nguyen and Nguyen, *Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Cac Nuoc Lon Va Quan He Voi Viet Nam Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky XXI* (Big countries' strategies of foreign affairs and [their] relations to Vietnam in the first two decades of the 21st century), 18.

[45] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba, Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13, Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge, Issues of the political science and leadership, management, Volume 13, International relations), 20.

[46] Nguyen and Nguyen, *Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Cac Nuoc Lon Va Quan He Voi Viet Nam Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky XXI* (Big countries' strategies of foreign affairs and [their] relations to Vietnam in the first two decades of the 21st century), 16.

[47] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba, Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13, Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge, Issues of the political science and leadership, management, Volume 13, International relations), 20.

[48] Nguyen and Nguyen, *Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Cac Nuoc Lon Va Quan He Voi Viet Nam Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky XXI* (Big countries' strategies of foreign affairs and [their] relations to Vietnam in the first two decades of the 21st century), 16.

Relations of Big Countries

As far as relations between and among big countries are concerned, some Vietnamese IR researchers point out the following four main characteristics of relations of big countries in the post-Cold War era. First, the dominant nature of relationships between and among big countries has shifted from confrontation to cooperation, despite the existence of competition among them.[49] Generally, big countries adjust their foreign policies to pursue their best interests in the new world order. They tend to build up long-term ties with others as a way of boosting their economies and serving their fundamental strategic interests. As a result, conflicts between big countries are, in large part, settled through the means of dialogues and compromise, rather than confrontation.[50]

Second, despite the trend of cooperation in the relations of big countries, they experience an elevated level of uncertainty and instability.[51] The changes in relative capabilities among big countries make the ties precarious and erratic. The collapse of the Cold War has witnessed significant changes in global politics, with the USA retaining a dominant position in the world. China has been rising rapidly. India has been playing a growing role in the region. Russia has returned as a compelling state in recent decades. Japan has faced prolonged stagnation. The persistence of historical mistrust has remained between big countries such as between Western Europe and Russia, Japan and China, and China and India. While national interests of some big countries converge on some fronts, they diverge on others. For example, whereas the USA strives to maintain the unipolar world, other big countries, and the rest of the world, struggle to establish a multi-polar world.[52] The central axis of competition in contemporary global affairs has shifted to USA-China, as the rise of China is a long-term challenge to the hegemonic position of the USA.[53]

Third, following the demise of the Cold War era, the two-faceted nature is the dominant characteristic of relations between and among states in general, and big countries in particular.[54] While big countries tend to stress collaborative aspects in their international activities for the sake of national

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[49] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 181.
[50] Nguyen, "*The Gioi Sau Chien Tranh Lanh – Mot So Dac Diem Va Xu The*" (The post-Cold War world: Some characteristics and trends).
[51] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 181.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 183.
[54] Nguyen, "*The Gioi Sau Chien Tranh Lanh – Mot So Dac Diem Va Xu The*" (The post-Cold War world: Some characteristics and trends).

interests, their differences in the ideological and economic base, a race for interests, and competition

for influence between and among them are inevitable.[55] As a result, big countries' promotion for

cooperation and compromise are concurrently accompanied by fierce competition and rivalry.[56] The

two-faceted nature of relations of big countries is reflected in their extremely complicated forms of

interaction. They form diversified types of ties: from allied, aligned, to non-aligned relationships; and

from partners, to direct or potential competitors.[57] Some big countries even endeavor to promote

relations with one another to enhance their bargaining position to the rest.

For example, China and Russia tend to move closer together to balance against the USA's hegemonic

behavior. In the same vein, India enhances ties with the USA, Japan, and Australia to respond to

China's ambition of regional influence. To counteract China, the USA maneuvers to pull India to its

side to prevent the potential formation of the axis of Russia-China-India that would disadvantage the

USA. While making efforts to contain and compete with each other, both the USA and China still

boost collaborative activities in the economic domain, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and

the Korean matter.[58] In short, it is an interdependence as well as the overlapping and conflicts of

interests that prompt big countries to cooperate and compete with one another at the same time in

their efforts to work towards their national interests.

Dealing with Big Countries

Factors from big countries such as leadership, political regimes, and their internal and external

policies can remarkably affect the issue of global peace and societal progress. As a result, smaller

countries, whether they are aligned to big countries or not, need to pay close attention to moves that

big countries make to adjust their strategic and foreign policies correspondingly, so as to best serve

their national interests.[59] In order to defend independence, maintain self-reliance, and safeguard

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 182.

[57] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba, Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13, Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge, Issues of the political science and leadership, management, Volume 13, International relations), 20.

[58] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 182.

[59] Nguyen and Nguyen, *Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Cac Nuoc Lon Va Quan He Voi Viet Nam Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky XXI* (Big countries' strategies of foreign affairs and [their] relations to Vietnam in the first two decades of the 21st century), 18.

national sovereignty, it is essential for medium and small countries to learn how to deal with big countries effectively.

IR scholars around the globe have recommended various approaches to manage ties with big countries such as bandwagoning, balancing, or hedging. With bandwagoning, the threatened state aligns itself with, and makes concessions to the potential enemy in the hope of "gaining some spoils of war" and avoiding aggressive behavior of the adversary.[60] A smaller country can choose to balance against potential attacks of a bigger country either by strengthening its military capabilities, improving security ties, or aligning with other big countries in order to prevent the potential aggressor.[61] In a journal article, "Understanding 'Hedging' in Asia-Pacific Security," Goh explains the "hedging" strategy that a smaller country can deploy to deal with a more prominent country as:

> a set of strategies aimed at avoiding (or planning for contingencies in) a situation in which states cannot decide upon more straightforward alternatives such as balancing, band-wagoning, or neutrality. Instead they cultivate a middle position that forestalls or avoids having to choose one side (or one straightforward policy stance) at the obvious expense of another.[62]

According to Nguyen Vu Tung, relations between a smaller country and a bigger one, especially when they share a border, are challenging to manage due to two reasons. The first is huge disparities in posture between the two as a result of the long-term process of development in a wide range of issues in the economy, culture, society, military, politics, diplomacy and so on. The second is such disparities causing "the mindset of a big country versus a small country" that the big one tends to shun or bully the small one, in their identification of and the approach to national interests towards the small.[63] Nguyen Vu Tung's perception echoes Brantly Womack's proposition of the politics of asymmetry. Womack argues that asymmetry in a bilateral relationship places the two countries in a

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[60] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 139.

[61] Denny Roy, "Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27, no. 2 (2005): 306.

[62] Evelyn Goh, "Understanding 'Hedging' in Asia-Pacific Security," *Pacific Forum*, August 31, 2006, https://www.pacforum.org/analysis/pacnet-43-understanding-hedging-asia-pacific-security (accessed July 24, 2018).

[63] Vu Tung Nguyen, "*Song Chung Voi Nuoc Lang Gieng Lon Hon: Thuc Tien Va Chinh Sach*" (Living with a bigger neighbour: Realities and Policies), *International Studies* 81, no. 2 (June 2010): 169-183. Consulted at: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:sGEWsVIkjJcJ:nghiencuubiendong.vn/download/doc_downlo ad/213-pgsts-nguyn-v-tung-sng-chung-vi-nc-lang-ging-ln-hn-thc-tin-va-chinh-sach+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=nz (accessed September 12, 2018).

different situation vis-à-vis one another,[64] where the bigger would do things to the smaller who is not able to do so in return.[65]

Lieutenant General Nguyen Trong Nghia, Deputy Director of the General Political Department of the Vietnamese People's Army, suggests solutions that would enable a smaller country to manage bilateral ties with a big country. First of all, as a big country can exert a remarkable influence on the region and the world, close monitoring of the behaviors or policies of the big countries would enable the smaller country to adapt to changes initiated by the big country. It is vital for the smaller country to identify both the "*doi tac*" (object for cooperation) aspects and "*doi tuong*" (object for struggle) aspects in relation to the bigger country which are guided by national interests in order to devise appropriate policies. The smaller country's acts of cooperation and struggle with the bigger country can take place at the same time, but they must be conducted in a flexible and case-specific manner.

Since all big countries have impacts on smaller countries, a troubled relationship with the former can cause remarkable damage to the latter, especially when the former and the latter share a national border. As a result, an improvement in bilateral relations with one big country must not cause damage to those with others. Also, a smaller country should constantly improve its comprehensive national strength to gain a better bargaining position in dealing with a big country. Nguyen Trong Nghia also argues that it is important for smaller countries to enhance military cooperation with big countries, as the latter is influential in inter-state relations, and cooperative engagement with them would bring about positive impacts, build trust and confidence. Such engagement is the early step of defending smaller countries through peace from the potential aggression of big countries.[66]

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[64] Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006), prefix.
[65] Ibid., 78.
[66] Trong Nghia Nguyen, "*Xu Ly Dung Dan Moi Quan He Voi Nuoc Lon – Yeu To Quan Trong De Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Quyen Quoc Gia Trong Qua Trinh Tich Cuc, Chu Dong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Right management of relations with big countries – An important factor to firmly maintain independence, self-control and national sovereignty in the process of proactive and active international integration), *National Defence Journal*, December 11, 2017, http://tapchiqptd.vn/vi/nghien-cuu-thuc-hien-nghi-quyet/xu-ly-dung-dan-moi-quan-he-voi-cac-nuoc-lon-yeu-to-quan-trong-de-giu-vung-doc-lap-tu-chu-v/10942.html (accessed August 3, 2018).

5.2. Power in International Relations

The term "power" in political science is connected to influence, control, capabilities, or status. In IR studies, whereas the concept of power is "a significant constitutive force" that defines the discipline,[67] it is "one of the most troublesome in the field."[68] Power is also said to be a frame of reference or lens through which the history of international relations can be explained, as competitions for power have long been the root-cause of peace and war in the history of international relations.[69]

The earliest perception of power in global politics was introduced by Hans Morgenthau and later elaborated by Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer.[70] The conception was originally related to material resources and tangible things such as military, wealth and geography. However, since the 1960s, the perception of power was expanded beyond material resources to include "a relationship of influence."[71] Despite a long discussion of the role and nature of power in international relations, differences remain among global scholars on these matters.[72] When it comes to the definition of "power" in international relations, Joseph S. Nye, a dominant scholar on power, points out that "[n]o single definition is accepted by all who use the word, and people's choice of definition reflects their interests and values."[73]

5.2.1. Conceptualizing Power

According to Doan Van Thang, in the Vietnamese language, the term "strength" (*suc manh)* and "power" (*quyen luc)* can be interpreted differently. While "strength" refers to capabilities or tools that enable a state to pursue its interests, "power" is used to represent a state's ability to influence or control others' thinking and behaviors.[74] However, Hoang Khac Nam argues that these two terms are interchangeably adopted in the context of the study on international relations, as they both refer to

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[67] Janice Bially Mattern, "The Concept of Power and the (Un)discipline of International Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 691.

[68] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13.

[69] Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), 245.

[70] Mattern, "The Concept of Power and the (Un)discipline of International Relations," 692.

[71] Ibid.

[72] David A Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 291.

[73] Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy," 10.

[74] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 83.

capabilities that a state uses to achieve its goals in international relations. He maintains that any state that can maintain its independence, and pursue its interests through inter-state relations is the one possessing power or strength.[75]

In a textbook of 2016, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), Hoang Khac Nam suggests that a definition of power should reflect two aspects: capability and relationship. He clarifies that the former is what formulates power, and is a tool in practical terms because an actor or entity has power only when it possesses capabilities. The latter is the context and conditions in which power is deployed. Power occurs only through relationships or interactions between or among actors. When there are no relationships or interactions, there is no power. In other words, power is reflective of relative capabilities through the actor's relationships.[76]

Hoang Khac Nam defines power as "an entity's ability to achieve its purpose in international relations."[77] As such, under Hoang's account, power is presented by the ability of "an entity" or an international actor, to achieve its objective through interactions or relationships with other entities in the world. He also notes the contextual aspect when one interprets the concept of power. He explains that power is closely attached to the context, as the context is a condition in which power is exercised. For example, military power may be considered as appropriate in a given specific context, but may not be in others. No power exists beyond the context. For instance, economic relations cannot be well comprehended without due attention being paid to market factors, or political relations without the impact of a political system. As a result, a state's power, being either strong or weak, reflects its capabilities of dealing with the context that it confronts. Therefore, the context must be taken into consideration when one analyses power, especially the exercise of power.[78]

Hoang Khac Nam's approach to power appears to share Western IR scholars' perception of this subject matter. In the *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, Pasquino points out the four elements of the concept of power, including relations, intention, resources, and specific socio-political

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[75] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 104.
[76] Ibid., 103.
[77] Ibid., 104.
[78] Hoang, *Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of International Relations theories from the historical perspective), 265-266.

contexts.[79] As such, in the context of international relations, power must be analyzed in relations between or among international actors in which one actor adopts its capabilities (resources) based on a specific context to carry out its intentions (or achieve aims). However, global IR scholars are still divided on the perception of power. Many treat power as "the exclusive province of realism,"[80] and perceive power simply as "the possession of resources and their use to exercise control at the international level."[81] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall argue that it would be "erred" to adopt a single concept, but to apply multiple concepts instead, to analyze the forms of power in international politics.[82]

Hoang Khac Nam also critiques one out of many Western definitions of power, which states that "[p]ower is one's ability to impose its will on others (who accept the will either forcibly or voluntarily) so that the others act according to that will."[83] He argues that such a perception only fits the context where inter-state relations were dominated by empires, hegemons, invaders, hegemonic diplomacy or vassals, and that such perception does not work in the modern context where there are growing voices and roles of third-world countries in the international stage. In reality, superpowers or big countries are not always able to impose their wills on smaller powers or states, despite their dominant capabilities. An increasing interdependence among states and the emergence of global issues have enabled smaller states or powers to take a more significant part in the process of international relations and offered them a better chance to fight against the larger side's imposition of will. In other words, power must represent a two-way interaction between more powerful actors and less powerful ones rather than one way from more power to less power.[84]

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[79] Gianfranco Pasquino, "Power," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 2102.

[80] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics," *International Organizations*, no. 59 (Winter 2005): 40.

[81] Stefano Guzzini, "Power and International Politics," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 2110-2111.

[82] Barnett and Duvall, "Power in International Politics," 67.

[83] Thai Yen Huong Nguyen, *Quan He My – Trung, Hop Tac Va Canh Tranh: Luan Giai Duoi Goc Do Can Bang Quyen Luc* (The USA-China relations: Cooperation and competition – An explanation from the balance of power perspective) Hanoi: National Political Publishing House: 2017), 15.

[84] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 104.

5.2.2. The Exercise of Power in International Relations

Regarding the expression of power in international relations, Hoang Khac Nam observes that power is expressed by the balance of forces or through interactions of actors in international relations. The concept of power occurs only through the balance of forces between or among international actors. However, it is usually difficult to obtain the full and precise comparison of forces among those actors as they only expose their empirical capabilities more fully or substantively through interactions. The balance of forces can be recognized by signs in practical terms.[85] Hoang Khac Nam's account of the expression of power appears to fall into the "relational power" approach in some disciplines of social sciences, including political science in the West. Accordingly, power is an actual or potential relationship between two or more actors, and power is perceived in causal terms "in which the behavior of actor A at least partially causes change in the behavior of actor B." The "behavior" can refer to a wide range of aspects such as beliefs, attitudes, preferences, expectations, and the like.[86]

For the deployment of hard and soft power in international relations, various Vietnamese IR writers believe that it is subject to specific conditions that states would decide if hard power, soft power or the combination of both is deployed to achieve the goal in international relations. Luu Thuy Hong explains that it would be easier for great powers with remarkable material capabilities, to use hard power, to achieve what they want. However, the deployment of hard power is costly and can cause negative images of those who use it, and usually causes grave consequences.[87] Pham Quoc Tru, from the DAV, argues that while states adopt both hard power and soft power in their external activities, it is up to specific circumstances or targets that states prefer to deploy hard or soft power, or the combination of the two at varying degrees.[88]

Tran Nguyen Khang argues that the adoption of soft power facilitated by hard power would enable states to best work for their national interests.[89] Luu Thuy Hong notes that it is not easy for states to use soft power, as the adoption of soft power requires more time and effort, and the results are not

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[85] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 118.

[86] Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," 274.

[87] Luu, "*Suc Manh Quoc Gia Va Su Dung Suc Manh Do Cua Trung Quoc*" (National strength and China's use of it), 83-84.

[88] Quoc Tru Pham, "*Quyen Luc Mem Trong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Soft power in international relations), *East Sea (South China Sea) Studies*, January 6, 2011, http://nghiencuubiendong.vn/nghien-cuu-quoc-te/69-nghien-cu-quc-t/1228-quyen-luc-mem-trong-quan-he-quoc-te (accessed October 2, 2018).

[89] Nguyen Khang Tran, "*Canh Tranh Suc Manh Mem Giua Cac Quoc Gia Dau The Ky XXI*" (Soft power competition among states at the beginning of the 21st century), *International Studies* 106, no. 3 (September 2016): 191-209.

always guaranteed.[90] Furthermore, as Tran Nguyen Khang argued, a harsh competition for soft power these days is not only limited to great powers but also multiple other states. It aims to win confidence and support from the rest of the world. Such competition takes place globally and multi-dimensionally.[91] Both Luu Thuy Hong and Pham Quoc Tru conclude that nowadays states tend to give more priority to the deployment of soft power[92] as with a general trend of human growth and a higher level of civilization, soft power tends to be a better option.[93]

As such, Vietnamese scholars' perspectives on exercising the combination of both hard and soft power in international relations are similar to Joseph S. Nye's conception of "smart power," which is defined as "the ability to combine hard and soft power resources into effective strategies."[94] In the words of Nye,

> Wielding soft power is important, but it is not always easy, particularly in the diplomatic conditions of a cyber age. And combining it with hard power into smart power strategies makes the diplomat's task doubly difficult.

Nye also quotes the former American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as stating that "We must use what has been called "smart power," the full range of tools at our disposal."[95]

5.2.3. The Concept of Comprehensive National Strength

As discussed above, material resources are one of the constituent elements of the conception of power. The question of what shapes a state's overall strength has become a topic of concern for many domestic IR scholars. In Vietnamese political discourse, phrases such as "national strength" (*suc manh quoc gia*), "comprehensive national strength" (CNS) (*suc manh tong the quoc gia*), "people's strength" (*suc manh dan toc*), or "internal strength" (*suc manh ben trong*) are popularly used. The term "national synergy" (*suc manh tong hop quoc gia*) is also used interchangeably with such terms as "national strength" and "comprehensive national strength" without substantial differences, though they are used in different ways to fit the context.

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[90] Luu, "*Suc Manh Quoc Gia Va Su Dung Suc Manh Do Cua Trung Quoc*" (National strength and China's use of it), 84-85.
[91] Tran, "*Canh Tranh Suc Manh Mem Giua Cac Quoc Gia Dau The Ky XXI*" (Soft power competition among states at the beginning of the 21st century), 191-209.
[92] Luu, "*Suc Manh Quoc Gia Va Su Dung Suc Manh Do Cua Trung Quoc*" (National strength and China's use of it), 83-84.
[93] Pham, "*Quyen Luc Mem Trong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Soft power in international relations).
[94] Joseph S. Nye, "Hard, Soft, and Smart Power," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, eds. Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 565.
[95] Nye, "Hard, Soft, and Smart Power," 572.

According to Tran Thai Binh, the idea of constructing and promoting national synergy in order to meet the demand of Vietnamese revolutionary has come into existence for long, reflecting the consistent point of view of the Party-State system in Vietnam. Such idea is clearly presented in Vietnam's National Defense Strategy. The construction of national synergy requires a full deployment of both internal and external resources in which the former must play the main role. In this process, a close combination of defense with security, diplomacy, economy and culture must be taken as the foundation, and an enhancement of economic growth accompanied by defense and security improvement be taken as "the core and determinant."[96] Doan Minh Huan also states that the national synergy is not merely the simple plus of resources and forces, yet the science and the art of the use of these resources and forces in specific circumstances.[97]

In the global scholarship on national power, the phrase "comprehensive national power" is used to refer to "the general power of a nation-state" in the broadest sense.[98] In the Vietnamese language, the term "strength" (*suc manh*) instead of "power" (*quyen luc*) is used in the phrase "comprehensive national strength." In this thesis, the terms CNS, CNP and national synergy are used interchangeably.

Various Vietnamese IR scholars define CNS in diverse ways. In 2007, Luong Van Ke[99] defined CNP as:

> all capabilities to secure the survival, development, and elevation of a state in inter-state relations, inclusive of material elements (or hard elements such as resources, population, economy, and military) and spiritual elements (or soft elements such as the quality of governance and political institution).[100]

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[96] Thai Binh Tran, "On the building of national synergy in Vietnam's National Defense Strategy," *National Defense Journal*, October 17, 2018, http://tapchiqptd.vn/en/theory-and-practice/on-the-building-of-national-synergy-in-vietnams-national-defence-strategy/12621.html (accessed October 21, 2020).

[97] Minh Huan Doan, *"Phuong Phap Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop Cua Dang Trong Tien Trinh Chin Muoi Nam Lanh Dao Cua Dang"* (Methods of bringing into play the national synergy by the Party in the course of 90-year Party leadership), *Ministry of Home Affairs Party Steering Committee*, February 18, 2020, https://moha.gov.vn/nghi-quyet-tw4/tin-tuc-su-kien/phuong-phap-phat-huy-suc-manh-tong-hop-cua-dang-trong-tien-trinh-chin-muoi-nam-lanh-dao-cach-mang-viet-nam-42867.html (accessed October 21, 2020).

[98] J. S. Bajwa, "Defining Elements of Comprehensive National Power," *CLAWS Journal* (2008): 151.

[99] He was once head of the Division of Regionalism Studies at the Faculty of International Studies at VNU-Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities

[100] Van Ke Luong, *"Cac Yeu To Cau Thanh Suc Manh Tong Hop Quoc Gia"* (Components of comprehensive national strength), *Americas Today Journal*, no. 10 (2007): 34.

Luong noted that the CNS was not merely the result of the addition of all capabilities together, but the one from how these capabilities were combined and deployed together.[101] In 2008, in *Giao Trinh Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook on international relations of politics), Duong Xuan Ngoc[102] and Luu Van An[103] defined "national strength" as "the comprehensive national strength, tangible and intangible, including natural and social factors, having impacts on and influencing the outside [of the nation], to implement national interests."[104]

As such, national strength is comprehended as capabilities and tools, inclusive of both material and non-material elements, that a state can employ to pursue its interests.[105] Pham Quoc Tru suggested in 2011 that, in addition to internal factors, the CNS is also made up of "external factors." He wrote that "the CNS is the result of the combination of both hard power and soft power, which is created by both internal and external factors."[106] However, he did not elaborate on how external factors contribute to the formulation of the CNS. Sharing the accounts of Duong Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An, in her work of 2015, Luu Thuy Hong added the "potential" aspect, instead of the "actual" aspect only, of capabilities as to what formulates the CNS:

> [n]ational strength is the total capabilities (current and potential) in terms of military, economics, politics, culture and ideology within a state, and the adoption of these capabilities in international relations for national survival and growth.[107]

As seen from the above definitions, CNS is comprised of both material resources and non-material factors (such as ideology,[108] cultural values and national policies),[109] which reflects a state's actual and potential capabilities in its inter-state relations.

However, there are still differences among Vietnamese IR scholars on the constituent elements of CNS. According to Luong Van Ke, CNS consists of six components (territory – geographical position,

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Duong Xuan Ngoc is now a professor, head of the Division of Political Power and Authorities, a former deputy director of the Academy of Journal and Communication.

[103] Luu Van An is now associate professor, deputy director of the Academy of Journal and Communication, a former Head of the Department of Politics.

[104] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 59.

[105] Ibid., 60.

[106] Pham, "*Quyen Luc Mem Trong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Soft power in international relations).

[107] Luu, *Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations), 21.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Pham, "*Quyen Luc Mem Trong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Soft power in international relations).

total land area, topography, natural resources; population; economic capabilities; the quality of the government; military capabilities; and foreign affairs).[110] Hoang Khac Nam shares this view of Luong Van Ke, but stresses the importance of science-technology as well as spiritual factors (trust, reputation, tradition, culture, leadership capabilities, and public opinion) in the making of CNS.[111] Out of the elements mentioned above, Hoang Khac Nam argues that military force is fundamental to the CNS, and the economy is the principal element that forms CNS.[112] Other Vietnamese IR writers contend that factors beyond the national border can also contribute to the CNS such as alliances with other nation-states in politics, economics, military, and strategic relations; high-quality capital, technology, and human resources that a state can mobilize beyond its national borderline, spiritual values, global trends of equality, and societal progress among others.[113] The following table summarizes Vietnamese perceptions of the constituent elements of CNS.

Table 5.1. Constituent Elements of Comprehensive National Strength

Source	Hard strength	Soft strength
Internal	- Geographical conditions (geographical location, the area of land, topography, natural resources, climate) - Population (the number of people, ethnic constituents) - Economy (industry, agriculture, resources) - Military force (humans and weapons) - Science – technological capabilities - The system of transportation and communications	- Spiritual, cultural values, and traditions - Leadership capabilities, the quality of national governance - The system of national institutions - Societal consensus and people's unity and public opinions - National position on the international stage
External	- Alliances in politics, economics, military, and strategic relations; foreign affairs - High-quality capital, technology, human resources mobilizable beyond the national borderline	- Advanced knowledge, theories, and models of development - Spiritual support from other countries and external forces - Global trends of equality and societal progress

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[110] Luong, "*Cac Yeu To Cau Thanh Suc Manh Tong Hop Quoc Gia*" (Components of comprehensive national strength), 34.

[111] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 108-117.

[112] Ibid., 113-5.

[113] Xuan Thang Nguyen, *Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi* (Independence, self-control and international integration of Vietnam in the new context) (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2011), 35; Khac Nam Hoang, *Quyen Luc Trong Quan He Quoc Te: Lich Su Va Van De* (Power in international relations: History and issues) (Hanoi: Culture and Information Publishing House, 2011), 176.

The perceptions of Vietnamese scholars on the CNS are influenced by those of the West and China. Many Western IR scholars have introduced various models for calculating the aggregate national power, beginning with single variables (such as military power or economic power constituents), and later expanding to multi-variables (inclusive of both hard power constituents and soft power constituents).[114] However, Chinese scholars are credited for "the most well-rounded approach towards measurement and the process of quantification of national power," initiated in the early 1980s when China needed to find the means for calculating the total strength of the "forces restricting war."[115] From the Chinese perspective, CNP is "the combined overall conditions and strengths of a country," including "territory, availability of natural resources, military strength, economic clout, social conditions, domestic government, foreign policy and its initiatives," and its international influence.[116]

As such, CNS refers to comprehensiveness and all aspects of the power of a country, including three main elements: (i) material strength, (ii) ideational ethos, and (iii) international influence.[117] It is arguable that Vietnamese perspectives differ from foreign scholars' perspectives in a way that the Vietnamese scholars believe that external factors contribute to the formulation of CNS.

Critiquing the conception of CNS, in a book, *Quyen Luc Trong Quan He Quoc Te: Lich Su Va Van De* (Power in international relations: History and issues), Hoang Khac Nam points out the following changes in the current perception of the CNS as compared with the traditional understanding. First, the contemporary understanding of the components of the CNS has taken into account other factors rather than only the military factor as the conventional perception. Second, the growth, especially in economic terms, has become fundamental to the resource of the formation of CNS; as a result, most states nowadays give priority to economic growth as a way of improving their CNS, instead of massive investment in military force as in the past. Third, though the role of military capacities is still of great importance to the composition of CNS, the push for striking a balance in terms of military

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[114] P. K. Singh, Y. K. Gera, and Sandeep Dewan, *Comprehensive National Power: A Model for India* (New Delhi: Vij Books India Private Limited, 2013), 47.

[115] Ibid., 24.

[116] Ibid., 25.

[117] Bajwa, "Defining Elements of Comprehensive National Power," 152.

capabilities among states in international affairs tends to decline and be replaced by non-military approaches instead. Fourth, an external environment or factors beyond a nation-state's border play a more critical role in the making of CNS. Fifth, small and medium states, nowadays, have more opportunities ever to enhance their CNS through their engagement in inter-state relations, though they confront growing challenges at the same time.[118]

From the Vietnamese perspective, CNS is not fixed, but changes over time. Changes in CNS are subject to both internal and external factors. The CNS can change unintentionally or intentionally as a result of statesmen's efforts. The change can be fast or slow. Significant changes in the balance of forces or changes in the power of other states can lead to changes in a state's CNS, as a result of the state's alignment with these significant changes. Also, changes in the circumstances or conditions of the exercise of power would cause changes in individual components of the CNS, and if such a component is of vital importance to the making of the CNS, then the CNS is substantially changed.[119] Besides, it is not necessary that CNS always helps its possessor achieve its targets in international relations. Logically, the stronger the CNS is, the easier the possessor can find it, as compared to the weaker, to achieve its goals when dealing with other states. However, in reality, there is a wide range of factors that could prevent a state actor from achieving its goals through the exercise of power, especially the use of hard or coercive one. These factors vary from the state actor's internal circumstance, conditions, and the context in which power is exercised, to the interdependence of parties involved.[120]

A Vietnamese scholar notes the relations of the constituent elements of CNS. While the elements are independent of one other, they are reliant on one another. The CNS is comprised of the combination of separate elements, each of which is relatively independent of each other, resulting in a nation's leverages. The more leverages a nation possesses, the more options it can take, in terms of tools, to pursue its national goals. Notably, since CNS is comprised of the combination of elements, rather than a single element, there could be supportive elements or transformation of elements, especially those that are fundamental to the formation of CNS.[121] Also, it is not necessary that CNS from all

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[118] Hoang, *Quyen Luc Trong Quan He Quoc Te: Lich Su Va Van De* (Power in international relations: History and issues), 272.

[119] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 119.

[120] Ibid., 120.

[121] Ibid., 118-119.

nations is evenly made up of the full constituent elements mentioned above, because the formation and growth of nations vary. Multiple factors contribute to the formation of CNS, such as national circumstances, conditions, level of development, and the political elite' knowledge and determination. Alternatively, it is the absence or the weakness of one or more elements of the CNS that tend to drive states to expand relations with other states in order to bolster or supplement the shortcomings.[122]

5.2.4. The Idea of Combining the National Strength with the Epochal Strength

The phrase "combining the national strength with the epochal strength" (*ket hop suc manh dan toc voi suc manh thoi dai*) has been a much-known one in Vietnamese political literature and Vietnamese media for almost two decades. The phrase is also used interchangeably by the phrase "bringing into play the internal strength and taking advantage of the external strength" (*phat huy noi luc, tranh thu ngoai luc*). Similarly, such as "epochal strength" (*suc manh thoi dai*), "external strength" (*ngoai luc*), and "externally favorable conditions" (*dieu kien thuan loi ben ngoai*) are also interchangeable.

As discussed in Chapter 3, as a country with a strategically important position in Southeast Asia, Vietnam has long been a target for many great powers who harbor the ambition of conquering the country since its early history. In modern times, given enormous disparities in economic, political, and military terms favoring great powers, Vietnam finds itself limited regarding physical capabilities against aggressive behaviors of great powers if support beyond its borders would not be mobilized. Arguably, Vietnam's combination of internal strength or national strength with external strength or epochal strength has been of vital significance to the struggle for independence, reunification, and growth of Vietnam during the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, the combination of national strength with epochal strength has facilitated Vietnam's successful delivery of the *Doi Moi* process over the past three decades. In fact, one of the great lessons that Vietnam has learned through three decades of *Doi Moi* is the significance of the combination of national strength with epochal strength.[123]

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[122] Ibid., 119.

[123] Viet Thong Nguyen, "*Nhin Lai 30 Nam Doi Moi: Danh Gia Tong Quat Va Bai Hoc Kinh Nghiem*" (Looking back on the thirty years of the *Doi Moi*: General assessments and lessons learnt), *Nhan Dan Online*, December 30, 2015, http://nhandan.com.vn/daihoidangtoangquocxii/nhin_lai_30_nam_doi_moi/item/28400202-danh-gia-tong-quat-va-bai-hoc-kinh-nghiem.html (accessed June 23, 2018).

The idea of combining national strength with epochal strength, whether it is stated explicitly or not in the documents of the CPV, has long been of immense value to Vietnam's national revolution. Such an idea was officially introduced in the documents of the CPV from at least 2003. However, in the Resolution of the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Ninth National Party Congress (2003), the matter of combining national strength with epochal strength was not clearly stated as a separately-expressed point of view. Instead, the emphasis on the mobilization of epochal strength or "externally favorable conditions" was put in relation to the exercise of internal strength, stating that Vietnam needed to "make efforts to bring internal strength into play, at the same time, maximize and make full use of every externally favorable condition" that Vietnam could find.[124]

The Tenth National Party Congress (2006) stressed the importance of bringing into play the "whole-people's strength," and put it as one of the four main themes in the agenda of the Congress. The congress held that "whole-peoples' strength" was a source of national power, a major motivational and decisive factor in securing the sustainable success of the course of construction and defense of the Homeland.[125] The documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress (2011) stated that Vietnam needed to:

> combine national strength with epochal strength, domestic strength with international strength. In any circumstances, there is a need [of Vietnam] to insist on the will of independence, self-control, highly raise the spirit of international cooperation, bring into play internal strength, [and] at the same time make full use of external strength.[126]

The documents of the CPV do not elaborate on the elements of the national strength of Vietnam, nor those of the epochal strength. However, Vietnamese scholars agree that the national strength of Vietnam is made up of material strength (economy, politics, military, and so on) and spiritual strength (the righteousness of which the state is in pursuit, strong patriotism and anti-foreign aggression spirit, long-term cultural traditions, a significant geo-political and geo-economic position). Epochal strength originates from the huge movement of peoples' independence, democracy, great

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[124] Central Department of Ideology and Culture, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Nghi Quyet Hoi Nghi Lan Thu Tam Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa IX* (Materials to study the resolution of the Eighth Plenum of the Ninth Party Central Committee) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2003), 47.

[125] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu X* (Documents of the Tenth National Party Congress) *(*National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006), 116.

[126] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XI* (Documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress), 66.

trends of the world such as the right of independence, self-determination for each state, and the trend of peace and equal cooperation among states regardless whether they are big or small.[127]

Concerning the relationship between national strength and epochal strength, Nguyen Viet Thong points out that the former is the platform for the full use of the latter, the purpose of which is to create the CNS to serve the course of national defense and growth.[128] Similarly, Nguyen Viet Thao argues that external or epochal strength is significant and can be brought into play only when the internal strength has been well established and is sufficient.[129] He also warns that it is significant not to overemphasize any of the two: the overemphasis of national strength nor that of epochal strength. Overstressing the former means belittling the latter. He maintains that seeking external sources will not necessarily lead to dependence on outsiders or a loss of national independence. Any radicalization of national strength can eventually result in conservativism, isolation, and narrowly-minded nationalism. Overstating epochal strength means taking external factors as solutions to all matters and downgrading the role of the national strength. This can lead to a waste of internal leverages or resources, which are of vital importance to national prosperity.[130]

Conclusion

This chapter has presented Vietnamese perspectives on international actors and power in international relations. Whereas the Vietnamese IR community generally appears to be influenced by its overseas counterparts in approaching these matters, it has adapted the concepts to the specific conditions of Vietnam. Regarding international actors, different IR traditions offer various perspectives on the nature of international actors with distinctive features or signs. The only area that IR theories converge concerning international actors is that they are made up of human beings.[131]

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[127] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Tap 2: Duong Loi Cua Dang Cong San Vietnam, Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Danh Cho Lop Boi Duong Du Nguon Can Bo Lanh Dao, Quan Ly Cap Tinh, Thanh Pho* (Volume 2: The line of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Study materials for the training course of potential managerial and leadership officers of provincial and municipal levels), 210.

[128] Nguyen, "*Nhin Lai 30 Nam Doi Moi: Danh Gia Tong Quat Va Bai Hoc Kinh Nghiem*" (Looking back on the thirty years of the *Doi Moi*: General assessments and lessons learnt).

[129] Viet Thao Nguyen, "*Ket Hop Suc Manh Dan Toc Voi Suc Manh Thoi Dai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*" (Combining national strength with epochal strength in the new situation), *Political Theory Journal*, Jan 23 2017, http://lyluanchinhtri.vn/home/index.php/nguyen-cuu-ly-luan/item/1830-ket-hop-suc-manh-dan-toc-voi-suc-manh-thoi-dai-trong-tinh-hinh-moi.html (accessed September 12, 2018).

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ngo, "*Ban Ve Chu The Trong Quan He Quoc Te*" (Discussion on actors in international relations), 225-226.

Many Vietnamese IR writers agree with realist IR advocates in the West who believe that the nation-state is the main actor of the international system. However, Vietnamese scholars also believe in the growing role of non-state actors, including TNCs, in addressing global matters. Such beliefs share the ideology of neoliberal institutionalists who argue for "the relevance of non-state actors'' in addition to state actors in global politics.[132] In Vietnamese literature, an entity is qualified as an international actor if it demonstrates these three properties: engaging cross-national, independent activities for specific goals; having impacts on international relations; and being acknowledged by, or mattering to, other international actors.

Big countries, in Vietnamese accounts, exert a decisive impact on all substantial issues of the contemporary world and the development of the international system in the future. Whereas the Vietnamese IR community tends to identify a "big country" based on its outstanding capabilities (comprehensive national strength or power) and its international influence, there has remained the absence of specific criteria in its identification of big countries. Vietnamese scholars are informed by the traditional Western perception of great powers, revealing that great powers are those "states with the most military power" and the "rules" of the international arena are constructed and played primarily by these powers.[133]

However, unlike traditional Western perceptions, the Vietnamese IR community considers not only outstanding military strength but also dominant capabilities in economic, political, and influential terms in identifying a big country. Global IR scholars have discussed various strategies that would help smaller countries manage bilateral ties with great powers or big countries such as balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, and the like. Vietnamese scholars tend to promote a strategic approach to balanced ties with all big countries. Under this approach, a smaller country needs to identify both aspects of collaboration and aspects for struggling within a bigger country involved. Such identification is contingent upon the specific time and conditions. On the one hand, it needs to promote cooperative activities; on the other hand, it also struggles to prevent or reduce harms or impositions to which the bigger country can cause or put on them.

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[132] Milner, "Power, Interdependence, and Non-state Actors in World Politics: Research Frontiers," 5.
[133] Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," 274.

Similar to the studies on international actors, Vietnamese studies on power in international relations are still modest. Global IR scholars are still divided on the approach to the conception of power. Some approach power as resources (elements of national power), while others as a kind of causation (relational power).[134] Vietnamese literature tends to combine both of the approaches by showing that power is the ability that enables states to achieve their objectives in their inter-state relations. Concerning the exercise of power in global politics, Vietnamese scholars share Western ideas by stating that it depends on specific conditions that if hard power or soft power, or a combination of both should be deployed in international relations. However, Vietnamese scholars believe that soft power tends to be a better option given the evolution of human civilization.

Vietnamese IR writers agree with global IR scholars that CNP (or as referred to CNS by Vietnamese scholars) is made up of a wide range of factors, including material resources, spiritual factors. Vietnamese scholars add that factors beyond the national border can also contribute to CNS. These factors include alliances with other nation-states, external resources that a state can mobilize, and global trends of progress. In addition, they also point out that the domestic resources are "a determinant"[135] to the making of the CNS. To achieve national goals, Vietnamese political writers have introduced the idea of combining internal strength with the epochal or external strength, in which the former plays a crucial role. They also emphasize the right approach to these types of strength, as overstating any one of these can impact negatively on the safeguarding of national independence and self-reliance.

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[134] Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," 291.

[135] Central Department of Ideology and Culture, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Nghi Quyet Hoi Nghi Lan Thu Tam Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa IX* (Materials to study the resolution of the Eighth Plenum of the Ninth Party Central Committee), 47.

Chapter 6

National Interest

National interest is one of the fundamental concepts in the study of IR. As Jutta Weldes pointed out, the concept of national interest has been deployed in international relations for various purposes: to explain the state's policy decisions and behaviors, to serve as the practical guidelines in the making of foreign policy, and to convince the public about the legitimacy of the state's acts.[1] Scott Burchill argued in his book in 2005, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, that while the conception of "national interest" is deployed across IR theories, it has remained a "rhetorical and lexical function" and "lacks substantive object content."[2]

The matter of "nation-state interest" has become a topic of growing interest to the Vietnamese political and IR community over the past decades, as it is the underlying factor of Vietnamese foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* cause. However, it was not until 2011 that the CPV explicitly stated for the first time in the Documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress that the goal of Vietnam's foreign affairs is "to serve the nation-state interest." The CPV also confirmed in the Documents of the Twelfth National Party Congress in 2016 that Vietnam's pursuit of "nation-state's supreme interest" is "based on the fundamental principles of international law, equality, and mutual benefits."[3] Coupled with the introduction of the idea of national interest into the official documents of the CPV, various Vietnamese academic writers have also contributed their understanding on this subject matter. However, as Vu Duong Huan pointed out, Vietnamese studies on this subject matter are just confined to the underlying conceptualization of national interest and the specific national interests of Vietnam under *Doi Moi*.[4]

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[1] Jutta Weldes, "National Interest," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science,* eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 1650-1651.

[2] Burchill Scott, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2005), 211.

[3] Binh Minh Pham, "*Nhung Diem Moi Va Nhung Noi Dung Cot Loi Cua Duong Loi Doi Ngoai Trong Van Kien Dai Hoi XII Cua Dang*" (New points and the key contents of the line of foreign policy in the documents of the Twelfth National Party Congress), *Nhandan Online*, April 25, 2016, http://www.nhandan.com.vn/chinhtri/item/29421802-nhung-diem-moi-va-nhung-noi-dung-cot-loi-cua-duong-loi-doi-ngoai-trong-van-kien-dai-hoi-xii-cua-dang.html (accessed September 13, 2018).

[4] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 147-148.

This chapter aims to investigate Vietnamese political discourse on the idea of national interest, since the introduction of the *Doi Moi* cause. It consists of three sections. The first section discusses the standpoints of the Vietnamese scholar community as well as that of the CPV on the idea of "nation-state interest." The documents of the CPV are frequently regarded as the "official" viewpoints of Vietnam, whereas scholarly works, for a large part, help to elaborate, reinforce, or develop the ideas that have been introduced in the documents of the CPV. The second section examines Vietnamese perspectives on the identification of national interest, including the elements of the current national interests of Vietnam. The third section presents Vietnam's idea of "interwoven interest" and the handling of national interest in international relations. The chapter also discusses, where appropriate, similarities and differences between the Vietnamese viewpoints and those of the West, on issues relevant to the notion of national interest.

6.1. Conceptualizing National Interest

Differences have remained across IR traditions on the concept of national interest. From the realist tradition, the best interest of a state is mainly security and survival.[5] In contrast, the English School tradition views the interest of a state as "enlightened self-interest," and argues that the interests of a state are less vital than those of the whole international community.[6] Similarly, the liberal tradition argues that more priorities should be given to free trade and unrestricted commerce than the protection of national interest, because the promotion of national interest can lead to protectionism and corruption of markets.[7]

The evolution of Vietnamese perception of national interest has taken place over the past several decades. In the Vietnamese language, phrases such as "national interest" (*loi ich dan toc*), "state interest" (*loi ich quoc gia*), and nation-state interest (*loi ich quoc gia-dan toc*) have appeared with high frequency in the media and political discourse in recent decades. However, the meaning of these terms is not precisely the same. The term "national interest" usually refers to the interests that are shared by everyone in a nation. Similarly, "state interest" is mainly adopted to represent the interests of the ruling class of the state. The phrase "nation-state interest" tends to combine the meanings of

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[5] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 61.
[6] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 208.
[7] Ibid., 212.

the two previous terms. In spite of that, these three terms are used interchangeably in Vietnamese literature.[8] However, the term "nation-state interest" is more often used than the other two terms, which represents the interests of both the Party-State and the people of Vietnam both at home and abroad.

Domestic Scholarly Works on National Interest

In the early 1990s, Khoan Vu, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, touched on the matter of "national goals" that were later perceived by many domestic scholars as something akin to "national interest." In the accounts of Vu Khoan, the three main goals that every state-nation aims to achieve are the security goal, the developmental goal, and the goal of external influence, which are pursued through external affairs. He wrote that:

> [e]very nation's external activities are to serve three main goals: (i) to secure sovereignty, national security and territorial integrity (the security goal); (ii) to take advantage of international conditions to build up and develop the nation (developmental goal); and (iii) to bring into play its influence in the international arena (influential goal).[9]

In *Tu Dien Thuat Ngu Ngoai Giao: Viet - Anh - Phap* (The dictionary of diplomatic terminology: Vietnamese – English – French) of 2002, Duong Van Quang and Vu Duong Huan defined national interest as the interests that people in the same country have in common. The dictionary stated that national interest is "the shared interests of the community of those people who live in a nation, sharing the origin, history, customs, and largely spoken and written language."[10]

In a work of 2003, *Quan He Quoc Te – Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), Doan Van Thang echoed the emphasis of Vu Khoan on the importance of "national goals." Doan Van Thang stated that national interest also represents "the needs" of a nation-state. He said that "national interest reflects the needs and goals that a state is in pursuit domestically as well as in its relations

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[8] Dinh Quy Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), *International Studies* 80, no. 1 (March 2010): 115.

[9] Khoan Vu, "*An Ninh, Phat Trien Va Anh Huong Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai*" (Security, development and influence in the activities of foreign affairs), in *Hoi Nhap Va Giu Vung Ban Sac (*Integration and firm preservation of identity), ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995), 205-206.

[10] Van Quang Duong and Duong Huan Vu, *Tu Dien Thuat Ngu Ngoai Giao Viet – Anh – Phap* (Vietnamese – English – French dictionary of diplomatic terminology) (Hanoi: The Gioi Publisher, 2002), 63.

with other states and international organizations."[11] In *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics) in 2008, Duong Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An tended to synthesize the existing Vietnamese perception of national interest. They wrote that:

> [T]he national interest is the overall of interests in economics, politics, culture, society, security, sovereignty, territorial integrity… of a state in its relations to other states and international actors. It reflects the need and goal of survival and development of the state in its international relations.[12]

In 2009, Vu Duong Huan further argued that the national interest is also "an essential tool for foreign policy analysis."[13] It means that national interest can be viewed as criteria to assess whether the nation state's foreign policy is efficient and appropriate. In 2016, Hoang Khac Nam clarified that only interests that a state pursues through external relations are named "national interest."[14]

As such, Vietnamese scholars' conception of national interest represents both the inherence of the previous domestic thought and the development of thinking over time. Vietnamese IR scholars tend to define national interest in terms of goals and needs that a nation-state needs to achieve or meet, through the deployment of external relations, in order to survive, grow and exert influence on international relations.

The CPV Documents on National Interest

The CPV's perception of national interest has unfolded over time since the introduction of the *Doi Moi* policy. The Sixth National Congress of the CPV in 1986 paved the way for a new chapter in Vietnam's history of development. As discussed in Chapter 3, the 1988 Politburo Resolution No. 13 of the CPV marked a milestone in the shift of Vietnam's foreign policy thinking. The shift from a "two-camp" worldview to the perception of interdependence has changed the way that Vietnam engages with the outside world. Instead of stressing the ideological factor, Vietnam has viewed national interest as the guideline for its activities in foreign affairs.

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[11] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 75.

[12] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 50.

[13] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 152.

[14] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 58.

However, it was not until at least 1988 that the term "interest" (*loi ich*) officially appeared in the documents of the CPV. The incorporation of the concept of national interest into the CPV documents signals the growing importance of the matter and the new foreign policy thinking of the CPV in the post-Cold War era. Despite that, the vocabulary for this conception was expressed differently. The documents usually used various expressions such as "the interest of our Party and people" (*loi ich cua Dang va nhan dan ta*), and "the best interest of our peoples" (*loi ich cao nhat cua dan toc ta*). In Resolution No. 13 of 1988, which was never published, but later revealed by a Politburo member, the perception of the national interests of Vietnam was expressed in general terms only. The Resolution stated that "the best interest of our Party and people is to consolidate and firmly maintain peace to concentrate strength for building up and developing the economy."[15]

The Soviet Union was once a "cornerstone" of Vietnam's foreign policy during the Cold War. Hence, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in late 1991 urged Vietnam to reconsider its foreign policy. Taking place almost six months after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Third Plenum of the Seventh National Congress of the CPV in 1992 gave more reasons to stress the importance of the national interest, instead of ideological factors as previously. In his opening address, General Secretary Do Muoi stated that the goals of "peace" and "development" helped "serve the best interest of our people" at this stage.[16] Such goals would enable Vietnam "to quickly escape the crisis, firmly uphold and enhance political stability, socio-economic development, for wealthy people, a strong nation, firmly safeguard the independence and freedom of the Homeland, [and] to serve the best interest of our nation."[17]

Notably, the plenum introduced, for the first time, four principles or slogans to manage Vietnam's external affairs. The first principle called for the assurance of national interest in diplomatic activities. It reads: "to assure the righteous interests of the nation, a skillful combination of patriotism and internationalism [is required] of the working class."[18]

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[15] Co Thach Nguyen, "*Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi Va Tu Duy Moi Cua Chung Ta*" (Changes in the world and our new thinking), *Journal of International Relations*, no. 1, (1990): 7.
[16] Manh Cam Nguyen, *Doi Moi Ve Doi Ngoai Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te* (Renovation on external relations and international integration) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2009), 65.
[17] Ibid.
[18] The four principles are: (1) to assure the righteous interests of the nation, a skillful combination of patriotism and internationalism [is required] of the working class; (2) to uphold independence, autonomy, self-reliance, self-strengthening, enhance the multilateralization and diversification of foreign affairs; (3) to grasp the duality of cooperation and struggle in international relations for our justified national interests; and (4) to join international

In 2003, the Eighth Plenum of the Ninth National Party Congress adopted a resolution on the strategy of safeguarding the homeland in the new situation, setting out six goals that Vietnam needed to achieve. The fourth goal is "to safeguard the nation-state interests."[19] The document of the plenum regarded "national independence that was closely attached to socialism" as "the fundamental nation-state interest." It also stated that "the best interest of the nation" means "maintaining a peaceful environment, stability for the socio-economic development, the implementation of industrialization, [and] modernization with a socialist orientation."[20]

In 2006, the Tenth National Party Congress reaffirmed that "the highest goal" of Vietnam's external activities is for the sake of the national interest.[21] In addition to the reaffirmation of the significance of nation-state's interest to Vietnam's foreign affairs, the Twelfth National Party Congress in 2016 elaborated the grounds of Vietnam's national interest. It pointed out that Vietnam's pursuit of national interest is based on "the fundamental principle of international law, equality, and mutual interests."[22] Stated another way, the national interests for which Vietnam strives are not narrow-minded or egoistic interests.[23]

In 2011, Pham Binh Minh pointed out the reasons why Vietnam has been taking national interest as the guideline for formulating and deploying Vietnamese foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* period. First of all, national interest is the most important principle for formulating and deploying foreign policy, because failing to comply with this principle would result in acts impacted by ideological factors and feelings. Second, only when the national interest works as the guideline for action would it create a

cooperation, concurrently, expand relations to all countries, especially, attach great importance to balanced ties with big countries. Cited in Van Hung Bui, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Trong Thoi Ky Doi Moi Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te* (Vietnam's foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* and integrational period) (Hanoi: Judicial Publishing House, 2011), 39.

[19] The six goals are: (i) to firmly safeguard independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity; (ii) to safeguard the Party and the state, its people and the socialist regime; (iii) safeguard the cause of the *Doi Moi*, the country's industrialization and modernization; (iv) to safeguard the nation-state interests; (v) safeguard the political security, social order and safety, and the culture; and (vi) to firmly maintain political stability, peaceful environment and the country's socialism-oriented development. Consulted in Central Department of Ideology and Culture, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Nghi Quyet Hoi Nghi Lan Thu Tam Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa IX* (Materials to study the resolution of the Eighth Plenum of the Ninth Party Central Committee), 45-46.

[20] Ibid., 46-47.

[21] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu X* (Documents of the Tenth National Party Congress), 114.

[22] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IX* (Documents of the Ninth National Party Congress), 153.

[23] Hung Nguyen, "*Loi Ich Quoc Gia – Dan Toc La Nguyen Tac Toi Cao Cua Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai*" (Nation-state interest is the supreme principle of external relations), *Vov.vn,* August 24, 2016, http://vov.vn/chinh-tri/loi-ich-quoc-giadan-toc-la-nguyen-tac-toi-cao-cua-hoat-dong-doi-ngoai-543351.vov (accessed July 21, 2018).

consensus between the CPV and the people, and between the domestic population and overseas Vietnamese. Third, since all countries in the world view national interest as the most fundamental principle for their external activities, it is understandable and acceptable that Vietnam has also stated this principle in its documents for foreign policy. Fourth, stressing national interest as the principle for foreign affairs would help reduce differences in ideological terms between Vietnam and other countries.[24]

6.2. Identifying National Interest

Global IR theories on national interest lack consensus on what constitutes the best interest of a state. In his book entitled, *National Interest*, Joseph Frankel contends that existing IR scholarship on national interest can be grouped into "objectivist" and "subjectivist" approaches. The former states that the elements of national interest are the "permanent interests" of a state. They include "geography, history, neighbors, resources, population size, and ethnicity." The latter views national interest as "changing preference or priorities," meaning that the identification of the elements of national interest is subject to changes in the political elite of the state. In other words, they are contingent upon factors such as ideology, religion, and class.[25]

From the Vietnamese perspective, the identification of the elements of national interest is affected by both internal and external factors. While internal factors play a crucial role in the process, external ones are indispensable and cannot be ignored. As a result, the interests of a nation-state are not fixed but changing, subject to internal and external changes. In other words, the elements of national interest are subject to a historical context, or "a particular period of history."[26]

For Vietnamese scholars, the internal factors consist of both the "objective" and "subjective" compositions. The internal factors, as Duong Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An point out, cover a wide array of issues falling within the state's border. They include, but are not limited to, economics, politics, security, culture, society, state-citizen relations, interest groups, corporations, and so on.

[24] Binh Minh Pham, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*" (Some reflections on the shaping of the new foreign policy) in *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Den 2020* (Strategic directions of Vietnamese diplomatic towards 2020), ed. Binh Minh Pham (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011), 62.

[25] Joseph Frankel, *National Interest* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), 27.

[26] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 152.

These factors interact and sometimes compete against one other.[27] Among the internal factors, in the account of Dang Dinh Quy, the interest of the state's ruling class is the most important element that affects the identification of the national interest.[28] Echoing the view of Dang Dinh Quy, Hoang Khac Nam holds that "interest groups," especially statesmen who are involved in the process of the identification and deployment of the national interest, are of vital importance to the identification of the national interest. Hoang Khac Nam notes that the complexity of the interaction among internal factors would result in the possibility that the so-called "national interest" turns out to be the interest of the ruling class. Even worse, it is simply the result of the competition and compromise among interest groups of the state.[29]

Regarding external factors, the international environment or context plays a significant role in determining the state's national interest. Major features or trends of the region or the world can exert considerable impact on issues within the state. Similarly, it is through the international environment that the state pursues its interests.[30] As a result, an understanding of international circumstances, especially of the international structure and the world order, is crucial for the state to identify its interests. Such an understanding enables those who are involved in the process of foreign policy to take advantage of potential opportunities but reduce any disadvantages that the international environment presents.[31]

The Vietnamese IR community shares global IR scholars' views on "objective" and "subjective" compositions in the identification of national interest. These compositions are grouped in the Vietnamese literature as "the internal factors" in the identification of the national interests. Vietnamese scholars add that external factors (the environment beyond the state's borderline) affect the identification of national interest. However, they believe that internal factors play a decisive role in the process. The Vietnamese IR community notes that both internal and external factors are closely

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[27] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 51-52.
[28] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 132.
[29] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 58.
[30] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 130.
[31] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 159.

linked to each other. They not only impact on the identification of the national interest, but also influence the methods that a state can deploy to achieve its aims.[32]

Vietnam's National Interests in the Doi Moi Era

The global discourse of politics has introduced diverse ways of classifying national interest. In terms of the significance, national interest can be ranked as vital, extremely important, important, less important, or secondary.[33] In terms of areas, national interest can be grouped into political-security interests, economic or developmental interests, and cultural-societal interests.[34] In terms of duration, national interest can be classified into strategic or long-term interests, medium-term interests, and short-term interests. In terms of scope, national interests can be categorized into overall interests and specific interests.[35]

Some Western scholars believe that the identification of national interest requires "hard choices."[36] Sharing this standpoint, Dang Dinh Quy states that the identification of national interest is difficult due to three main factors. The first is the difference in the interests of those who are involved in the making and deployment of foreign policy. The second involves differences in the perception of the elements of national interest, and the methods to achieve them. The third is associated with a lack of consistencies in the regulations of the agencies that are relevant to formulating and deploying the foreign policy.[37]

For Vietnamese scholars, the national interests of Vietnam change over time. Vietnam's national interest in each of its historical period during the Cold war differed. Soon after Vietnam declared its independence on September 2, 1945, the newly established government had to fight both "internal foes, external aggressors." The best national interest of Vietnam at the time was to defend the newly-

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[32] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 130.
[33] Robert Ellworth, Andrew Goodpaster, and Rita Hauser, "America's National Interests: A Report from the Commission on America's National Interests," *The Commission on America's National Interests* (2000): 6-8.
[34] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 154-156.
[35] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 59-60.
[36] Ellworth, Goodpaster, and Hauser, "America's National Interests," 13.
[37] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 118.

established government and mobilize forces in preparation for a potential war.[38] Between 1946 and 1975, when Vietnam had no choice but to fight fierce resistance wars against the French invasion, and American engagement, Vietnam's primary national interest was to defeat the aggressors.[39] Around the mid-1980s, Vietnam had to face a severe socio-economic crisis on the domestic front, and international isolation, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Vietnam's allies, on the international front. Hence, the CPV stated in 1988 that "the best interest of our Party and people is to consolidate and firmly maintain peace to concentrate strength for building up and developing the economy."[40]

In the *Doi Moi* era, Vietnamese IR writers still differ in what they perceive as the best interests of Vietnam. In a publication of the Foreign Ministry of Vietnam in 1999, a group of Vietnamese authors argued that the best interest of Vietnam in *Doi Moi* is "wealthy people, strong country, equal and civilized society."[41] That phrase was later incorporated in the Documents of the Tenth National Party Congress in 2006 as "wealthy people, strong country, equality, democracy, and civilization." However, the order of the phrase was modified in *Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Le Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Bo Sung Va Phat Trien Nam 2011* (The platform for the construction of the country in the transitional period to socialism [supplemented and developed in 2011]) to "wealthy people, strong country, democracy, equality, and civilization." It should be noted that the change of order in wording ("democracy" before "equality") signals the evolving perception of the CPV. It represents the more important goal of "democracy" as compared to "equality" in the construction of a socialist-oriented Vietnam.[42]

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[38] Huy Ngoc Dao (ed.), *Tong luan 50 nam Hoat dong ngoai giao Viet Nam* (General conclusion of Vietnam's 50-year activities in foreign affairs) (Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999), 80-81.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Nguyen, "*Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi Va Tu Duy Moi Cua Chung Ta*" (Changes in the world and our new thinking), 7.

[41] Dao, *Tong luan 50 nam Hoat dong ngoai giao Viet Nam* (General conclusion of Vietnam's 50-year activities in foreign affairs), 80-81.

[42] Huu Nghia Le, "*Dac Trung Cua Xa Hoi Chu Nghia Trong Cuong Linh – Muc Tieu Phan Dau Cua Toan Dang, Toan Dan Ta Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do*" (Socialist distinctiveness in the platform – The striving goal of the whole Party and people in the transitional period), *CPV Online Newspaper*, September 30, 2015, http://dangcongsan.vn/tu-lieu-van-kien/tu-lieu-ve-dang/lich-su-dang/doc-0930201510393746.html (accessed July 27, 2018).

In 2009, Vu Duong Huan wrote that the six goals (except the fourth one as it is related to national interest itself) that were introduced by the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Ninth National Party Congress in 2003 are the current national interests of Vietnam.[43] The goals are to:

1. Firmly safeguard independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity;

2. Safeguard the Party and the state, its people and socialist regime;

3. Safeguard the cause of *Doi Moi* (renewal), the country's industrialization and modernization;

4. Safeguard the nation-state interest;

5. Safeguard political security, social order and safety, and the culture;

6. Firmly maintain political stability, a peaceful environment, and the country's socialism-oriented development.[44]

It is noted that though these elements of the national interest are not ranked in order of importance, such as "survival," "necessary" or "less importance," they represent the "prioritized interests" which Vietnam aims at. As the then General Secretary of the CPV Nong Duc Manh stated, the two most prioritized interests that the Plenum pointed out were: (i) to persist the goal of national independence, which is attached to socialism; and (ii) to firmly safeguard a peaceful and stable environment for the socio-economic development.[45]

Years later, other scholars have echoed the argument of Vu Duong Huan on the elements of the national interest of Vietnam. In 2015, Viet Thai Tran wrote that during the past three decades of *Doi Moi*, Vietnam's best interest has been not only to defend its independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. It has also been to defend the CPV and the stability of the political system, the successful completion of the country's industrialization and modernization, and deeper integration of the country into the world.[46] In the same year, in a textbook on IR, a group of authors from HCMNAP pointed out that the current interests of Vietnam are:

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[43] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 158.

[44] Central Department of Ideology and Culture, *Tai Lieu Hoc Tap Nghi Quyet Hoi Nghi Lan Thu Tam Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa IX* (Materials to study the resolution of the Eighth Plenum of the Ninth Party Central Committee), 45-46.

[45] Duc Manh Nong, "*Phat Bieu Cua Tong Bi Thu Be Mac Hoi Nghi Trung Uong 8*" (The general secretary's closing speech at the Eighth Plenum), *Nhandan Newspaper*, July 13, 2003.

[46] Viet Thai Tran, "*Dat Loi Ich Quoc Gia – Dan Toc Len Tren Het*" (Putting nation-state interests first), *The World and Vietnam Report,* October 31, 2015, http://baoquocte.vn/dat-loi-ich-quoc-gia-dan-toc-len-tren-het-17979.html (accessed March 5, 2018).

to build socialism successfully and firmly safeguard the Homeland, [ensure] a rapid socio-economic development, an equal, democratic, [and] civilized society, [and] to maintain political stability.[47]

As such, most Vietnamese scholars identify the current interests of Vietnam in terms of the overall goals that have been mentioned in the documents of the CPV. Also, these works do not mention the order of importance of these interests as well as elaborating the grounds on which the interests of the nation are based. However, Dang Dinh Quy holds that the nation-state interest of Vietnam in foreign policy consists of two groups of interest: a group of survival interests and a group of developmental interests. He notes that the elements and the order of priority of each of these two groups are framed subject to a vast array of factors, yet the three most important are the ruling class's interests, the national synergy, and the international environment. He also believes that there is a dialectical relationship between these two groups. The pursuit of the latter is to create conditions to assure the former, and the pursuit of the former is, in turn, to create conditions to pursue the latter.[48]

The group of survival interests represents conditions that Vietnam continues its survival at a level that is not worse than the one that Vietnam has achieved. This group is comprised of five components in order of importance as follows:

(1)   Sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity;

(2)   External peace, domestic stability, and order;

(3)   Assurance of the safe lives of the people: food hygiene to be guaranteed, the environment not to be downgraded;

(4)   Assurance of economic security: markets (domestic and export-import); food security, water security; financial security; [and] information security;

(5)   Maintenance of Vietnamese people's identities.[49]

Dang Dinh Quy also notes that when any of these five constituents is at risk, the survival of the nation will be challenged; as a result, they are non-negotiable. Also, while the compositions of the

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[47] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics Institute of International Relations, *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te - He Cu Nhan Chinh Tri)* (The lecture book of International Relations - Bachelor of Political Science program) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2015), 339-340.

[48] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 132.

[49] Ibid., 130-131.

latter two are not as crucial as the former three, they are increasingly urgent in the context of Vietnam nowadays.[50]

The group of developmental interests consists of conditions that continuously help improve the living standards of Vietnamese people and the comprehensive national strength. They include:

(1) The constant enhancement of the capability of firmly upholding the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, assurance of national security;

(2) The constant enhancement of the people's living standards;

(3) The expansion of developmental space: expanding markets (domestic, external; export and import); increasing the capability of accessing to the human race's advanced knowledge, technology, [and] capital; obtaining a position that is more advantageous to the labor distribution at the regional and global scale;

(4) The bringing into play of Vietnamese people's identities;

(5) The attainment of a higher status in the international arena.[51]

He also notes that among these five constituent elements, the third and fifth are both the goal and the means of pursuing the nation-state's interest. These two are regarded as both a part of the measurement of the national synergy and the means that play an increasing role in enhancing the national synergy against the backdrop of Vietnam's deeper and more comprehensive integration into the region and the world.[52]

The approach of Dang Dinh Quy to the national interest of Vietnam has been echoed by the works of Shaohua Hu, a foreign scholar, on the configuration of the interests of a state. By applying Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, Shaohua argues that the four primary elements of the interests of a state in order of importance are national security, economic benefits, international status, and cultural influence.[53] He explains that:

> national survival and security often take precedence over all other preferences. If national security is not at stake, economic welfare looms large. Next, all countries prefer higher international status and great powers in particular set store by their credibility and prestige. Increasing cultural influence is no doubt a preference of all.[54]

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[50] Ibid., 131.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 130-132.
[53] Shaohua Hu, "A Framework for Analysis of National Interest: United States Policy toward Taiwan," *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 1 (2016): 147.
[54] Ibid.

It is noticeable that the perception of Dang Dinh Quy not only covers the four primary elements as suggested by Shaohua, but it also implies the short-term and long-term interests of which Vietnam is in pursuit. The two groups of interest mentioned are closely connected to each other and play a crucial role in the formulation of a well-functioned nation-state (people, territory, government, and international recognition).[55]

6.3. The Idea of Interwoven Interest and the Handling of National Interest

National interest is the primary goal that states try to advance in their external relations. Influenced by the Marxist approach, the Vietnamese political and IR community believes that interest is the root of cooperation and conflict, or peace and war in international relations. Cooperative acts can take place when states share the same interests, and conflict occurs when the interests conflict. Accordingly, "interwoven interest" (*dan xen loi ich*) is the basis for cooperation in international relations. In a 2017 journal article, Pham Binh Minh, a member of the CPV Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam states that "[I]interwoven interests in international relations refer to the overlapping of interests between different countries, wherein the interest of one would contain that of another and vice versa."[56] He also points out three factors that formulate the interwoven interest in international relations. The first is the sharing of geographical, historical, and cultural values. The second is the evolution of regional and global development trends, especially internationalization, regionalization, and globalization. The third is the strategy and policy that state actors adopt.[57]

Interwoven interest among states takes multiple forms and reflects in various areas.[58] In economic terms, the intermixed interest is promoted by increasing linkages and connections in trade and services as a result of the promotion of market principles and globalization. In political terms, shared interest is obtained by shared views and visions of international security and initiatives of collaborative mechanisms. In terms of security and defense, intertwined interests are advanced by

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[55] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 131.

[56] Binh Minh Pham, "USA-China Interwoven Interests in the Asia-Pacific: Vietnam's Perception and Response Policy in Current National Defense," *International Studies*, no. 36 (June 2017): 21.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 21-22.

concerted acts to address traditional and non-traditional threats or challenges. In cultural and societal terms, the enhancement of people-to-people exchanges on multiple domains, similar backgrounds in history, culture, language, religions, and policies to promote the connection of culture, all contribute to the development of interwoven interest.[59]

Pham Binh Minh also states that the intermingling of interest can bring about opportunities for states to strengthen collaborative acts, and to restrain themselves in handling differences or conflicts of interest. Interconnected interest, in particular, helps reduce the possibility of direct military confrontation or extreme acts. In case of serious conflicts of interest, big countries or great powers might not want to confront each other directly. They can, in reality, use "proxy wars" instead of waging a direct war to settle the conflicts.

Smaller power or states, if they are too dependent on great powers, might face the risk of being "betrayed" by great powers in the case of compromises between big powers.[60] However, smaller states can avoid such a scenario if they adopt a line of foreign policy that is independent and self-reliant. That would enable them to manage the acts of "push" or "pull" of great powers. They can even take advantage of their "strategic values" in relation to great powers to enhance resources that would help strengthen themselves.[61]

As national interest is crucial to nation-states in international relations, handling matters of national interest requires careful consideration or "hard choices" for many state actors.[62] The pursuit of national interest, as Dao Huy Ngoc pointed out in 1999, is based on national goals (or "revolutionary duties"), the specific circumstance of the nation, and the global context. In other words, identifying national priorities in foreign policy is crucial to secure national interests in the long term.[63]

Similarly, in 2010, Dang Dinh Quy stressed the importance of comprehensive national strength in the identification and pursuit of national interest. He stated that the identification of nation-state interest

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[59] Ibid., 21-23.
[60] Ibid., 23-24.
[61] Ibid., 25.
[62] Ellworth, Goodpaster, and Hauser, "America's National Interests," 13.
[63] Dao, *Tong luan 50 nam Hoat dong ngoai giao Viet Nam* (General conclusion of Vietnam's 50-year activities in foreign affairs), 80.

is based on or adaptive to the actual level of national synergy because the most appropriate means to achieve the interest is subject to the national synergy.[64]

Vietnamese scholars acknowledge that the pursuit of the national interest is actually "the pursuit of state survival" in an anarchical international system. They, however, do not limit such a pursuit to the "territorial concerns of the state" as perceived by the realist tradition.[65] They state that the identification and pursuit of the national interest must explicitly take into account the interests of other states or relevant parties, including those of the whole international community.[66] A fine balance of interests among relevant states or parties would help maintain and promote the common grounds for cooperative acts.[67] The promotion of interwoven interest can create harmonized interest,[68] which helps boost inter-state cooperation.

In Vietnamese IR literature, the promotion of the shared interests of all human beings is more significant than the narrow-minded pursuit of national interest. Each nation-state nowadays is part of the international community and increasingly interconnected to one other under the force of globalization. Global issues such as environmental pollution, pandemics, poverty, population growth, international organized crime, terrorism, climate change, the potential of devastating wars, and so on require the collective efforts of states to solve them. The solving of these issues is not necessarily beneficial to one single state, but all human beings on earth. Put in another way, while national interest is of vital importance to each state, the interest of the whole international community cannot be ignored.[69] That point of view is shared by the approach of the English School tradition, which points out that "it is wrong for national interest to be promoted without regard for the impact of policy on others and international morality in general."[70]

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[64] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 130.

[65] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 207.

[66] Vu, *Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy, Volume 1), 154.

[67] Nam Tien Tran, "*Loi Ich Quoc Gia Trong Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Thoi Ky Doi Moi*" (National interest in Vietnam's foreign affairs in the *Doi Moi* period), *Vietnam Social Sciences Review* 71, no. 10 (2013): 30.

[68] Pham, "USA-China Interwoven Interests in the Asia-Pacific: Vietnam's Perception and Response Policy in Current National Defense," 23.

[69] Duong and Luu, *Giao Trinh Quan He Chinh Tri Quoc Te* (The textbook of international relations of politics), 57.

[70] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 208.

In 2010, Dang Dinh Quy, former President of the DAV, introduced the four principles in the identification and pursuit of nation-state interest in foreign affairs.

> The first principle is to satisfactorily resolve the five types of interest: individual, group, class, state (nation), and interstates. Theoretical and empirical studies indicate that it is difficult to resolve these types of interest satisfactorily because individuals or groups who are involved in the identification or pursuit of nation-state interest tend to be influenced by their egoistic perspectives. As a result, in order for this matter to be solved satisfactorily, it is necessary to enhance the sharing of information, devise the most appropriate working mechanisms for the process, and build consensus.

> The second principle is to satisfactorily resolve the relationship between "the specific" and "the overall." The identification and pursuit of nation-state interest must be taken into consideration the state's general interests ("the overall") rather than interests from a particular circumstance ("the specific"). Interests from a particular circumstance are always correlated to general interests. However, the correlation between "the specific" and "the overall" is not always complementary: it is sometimes contradictory. Therefore, for each instance of a specific circumstance, it is essential to scrutinize and evaluate whether or not "the specific" is "at odds" with "the overall"; if so, it is necessary to manage to gain the "specific" but try to minimize the negative impacts on "the overall" as a result of "the specific."

> The third principle is to satisfactorily resolve the relationship between "short-term" interests and "long-term" interests. Whereas the former can be achieved immediately or in a brief time, the latter tends to last long and to grow more significant and beneficial to the existence and development of a nation in the long run. It is fundamental that the gaining of "short-term" interests must not cause trouble to the gaining of "long-term" interests; especially, it is necessary to try not to set a bad "precedent" causing difficulties in achieving national interests in the future.

> The fourth principle is to harmonize with the general trends of the world in managing the national interest. Harmonizing with the general trends, international laws and norms related to the national interest would enable state actors to reduce the likeliness of being "at odds" with other states and avoid the possibility of achieving "short-term" interests at the expenses of the "long-term" ones. [71]

Dang Dinh Quy also noted that the identification and deployment of foreign policies are affected by many factors such as institutional conditions, the mindset, and the problem-solving habits of those involved in the process. As a result, the application of these principles would minimize difficulties in, and bring about, consistency throughout the process of foreign policy.

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[71] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period), 132-133.

Conclusion

The concept of national interest is divisive. From the classical realist perspective, national interest serves as a tool for analysis and a guide for the action of nation-states in international politics.[72] In the words of Rosenau, it is deployed as a means "to describe, explain, and assess the foreign policies of nations."[73] Likewise, constructivists contend that national interest is the goal that a state pursues in its foreign policy.[74] In contrast, from a liberal perspective, the concept of national interest does not have much of its erosive sense due to the increasing preference of "unrestricted and unregulated commercial ties" in a globalized world.[75] Vietnamese IR scholars acknowledge that globalization has an enormous impact on national sovereignty and territory. They also state that the pursuit of national interest through foreign policy has been a universal trend of post-Cold War international relations.[76]

Vietnamese IR scholars stand somewhere between their various Western counterparts regarding the identification and pursuit of national interest. On the one hand, they concur with the realist IR perspective that national interest can serve as a guideline for state behavior in international relations, and can be achieved through the foreign policy. On the other hand, they disagree with classical realist IR advocates who declare that national interest is fundamentally "permanent," "fixed, politically bipartisan and always transcend changes in government."[77]

Vietnamese scholars, however, believe that in addition to "objective" factors, as classical realists argue, national interest is also framed by "subjective" factors. This point of view is similar to IR constructivists who emphasize the subjectivity or changing features of the formulation of state interests. Vietnamese scholars add that the identification of the national interest is also affected by external factors or the international environment. As such, the interests of a state are not fixed but change over time. For example, Vietnam's best national interest during the first two Indochinese wars (1945-1975) was to defend its independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. However, Vietnam's best interest under the era of *Doi Moi* has been not only to defend its independence,

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[72] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 32.

[73] J. N. Rosenau, "National Interest," in *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. II,* eds. D. L. Sills (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1964), 35.

[74] Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 3 (1996): 276,

[75] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 209-210.

[76] Pham, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*" (Some reflections on the shaping of the new foreign policy), 62.

[77] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 36.

sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, but also to defend the CPV and the stability of the political system, the successful completion of the country's industrialization and modernization, and ensure a deeper integration into the region and the world.[78]

From the realist IR perspective, security and survival are the essential elements of the state's interest.[79] Whereas Vietnamese scholars share similar views to the realist IR approach, they also stress that the pursuit of state interests must be legitimate *(chan chinh)*, not "narrow-minded or egoistic."[80] In words of Dao Huy Ngoc, "putting the national interest first does not mean egoistic nationalism."[81] From the Vietnamese perspective, whereas the state's activities in foreign affairs are to serve the state's legitimate national interest, they contribute to the state's international responsibilities.[82] The "righteous" pursuit of the national interest from the Vietnamese perspective also implies that such a pursuit is "based on fundamental principles of international law, equality and mutual interests in international relations."[83]

Vietnamese scholars argue that in addition to the interests of a state, the interests of other states and the whole human race must be taken into consideration when a state formulates and pursues its interests. This point of view appears to be similar to the idea of "international morality" or "a world common good"[84] under the English School tradition. From Vietnamese perspectives, it is not, however, the "international morality" which transcends state sovereignty and territorial integrity as IR liberalists aim to advance. Rather, it is the promotion of interests of states in international relations that must be based on international law and norms. As such, the Vietnamese IR community tends to emphasize "a balance of interest" (*can bang loi ich*) between and among relevant states or parties,

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[78] Thai Viet Tran, "*Dat Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Len Tren Het*" (Putting nation-state interests first), *The World and Vietnam Report*, October 31, 2015, http://baoquocte.vn/dat-loi-ich-quoc-gia-dan-toc-len-tren-het-17979.html (accessed July 12, 2018).

[79] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 208.

[80] Nguyen, "*Loi Ich Quoc Gia – Dan Toc La Nguyen Tac Toi Cao Cua Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai*" (Nation-state interest is the supreme principle of external relations).

[81] Dao, *Tong luan 50 nam Hoat dong ngoai giao Viet Nam* (General conclusion of Vietnam's 50-year activities in foreign affairs), 81.

[82] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics Institute of International Relations, *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te – He Cu Nhan Chinh Tri)* (The lecture book of International Relations – Bachelor of Political Science program), 339-340.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 208.

including the shared interests of all states, the international community, and all human beings when state actors pursue their interests.[85]

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[85] Tran, "*Loi Ich Quoc Gia Trong Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Thoi Ky Doi Moi*" (National interest in Vietnam's foreign affairs in the *Doi Moi* period), 30.

Chapter 7

Cooperation and Conflict

Cooperation and conflict are the primary forms of interactions among international actors in transnational transactions. The study of cooperation and conflict has been "an enduring task"[1] for many IR scholars around the globe. As international relations are "not a zero-sum game," they consist of the "elements of both conflict and cooperation."[2] However, under Intriligator's accounts in 1994, previous studies had put more concentration on international conflict (such as potential conflicts and conflict resolutions) than international cooperation.[3]

As Duncan Snidal and Michael Sampson explain, early IR research focused much on international conflict as a result of the introduction of Hobbesian perspective on global politics, revealing that international cooperation was precluded due to the existence of the "perilous state," "insecurity, mutual fear, and distrust" among states.[4] However, with the expansion of interdependence and globalization, global IR studies have shifted the focus to the possibility of cooperation, problems of cooperation and mechanisms (institutions and governance arrangements) as promoters of international cooperation.[5] Such a shift helps provide a "productive and innovative reorientation of scholarly and policy discussion."[6]

In the Vietnamese literature, whereas international conflict is inevitable, cooperation has been a significant trend of the post-Cold War era. In an assessment of the upcoming situation of the world, the political report of the Twelfth National Party Congress in 2016 stated that "… peace, peoples' independence, democracy, [and] cooperation and growth are still significant trends […], cooperation,

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[1] Robert Jervis, "Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 42.

[2] Michael D. Intriligator, "From Conflict to Cooperation in the Study of International Security," in *Cooperative Models in International Relations Research*, eds. Michael D. Intriligator and Urs Luterbacher (Boston, MA: Springer, 1994), 48.

[3] Ibid., 47.

4 Duncan Snidal and Michael Sampson, "Interstate Cooperation Theory and International Institutions," *Oxford Bibliographies*, May 19, 2017, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0093 (accessed July 30, 2018).

5 Ibid.

[6] Intriligator, "From Conflict to Cooperation in the Study of International Security," 47.

competition and struggle, and interdependence among nations, especially big ones are on the increase," and that

> the violation of national sovereignty, disputes of territorial and natural resources, conflict of ethnicities, religions, intervention for regime changes, terrorism, contracted wars, cyber warfare… are continuing to take place severely in many regions [of the world].[7]

This chapter consists of three sections. The first two sections explore Vietnamese perspectives on the conception of cooperation and conflict in international relations. It also puts in the comparison between the perspectives of the Vietnamese IR community and those of Western scholars where appropriate. The third section links the relationship between cooperation and conflict in international relations to Vietnam's styled idea of "object of cooperation" (*doi tac*) and "object of struggle" (*doi tuong*) in international relations. This conception is associated with Vietnam's tactic of "both cooperation and struggle at the same time" (*vua hop tac, vua dau tranh*) in foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* era. It discusses the context of the conception, the identification, and the handling of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" in Vietnam's inter-state relations. This chapter concludes that the Vietnamese political and IR community presents both convergent and divergent views, as compared with the West, on the idea of cooperation and conflict in international relations.

7.1. Cooperation in International Relations

The notion of international cooperation is central to many debates in IR theories. Early scholarly works on cooperation among states were introduced between the late 1970s and early 1980s.[8] In 1992, as Helen Milner pointed out in a journal article, "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strength and Weaknesses," worldwide scholars on cooperation among nations have gained a consensus on the definition of cooperation and introduced a wide range of game-theoretic constructs to explain the conditions of cooperative acts. However, Milner also stated that the conception of cooperation "has proved to be as elusive to realize as to analyze."[9]

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[7] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa XI Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII Cua Dang*" (Political report of the Eleventh Party Central Committee at the Twelfth National Party Congress).

[8] Snidal and Sampson, "Interstate Cooperation Theory and International Institutions."

[9] Helen Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," *World Politics* 44, no. 3 (1992): 466-467.

The Vietnamese IR community tends to focus more on the real-life, rather than theoretical dimensions, of cooperation and conflict in international relations. Hence, most of the Vietnamese scholarly works on theoretical aspects of international cooperation and conflict have been published only since the early 2000s and are very modest in quantity these days. These works represent initial domestic attempts to investigate this subject matter.

7.1.1. Conceptualizing International Cooperation

The Vietnamese IR community believes that international cooperation has become a growing trend of international relations of the post-Cold War era. This point of view is reflected in both the official documents of the CPV and scholarly works.

In 1992, the CVP stated that one of the three trends of the post-Cold War world is that "countries with different socio-political regimes cooperate and struggle with one another in peaceful co-existence."[10] The documents of the Eighth National Party Congress in 1996 reaffirmed the peaceful co-existence among "different socio-political regimes" of the world. It also stated that "peace, cooperation, and development are the growing and urgent demands of nation-states in the world," and that "big and small countries have become more involved in the process of regional and international cooperation, and in the linkages of economic, trade, and other realms."[11] In subsequent national Party congresses, the CPV also restated that peace, cooperation, and development are still "big trends"[12] that "reflect the urgent demands of nation-states." [13]

In a journal article of 2016, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te"* (Forms of international relations: International conflict and cooperation), Doan Van Thang defined international cooperation as "a circumstance in which two or more sides are aligned or take joint actions under a certain form to achieve goals that the sides can accept."[14] As Doan Van Thang pointed out, there are

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[10] Ha Hong, "*Tinh Hinh The Gioi Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Ta*" (The world's situation and our foreign policy), *Communist Review* (December 1992).--.

[11] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VIII* (Documents of the Eighth National Party Congress), 77-78.

[12] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu X* (Documents of the Tenth National Party Congress), 73.

[13] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XI* (Documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress), 66.

[14] Van Thang Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), *International Studies* 107, no. 4 (2016): 185.

two main elements of collaborative acts among states: (1) the goal for cooperation, which could be equally shared or acceptable to the relevant parties; and (2) interconnected acts of the relevant parties, which could either be direct involvements or cause reciprocal impacts in a certain form that is accepted by all the parties involved.[15]

In 2016, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), Hoang Khac Nam shared the viewpoint of Doan Van Thang. However, Hoang Khac Nam also added the "peaceful" aspect of cooperative acts. He wrote that "international cooperation is the peaceful collaboration of international actors to implement the shared objectives."[16] In Hoang Khac Nam's accounts, the use of violence or force is absent in the definition of collaborative acts.

Hoang Khac Nam identifies four distinctive features of international cooperation. These features help to differ cooperation from other forms of transnational interactions. They are reflected in relation to international actors, goals, behaviors and results. Accordingly, regarding the actors, international cooperation exists only when there is the engagement of state or non-state actors in transnational activities. Regarding the goals, international cooperation is conducted to achieve the goals that are shared by the actors involved. With regards to the behaviors, international cooperation refers to peaceful interactions between or among actors, which means the exclusion of the use of violence. Concerning the results, international cooperation usually brings about the results of a similar type, which could be either satisfied or unsatisfied to all the parties involved.[17]

Hoang Khac Nam also notes that, whereas both international cooperation and international integration refer to the peaceful collaboration between or among international actors to achieve shared goals, international cooperation and international integration are not the same. International cooperation is the necessary foundation for international integration. In other words, international integration is an advanced form of international cooperation.[18] A detailed discussion of the difference between international cooperation and international integration is discussed in Chapter 8.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 223.

[17] Ibid., 222.

[18] Ibid., 224-225.

7.1.2. Reasons for Cooperation

Influenced by the dialectical materialism of the Marxist doctrine, Vietnamese IR scholars state that *interest* is fundamental to international cooperation.[19] Acts of cooperation among states in global politics originate from interests. Collaborative acts emerge only when states share the interests of cooperation though it is not necessary that these interests are equal or the same to all the relevant parties.[20]

Vietnamese scholars believe that both internal demand and external conditions inspire collaborative acts among states. The internal demand refers to the national interest that states pursue in transnational activities. As Doan Van Thang explains, cooperative acts among states stem from domestic demands for survival and growth of each nation-state. As most states are not self-sufficient, they seek to supplement from external sources to overcome the shortage of resources within their national border.[21] Notably, collective acts are inspired by each nation-state's internal demand for a peaceful environment so that they can concentrate their efforts on national development.[22]

In Vietnamese literature, the existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction urge national leaders, both in capitalist or socialist countries, due to "mutual dependence," to take into consideration the issues of peace and war, especially possible damages in case of nuclear warfare. Hence, states need to enhance collaborative acts to reduce the potential risks of such damaging wars.[23]

The external conditions are associated with the growing demand for solving global matters in the context of globalization, interdependence and advances in science and technology. The post-Cold War world faces complicated global matters such as global warming, pollution, epidemics, the exhaustion of natural resources, the existence of the mass destruction weapons and their potential to cause damage, and growing threats of other non-traditional security issues. As each nation-state is not able to solve these matters alone, they need to collaborate with others to tackle them. Tackling

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[19] Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), 185.
[20] Ibid., 186.
[21] Ibid., 187-188.
[22] Van Hien Vu and Dinh Bon Bui, *Buc Tranh The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2017), 108-111.
[23] Ibid.

these problems is to protect the general interests of humankind, which turns out to contribute to each state's interests.[24]

According to Pham Binh Minh, globalization has promoted "interwoven interests" (*dan xen loi ich*) among international actors.[25] The interconnectedness of interests is the platform for collaborative activities. The more interests that international actors share, the more likely they to promote cooperative acts.[26] Doan Van Thang links international cooperation to the demand for the maintenance of world production. International cooperation was traditionally connected to the demand for production and trade. In a globalized world, competitions for trade and production grow fiercer, laying the foundation for the formulation of cooperation in terms of politics, security, and other domains to manage the world's material production.[27] In addition, advances in the areas of science and technology are also conducive to international cooperation. These advances can even play a greater role in inter-state relations,[28] as they make cooperative acts technically easier and more convenient. These factors have facilitated cooperation among nation-states with different socio-political systems.[29]

As such, Vietnamese perspectives on international cooperation have similarities and differences with Western IR theories. As discussed above, Vietnamese scholars hold that transnational cooperation has been promoted to advance state interests, which can be achieved through foreign policy. Helen Milner also states that, in the global IR literature, the concept of cooperation refers to the goal-directed behaviors of the cooperating parties through their policy adjustments to obtain "gains or rewards." The two most crucial elements of cooperative acts are the goal(s) and the adjustment of behaviors (policies) to achieve the goal(s).[30]

Worldwide IR scholars have pointed out three different ways to achieve cooperation in international relations. Correspondingly, cooperation can be achieved by being (1) "tacit" (without communication

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Pham, "USA-China Interwoven Interests in the Asia-Pacific: Vietnam's Perception and Response Policy in Current National Defense," 21.

[26] Ibid., 23.

[27] Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), 187-188.

[28] Ibid., 188.

[29] Vu and Bui, *Buc Tranh The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world), 108-111.

[30] Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," 468.

or explicit agreement), (2) "negotiated" (with explicit bargaining process), and (3) "imposed" (the weaker party who is forced to adjust their policy to match that of the stronger party). However, Vietnamese IR scholars refute the third way of defining the phenomenon. They state that cooperation "must be voluntary and based on the principle of equality, mutual benefits and no interference in each other's internal affairs."[31]

The Vietnamese IR community shares similar views to liberal IR perspectives on explaining cooperative acts in international relations. Vietnamese IR scholars tend to reaffirm that globalization and interdependence are conducive to transnational cooperation. From this point of argument, interdependence, especially in trade, encourages inter-state cooperation, and helps reduce the possibilities of the occurrence of violent conflicts. As Nye and David put it, "[i]nterdependence refers to a situation in which actors or events in various parts of a system affect each other," and "globalization is the subset of interdependence that occurs at global distances."[32] In the words of Viotti and Kauppi,

> [i]n an increasingly globalized world, liberals see states, international and non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, groups, and individuals operating in complex arrays of overlapping or cross-cutting coalitions and networks.[33]

For neoliberal institutionalists, as rational actors, states promote transnational cooperation to maximize their absolute gains. Also, the emergence of global-level issues, especially security, environment, human rights, drug trafficking, terrorism, among others, requires states to coordinate with one another to reach a consensus and tackle them.[34] Similarly, under the accounts of Vu Van Hien and Bui Dinh Bon, increasing interdependence among states, especially in economic terms, and the emerging non-traditional security issues require states to make concerted efforts to solve these global issues as no one single country in the world can solve them itself.[35]

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[31] Vu and Duong, *Tu Dien Thuat Ngu Ngoai Giao Viet – Anh- Phap* (Vietnamese – English – French dictionary of diplomatic terminology), 52.

[32] Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: Introduction to Theory and History*, 9th edition (New Jersey, Pearson Education: 2011), 261.

[33] Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, 5th edition (London: Pearson Longman, 2012), 130.

[34] Farah Naaz, "Liberalism," in *International Politics: Concepts, Theories and Issues,* ed. Rumki Basu (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2012), 163.

[35] Vu and Bui, *Buc Tranh The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world), 108-111.

Influenced by the Marxist perspective, Vietnamese scholars argue that interest is the root cause of cooperation or conflict in inter-state relations. States promote cooperative acts when they can find common benefits. This line of argument is different from the traditional realist school of thought. Classical realists believe that the anarchical nature of the international system encourages competition and conflict; thus, it hampers collaborative acts among states even in the case of their shared interests.[36] As Waltz pointed out in *Theory of International Politics* that:

> the impediments to collaboration may not lie in the character and the immediate intention of either party. Instead, the condition of insecurity—at the least, the uncertainty of each about the other's future intentions and actions—works against their cooperation.[37]

Vietnamese scholars stress that survival and security are the most crucial goals of a state, which is similar to what classical realists posit. However, they diverge the realist perspective on the matter of cooperation. From Vietnamese perspectives, survival and development are the underlying factors that encourage inter-state cooperation rather than impeding collaborative acts as realists argue. As Doan Van Thang explains, in some cases, conflict is also the cause of transnational cooperation. Such collective acts are promoted to counteract some *other* individuals or groups of people or states. As a result, cooperation is "inevitable," a "rule-natured phenomenon" of human society.[38] However, whereas international cooperation is an "objective trend" and "inevitable," how a nation-state conducts its international cooperation depends on their capabilities and policies. Doan Van Thang even argues that transnational cooperation could be a "double-bladed knife," which means that a nation-state would fall into foreign dependence rather than "interdependence" if they do not have appropriate approaches.[39]

7.2. Conflict in International Relations

Like the concept of cooperation, the concept of conflict among states has long been fundamental to many debates across IR theories. Many global IR scholars believe that conflict in international

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[36] Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 485.

[37] Quoted in Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation, "500.

[38] Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), 185.

[39] Ibid., 188-189.

relations is the result of policy-making people, and they use game theoretical constructs to explain particular dimensions of conflicts among states.[40]

7.2.1. Conceptualizing International Conflict

As mentioned in the previous section, interest defines the matter of cooperation and conflict in international relations. Cooperation among international actors takes place when they find the shared interest, and conflict emerges when the interests are contradicted. Put another way, the difference in objectives, a representation of interests, causes conflict in transnational interactions.

Doan Van Thang connects international conflict to national interests. In other words, inter-state conflicts take place when the pursuit of national interest of a state harms or contradicts that of others. He puts it as:

> a circumstance in which a state's implementation of foreign policy goals (also the pursuit of the national interests) causes harms or destroys to those of other states mainly in terms of economics, security, territory and natural resources which are the very fundamental elements for the state's survival and development.[41]

Hoang Khac Nam defines international conflict as "a social circumstance that occurs when there are two or more international actors whose objectives, perception or behaviors contradict each other in the same matter of relevance."[42] However, in a later work of 2016, he modifies his previous definition of international conflict by removing the phrase "the perception and behaviors" from the definition.[43] In the accounts of Hoang Khac Nam, contradiction is the social nature of the conflict. There is no conflict without contradiction.[44]

Hoang Khac Nam also distinguishes conflict from war. He states that war is the most advanced form of conflict; not all conflicts would lead to wars. As a result, proper resolutions to a conflict would prevent a potential war.[45] A conflict is distinguished from a war by four differences. The first

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[40] Stephen L. Quackenbush, "Game Theory and Interstate Conflict," *Oxford Bibliographies*, May 19, 2017, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0071 (accessed November 21, 2017).

[41] Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), 174.

[42] Khac Nam Hoang, "*Khai Niem Va Co So Cua Xung Dot Quoc Te*" (Notion and basis of international conflicts), *European Studies Review* 68, no. 2 (2006): 14-15.

[43] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 192.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Hoang, "*Khai Niem Va Co So Cua Xung Dot Quoc Te*" (Notion and basis of international conflicts), 16-17.

difference is related to the nature and severity of contradiction. In a war, the contradiction regularly reflects an opposition that has developed into a level that needs to be solved. This contradiction is usually linked to the interests that are too fundamental to be negotiated. On the contrary, in a conflict, the contradiction takes different forms with the diversified nature and severity of contradiction. The second difference is associated with the use of violence or military capabilities. While a war is always attached to the use of military capabilities, most conflicts can be solved without the use of force. The exception is that in an "armed conflict," violence is used.

The third difference is linked to the scale of force used, and the consequences. A war is usually conducted with a massive deployment of military force, an elevated level of social mobilization, and takes place for a considerable duration. A war usually causes an enormous number of deaths, and has remarkable impacts on the parties involved. In contrast, the use of military force, as in the case of an "armed conflict," can be deployed but frequently in a limited manner, and the consequence of a conflict is usually not as enormous as that of a war. The fourth difference is connected to the parties involved. Parties to a conflict are varied, which can be an individual, a group of individuals, or the nation-state. However, parties to a war are only political entities, which can be political parties or socio-political factions of a nation-state. Hoang Khac Nam also notes that, in reality, for political purposes, there are wars that are called "armed conflicts" as a way to avoid being criticized by the public.[46]

Table 7.1. Differences between Conflict and War

Criteria	Conflict	War
Nature and intensity of the contradiction	varied in degrees and nature	antagonistic, severe
In relation to the use of violence or force	likely or unlikely	always
Scale (objectives, forces, and consequence)	limited	enormous
Participants	varied	political entities only

Source: Khac Nam Hoang, Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te (Textbook of Introduction to International Relations) (Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press, 2016), 195.

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[46] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 194-195.

7.2.2. Conflict Origins and Resolutions

The Vietnamese IR community is influenced by the Marxist dialectical, materialistic perspective on the identification of the origin of international conflict. They link international conflicts to contradictions between and among international actors involved.

Origins of Conflict

The idea of "fundamental contradictions" (*mau thuan co ban*) of global politics, which was first introduced and underwent modifications during the Cold War,[47] has still existed in the Vietnamese political discourse today. In a book lecture on IR of 2014, the four contradictions in the current era of the world are presented as follows. The first contradiction is the one between socialism and capitalism, which is the fundamental contradiction throughout the current epoch in both theoretical and empirical terms. This contradiction represents the two opposing socio-economic models of the world, which is irreconcilable.[48]

The second is the one between the bourgeoisie class, and the working class and laboring people. Capitalists are not able to survive without maintaining the exploitation of the surplus value from the world's working class and laboring people. The contradiction between capital and labor is fundamental in the current stage of the epoch (the post-Cold War era), and tends to burst out when modern capitalism and transnational corporations impose on and control the working class and laboring people of countries.[49]

The third is the one between developing and least developing countries, and advanced capitalist countries. This contradiction represents the former's fight for the safeguarding of peoples' independence, stability and growth.[50] The fourth is the one between and among advanced capitalist countries, superpowers, capitalist centers, and transnational capitalist corporations. This type of

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[47] Vuving, "The Shaping of Foreign Policy: Vietnamese Grand Strategy after the Cold War," 26-28.

[48] Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, *Giao Trinh Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri, Khoi Kien Thuc Thu Ba, Cac Van De Khoa Hoc Chinh Tri Va Lanh Dao, Quan Ly, Tap 13, Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of advanced course of political theory, The third strand of knowledge, Issues of the political science and leadership, management, Volume 13, International relations), 25-29.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

contradiction is inevitable because of unequal growth among capitalist countries, the operational

mechanisms of capitalism, and the practice of "bigger fish swallow smaller ones."[51]

In addition to these fundamental contradictions, a major contradiction (*mau thuan chu yeu*) exists in

this stage of the epoch. It is the contradiction between the extremist and hawkish forces of

imperialism, and those who fight against such forces for the sake of peace, peoples' independence,

stability, substantial development and human dignity.[52]

The CPV stated in 2011 that "[t]he fundamental contradiction in the world with different forms and

various degrees still exist and grow."[53] However, the tone and the reiteration of these contradictions

in the Vietnamese political discourse and media appears to be less vigorous in recent decades,

parallel to Vietnam's efforts to integrate into the region and the world. In a book of 2017, *Buc Tranh

The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world), Vu Van Hien and Bui Dinh Bon argued

that in the post-Cold War world, socialism and capitalism are co-existing peacefully, and developing

cooperation for mutual benefits. Such cooperative acts take place in all aspects, at both bilateral and

multilateral fora on a global scale. As a result, they are not in an opposing stance as in the Cold War.[54]

Nevertheless, it is not necessary that Vietnam has abandoned the conception of contradiction in

international relations.

Vietnamese IR scholars hold that contradiction is the cause of international conflict. Conflict among

states results from the contradictions of interests and viewpoints.[55] From the Marxist perspective,

contradiction is the nature and driving force for the growth of human beings and societies.[56]

Contradiction originates from differences between and among human beings, societies (structure,

compositions, values, points of view, and so on), and states (geography, history, population, natural

resources, military, economic strengths, level of development, and the like) among others.[57] These

differences would lead to a conflict of interests, objectives, opinions, and behaviors.[58]

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi (Bo Sung, Phat Trien Nam 2011*" (The Platform for national building in a transitional period to socialism, Supplemented and developed 2011).

[54] Vu and Bui, *Buc Tranh The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world), 25-26.

[55] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 111.

[56] Hoang, "*Khai Niem Va Co So Cua Xung Dot Quoc Te*" (Notion and basis of international conflicts), 17-19.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Consequently, conflict in international relations is inevitable and existent in all areas such as economics, politics, culture, societies, and so on. International conflict takes various forms, ranging from competition for more power or economic leverages, to disagreement of values and the like. It also varies from the state, the regional to global levels.[59]

Conflict resolutions

The phrase "conflict resolution" is sometimes replaced by synonyms such as conflict settlement, conflict termination, or conflict management.[60] Barsky defines conflict resolution as "any process used to manage, determine, or settle differences that may arise among individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, nations, or any other social unit."[61] However, A. J. R. Groom explains conflict resolution as both "a situation and a process." He states that,

> [a] conflict is resolved when all the parties to a dispute agree that it is over for good, in full knowledge of the situation, and without any form of coercion, whether personal, manifest or structural since they acknowledge that their respective interests and values have been satisfied.[62]

Worldwide IR scholars use the term conflict resolution to refer to a "process" or "a situation" in which differences or disputes among all parties involved are settled or come to an end. Groom also points out that the outcome of a conflict resolution varies. It could be a diktat imposed by a victor, a negotiated settlement involving compromise and lengthy negotiations, a stasis outcome, and a full resolution.[63]

Doan Van Thang and A. J. R. Groom have some points of view in common on the ending of a conflict such as the involving of negotiation, the imposition from the stronger side(s) to the weaker side of the conflict, and compromise among conflicting parties. Doan Van Thang also observes the following ways to resolve conflicts among international actors. First, one or all relevant parties withdraw the demands that have caused the conflict. Second, all relevant parties proceed to negotiate to reach a resolution that can be acceptable to all the parties involved. Third, the use of force or the imposition

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[59] Ibid.

[60] A. J. R. Groom, "Conflict Resolution," in International Encyclopedia of Political Science, eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 392.

[61] Allan E. Barsky, "Conflict Resolution," *Oxford Bibliographies*, April 28, 2017, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195389678-0026 (accessed July 8, 2018).

[62] Groom, "Conflict Resolution," 391.

[63] Ibid., 391-392.

of pressure on the economy, military, and diplomacy on the weaker party is sometimes observed to end the conflict. Fourth, a third party or the intermediary can be deployed to terminate the conflict. Fifth, all parties to the conflict accept the superpower's compromises.[64]

However, Doan also notes that since there are almost no general resolutions to all international conflicts, any resolutions would take these matters into account: (1) the nature of the conflict; (2) the distinctive features of all relevant parties; (3) the relative forces of the parties involved; (4) the level of interdependence among the parties involved; and (5) the decision-makers' perception of the conflict. In the account of Doan Van Thang, in reality, the end of a conflict is subject to a series of factors. They include the domestic circumstance of the parties involved, the perception of the interests of the conflicting parties, the level of direct engagement of all relevant parties, a comparison of relative forces, and the degree of interdependence among the conflicting parties.[65]

In short, Vietnamese scholars contend that international conflict is linked to conflictual interests. As states in the international system are diverse in background, differences among them are unavoidable. Such differences lead to conflicts of interest when states interact with others. Stated in another way, widespread conflict and competition in the transnational transaction are inescapable. In Vietnamese literature, whereas conflict of interest causes conflicts in inter-state activities, the nature of the international system also leads to conflict among states. From realist IR perspectives, international politics is full of mistrust, insecurity, and fears among states, which makes it hard for states to maintain substantial cooperative acts. Realist IR advocates claim that anarchy and egoism are favorable to conflict and competition rather than cooperation.[66] As such, Hoang Khac Nam shares a realist perspective on the cause of inter-state conflict. He states that the anarchy of the international system is the condition that maintains and prolongs conflicts in international relations. As states under an anarchic system are cautious of each other and strive for more power to secure themselves, conflict among states emerge, and in many cases, violence is inevitable.[67]

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[64] Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), 183-184.
[65] Ibid., 184.
[66] Jack Donnelly, "Realism," in *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd edition, eds. Scott Burchill et al. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 37.
[67] Hoang, "*Khai Niem Va Co So Cua Xung Dot Quoc Te*" (Notion and basis of international conflicts), 20.

7.3. The Idea of "Object of Cooperation" and "Object of Struggle"

Describing the phenomena of cooperation and conflict, Michael Banton wrote:

> [W]hen there is cooperation, humans work together in pursuit of common objectives. When there is competition, they struggle with one another in contests governed by rules that determine who succeeds and that identify the sanctions to be imposed for noncompliance. When there is conflict, either no rules are recognized, or any relevant rules are not properly enforced. While rules may be embodied in laws or treaties, there may be a dispute about their application.[68]

From the Vietnamese perspective, cooperation and conflict are not separate from and exclusive of each other. In other words, they go hand-in-hand with each other. International actors perform collaborative acts to achieve their aims or interests. However, due to differences in terms of interest, perception, and behaviors, they have to compete or struggle with one another in the process of cooperation. As Doan Van Thang explains, even in an alliance, whereas cooperative acts are dominant, there remains the possibility of a conflict of interests among the parties involved.[69] As such, cooperation and struggle (or conflict) in inter-state relations can take place at the same time.

7.3.1. Conceptualizing "Object of Cooperation" and "Object of Struggle"

As discussed in Chapter 3, the mid-1980s witnessed Vietnam's embarking on a dramatic shift in its worldview from the "two-camp" theory to the Soviet-based perception of "an interdependent world" or "mutually connected and integral world" in which the growth of one state is interconnected to other states.[70] Whereas cooperation and integration are the general trends of post-Cold War international relations, conflict still exists. Through transnational activities, international actors pursue their interests that are diversified and can even be conflictual to those of others. Such conflict

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[68] Michael Banton, "Conflicts," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, eds. Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 395.

[69] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 106.

[70] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy," 8.

of interest compels them to struggle to secure their aims. Hence, both cooperation and struggle in inter-state relations are inevitable.[71]

However, it is not necessary that all struggles hamper cooperative acts because the struggle can take multiple forms and be taken up with various methodologies.[72] As Vu Van Hien and Bui Dinh Bon stress, the underlying factor that defines Vietnam's idea of "both cooperation and struggle at the same time" (*vua hop tac, vua dau tranh*) is the inevitable existence of conflict in international relations and the acceptance of the co-existence between socialism and capitalism in the post-Cold War period.[73] From Vietnamese perspectives, cooperative acts are promoted not only to achieve shared interests but also serve as a way of performing struggling acts. In turn, an appropriate form and method of struggling, which is dependent upon a specific conflict in a specific circumstance, can help maintain and expand chances for collaborative engagement.[74] The ultimate aim of the struggle is to prevent the collapse of collaborative acts.[75]

The idea of "both cooperation and struggle at the same time" is arguably one of the breakthroughs in the new thinking of Vietnamese foreign policy since the adoption of *Doi Moi*. This perception is elaborated in the documents of the CPV and identified as an "object of cooperation" (*doi tac*) and an "object of struggle" (*doi tuong*) in Vietnam's external relations. The ideas of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" were officially introduced in the CPV document of 2003, namely "*Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*" (Strategy for the safeguarding of the homeland in the new situation). This document stated that:

> those who advocate the respect of independence, sovereignty, establish and expand friendly and cooperative ties [with Vietnam] based on equality and mutual benefits are our "object of cooperation" (*doi tac*). Any of those forces who have conspiracy and actions that harm our goal of building and safeguarding the Homeland are our "object of struggle" (*doi tuong*).[76]

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[71] Van Hien Vu, *Vietnam Va The Gioi Duong Dai* (Vietnam and the contemporary world) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2014), 32.

[72] Ibid., 28-30.

[73] Vu and Bui, *Buc Tranh The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world), 107.

[74] Minh Quan Le, *Hoa Binh – Hop Tac Va Phat Trien: Xu The Lon Tren The Gioi Hien Nay* (Peace - cooperation and development: Big trends of the current world) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2010), 115.

[75] Doan, *Quan He Quoc Te – Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches), 101.

[76] Trinh and Nguyen, *Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Viet Nam Hien Nay (Hoi Va Dap)* (International relations and Vietnam's foreign policy at present (Questions and answers)), 157.

During the Cold War, Vietnam tended to adopt such terms as "ourselves–our enemies" (*ta-dich*) or "friends-foes" (*ban-thu*) to refer to international actors with which Vietnam was engaged. These terms present Vietnam's two-camp worldview of the Cold War. While the term "ourselves" or "friends" denotes the socialist-friendly force, "our enemies" or "foes" refers to the capitalism-favored world. In the post-Cold War era, the concept of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" are introduced to replace the old terms. The change in vocabulary is not simply the change of word use, but it represents Vietnam's innovative approach to international actors. It is contingent upon specific conditions that Vietnam identifies aspects of cooperation and aspects of the struggle in relation to international actors. As a result, continuing the adoption of these old terms would have impeded Vietnam's efforts to integrate into the region and the world. The updated terms would also enable Vietnam to advance the principle of "fixed in objectives, flexible in tactics" (*di bat bien, ung van bien*) in the management of its foreign affairs.[77]

In the Vietnamese language, "object of cooperation" (*doi tac*) refers to the one that shares joint efforts and helps each other in a specific relationship. "Object of struggle" (*doi tuong*) means either the one that people aim at understanding and taking actions, or the one whom others need to study to move to a closer relationship or being acceded to in an organization.[78] In a macro perspective, under the accounts of Nguyen Minh Duc, each "object of cooperation" or "object of struggle" can be identified as a full entity (one individual, one group of individuals – an organization, or a nation-state). However, from a micro perspective, each of them is incomplete (not perceived as a full entity). It means that each is perceived as just one or more than one constituent element or certain dimension of a full entity.[79]

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[77] Chuyen Quang and Ha Manh, "*Nhan Thuc Ve Doi Tac, Doi Tuong Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Hien Nay*" (Perception of the object of cooperation, the object of struggle in international integration at present), *Journal of All People's National Defense*, February 9, 2015, http://tapchiqptd.vn/vi/dua-nghi-quyet-cua-dang-vao-cuoc-song/nhan-thuc-ve-doi-tac-doi-tuong-trong-hoi-nhap-quoc-te-hien-nay/6998.html (accessed May 19, 2018).

[78] Minh Duc Nguyen, "*Nhan Thuc Cua Dang Ta Ve "Ban – Thu," "Dich – Ta," "Doi Tac – Doi Tuong," Ve Chu Dong, Tang Cuong Hop Tac Quoc Te Ve Quoc Phong, An Ninh Trong Qua Trinh Doi Moi Dat Nuoc*" (Our Party's perception on "friends-enemies," "foes-ourselves," "object of cooperation – object of struggle," [and] the active enhancement of international cooperation on national defense and security in the cause of renovating the country) in *Su Phat Trien Tu Duy Ly Luan Cua Dang Cong San Viet Nam Ve Bao Ve To Quoc Xa Hoi Chu Nghia Qua 30 Nam Doi Moi (1986-2016)* (The CPV's development of theoretical thinking on the safeguarding of the socialist Homeland throughout the thirty years of *Doi Moi* (1986-2016)), ed. Xuan Yem Nguyen (Hanoi: The People's Public Security Publishing House, 2014), 68.

[79] Ibid., 69.

As such, it is subject to a specific circumstance that each "object of cooperation" or "object of struggle" is interpreted as a full entity or as one or more than one constituent element of a full entity. Notably, both "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" can be interwoven into one full entity. It means that this entity is identified as an "object of cooperation" for some dimensions or aspects, and as an "object of struggle" for the other dimensions or aspects.[80]

As Phan Trong Hao explains, the distinction between "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" is crucial for nation-states to deploy their inter-state relations. Identifying these two aspects can constantly be changing because such identification is dependent upon international actors who can quickly change themselves to adapt to the fast-changing context of global politics. In addition, the identification of national interest also changes over time. Under the two-camp world in the Cold War, relations among nations were mainly based on "ourselves, our friends and our foes." Hence, the identification of factors for cooperation or struggle at the time would be not as difficult as it is in the post-Cold War era. The post-Cold War era has witnessed changes in the perception of allies, partners, or foes as a result of major changes in socio-political institutions worldwide.[81] Under globalization, the expansion of inter-state relations and growing interdependence among states make it difficult and more complex to distinguish "object of struggle" from "object of cooperation."[82]

Whereas it is crucial to differentiate the two, it must be flexible in distinguishing them because the line between the two is sometimes blurred in reality. The most fundamental principle to make a distinction between "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" in international relations is the national interest.[83] From the interest-based approach, "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" bring about different outcomes. Whereas the former brings about beneficial results, the latter leads to harmful consequences.[84]

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Trong Hao Phan, "*Phuong Phap Luan Phan Tich Moi Quan He Giua Doi Tac Va Doi Tuong Trong Nhan Thuc Cua Dang Ta*" (Methodology to analyze the relationship between the object of cooperation and the object of struggle in our Party's perception), *VASS Institue of Philosophy*, July 2008, http://philosophy.vass.gov.vn/nghien-cuu-theo-chuyen-de/Thuc-tien-xa-hoi/Phuong-phap-luan-phan-tich-moi-quan-he-giua-doi-tac-va-doi-tuong-trong-nhan-thuc-cua-Dang-ta-543.html (accessed March 3, 2019).

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

While the national interest can work as a general guideline, it is only in specific circumstances that a decision on whether an international actor is an "object of cooperation," or "object of struggle," or which aspects for cooperation and which aspects for struggle can be made. There is no eternal-lasting "object of cooperation," nor invariant, unchangeable "object of struggle." Stated in another way, both "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" can change over time. There is even the possibility of transformation from "object of cooperation" to "object of struggle" and vice versa.[85]

7.3.2. *Identifying and Managing Groups of "Object of Struggle" and "Object of Cooperation"*

The political discourse of Vietnam identifies the following three groups of "object of cooperation" and two groups of "object of struggle" in relation to Vietnam's foreign affairs. It also offers ways to manage them. The three groups of "object of cooperation" are presented as follows. The first group is related to those reliable partners who share similar interests with and have no intention of inflicting damage on Vietnam. They are partners with strategic potentials who can be upgraded to an overall, in-depth level of cooperation for mutual benefits.

The second group is comprised of those partners who have good relations in economic terms, but harbor elements that potentially cause Vietnam to face political difficulties. For this group, Vietnam finds it necessary to explore similarities and reduce differences through the implementation of cooperative acts. The third group consists of those nation-states who have economic exchanges and cooperative acts with Vietnam, yet harbor the conspiracy of violating the territorial sovereignty of, or take actions against Vietnam. These states are identified as both "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" at the same time.[86] For the group, Vietnam maintains economic and trade ties, but heightens its alertness to defeat their potential conspiracy against Vietnam.[87]

Regarding the two groups of "object of struggle," the first group is identified as those who have the conspiracy to remove the socialist regime of Vietnam. It consists of anti-revolutionary forces which combine the "peaceful transition" strategy with other forms of intervention, such as rebellions and regime

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Huu Phu Phung, Van Dang Nguyen and Viet Thong Nguyen, *Tim Hieu Mot So Thuat Ngu Trong Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII Cua Dang* (Learning some terminologies in the documents of Twelfth National Party Congress) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2016), 127.

[87] Ibid.

changes, the purpose of which is to gain victory without waging warfare.[88] Since the elements of this group are identified, Vietnam needs to heighten its alertness and proactively prevent potential threats and fight against them.[89] The second group is made up of those who have conspiracy and carry out tricks to violate the independence and territorial sovereignty of Vietnam.[90] For this group, Vietnam is determined to recognize their conspiracy and harmful acts and adopt a specific and appropriate policy towards them, even though the elements of this group are distinctive and very "sensitive" in Vietnam's foreign affairs.[91] The following table is a summary of Vietnam's identification of groups of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" and how to manage them.

Table 7.2. "Object of Cooperation" and "Object of Struggle" and How to Manage Them

Identified	Who	How to manage
Object of cooperation	Reliable partners who share similar interests, and do not intend to cause damage to Vietnam	Promote all-rounded and deep ties for mutual benefits
	Partners with good economic connections, yet with elements that potentially harm Vietnam politically	Explore similarities and reduce differences through cooperative acts
	Nation-states with economic exchanges and cooperative acts with Vietnam, yet with intentions to violate Vietnam's territorial sovereignty; with actions against Vietnam	Be identified as both "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" at the same time; maintain economic and trade ties, yet heighten alertness to defeat a potential conspiracy
Object of struggle	Forces with conspiracy to remove the socialist regime of Vietnam	Heighten alertness and proactively prevent potential threats and fight against them
	Forces with conspiracy, and previous, existing tricks to violate the independence and territorial sovereignty of Vietnam	Uncover their conspiracy and tricks and adopt specific and appropriate policies towards them

Source: Compiled by the author with reference to the work: Huu Phu Phung, Van Dang Nguyen and Viet Thong Nguyen, Tim Hieu Mot So Thuat Ngu Trong Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII Cua Dang (Learning some terminologies in the documents of Twelfth National Party Congress) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2016), 127-128.

It appears that Vietnamese literature does not name any specific country as "object of cooperation" or "object of struggle" for various reasons, which could be diplomatically or politically sensitive. More importantly, the changing nature in the identification of "object of cooperation" and "object of

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[88] Ibid., 127-128.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 127-128.

struggle" makes it impossible to name any specific countries or international actors under these categories. Instead, such an identification can only be made in specific circumstances.

The existing IR Vietnamese literature also reveals that there is a dialectic relationship between "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle." For each "object of struggle," there are still dimensions or aspects with which a nation-state needs to take advantage of and cooperate. In contrast, and for each "object of cooperation," there are still differences and conflicts with which a nation-state needs to struggle.[92] On the one hand, it is crucial to differentiate "object of cooperation" from "object of struggle," it is also crucial, on the other hand, to recognize the interweaving and the possibility of transformation between these two.

Handling "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" is crucial to the effective implementation of the foreign policy. Upon the expansion of inter-state relations, the emergence of inter-state conflict is inevitable. Struggling with "object of struggle" does not necessarily mean a confrontation. The "object of struggle" needs to be managed and understood in the first instance, and the nation-state can find ways to build trust among the parties involved. Also, the narrow-minded perception of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" is avoided, as in many cases, there remain possible dimensions of cooperation that the nation-state can promote in relation to the "object of struggle" and vice versa.

The Vietnamese IR community believes that dealing with "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" is based on the interests of the nation-state. However, Vietnam does not advocate the promotion of selfish and egoistic interests or the advancement of interests for one side and the ignorance of those of others, because doing so would show disrespect, inequality, and cause harm to collaborative acts towards the "object of cooperation." The selfishness rather than reciprocity could eventually result in the transformation of "object of cooperation" into "object of struggle." Therefore, building mutual trust and respect is necessary to construct more partners or "object of cooperation" in international relations.[93]

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[92] Trinh and Nguyen, *Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Viet Nam Hien Nay (Hoi Va Dap)* (International relations and Vietnam's foreign policy at present (Questions and answers)), 157.

[93] Phan, "*Phuong Phap Luan Phan Tich Moi Quan He Giua Doi Tac Va Doi Tuong Trong Nhan Thuc Cua Dang Ta*" (Methodology to analyze the relationship between the object of cooperation and the object of struggle in our Party's perception).

Conclusion

As the two central phenomena of inter-state interactions, cooperation and conflict have long been the topics of interest to many IR scholars around the globe. Liberalists believe that cooperation and competition are the two major processes of inter-state relations, although the latter dominates. In contrast, from a realist perspective, cooperation among states is only temporary because states mistrust one another due to the anarchical nature of the international system, which eventually impedes cooperative acts.[94] From the Vietnamese perspective, although conflict and competition in international relations also grow fiercer and more complicated, inter-state cooperation has become a significant trend of international relations since the end of the Cold War.[95]

Influenced by the Marxist approach, the Vietnamese IR community tends to explain cooperation and international relations in terms of interest or benefits. Accordingly, when there are shared interests, there is the possibility of collaborative acts among states. Such perception appears to share the point of views of many Western IR scholars who argue that cooperation requires "reciprocity."[96] However, since the conflict of interests among states arising through the interaction is inevitable, conflict in international relations is inevitable. The growing "interwoven interest" among international actors facilitated by globalization in an interdependent world has added impetus to cooperative acts in inter-state relations. As such, Vietnamese scholars share the view with the global perspective of globalization and interdependence in explaining the growing trend of collaborative behaviors in international relations.

In the words of Intriligator "[c]ooperation is, in many respects, the neglected 'other side of the coin' of conflict."[97] The Vietnamese political and IR community states that cooperation and conflict are not separate from and exclusive of each other. States can even promote cooperative acts as a way to minimize potential conflicts. Cooperation can also be achieved by way of struggle as the aim of the struggle is to promote cooperation.

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[94] Vu Tung Nguyen and Anh Tuan Hoang, *Quan He Doi Tac Chien Luoc Trong Quan He Quoc Te: Tu Ly Thuyet Den Thuc Tien* (Relationships of Strategic partnership in international relations: From theories to reality) (Hanoi: Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, 2006), 19.

[95] Vu and Duong, *Tu Dien Thuat Ngu Ngoai Giao Viet – Anh- Phap* (Vietnamese – English – French dictionary of diplomatic terminology), 52.

[96] Doan, "*Cac Hinh Thai Quan He Quoc Te: Xung Dot Va Hop Tac Quoc Te*" (Forms of international relations: Conflicts and cooperation), 186.

[97] Intriligator, "From Conflict to Cooperation in the Study of International Security," 48.

Vietnamese political leaders admit the peaceful co-existence among states with different socio-political systems in the post-Cold War world. They also point to the existence of fundamental contradictions in world politics. Recognizing cooperation and conflict as the two sides of a coin, Vietnamese people have introduced the idea of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" in international relations. This conception represents Vietnam's efforts to cope with the growing trend of "both cooperations and struggles at the same time" as one of the salient characteristics of post-Soviet inter-state relations. It also represents Vietnam's spirit of "integration without dissolvement" in the making and deployment of foreign policy under the *Doi Moi* process. Accordingly, the identification of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" in inter-state relations are not fixed but flexible, contingent on specific conditions. The basis for the identification is the interests of the nation-state. As such, a state can undertake collaborative acts with other states in some areas while struggling with them in other areas. The ultimate goal, though, is to maintain and advance cooperation for the pursuit of the national interest.

Chapter 8

International Integration

Since the end of the Second World War, the topic of integration, especially economic integration, has been an "ongoing concern" to many scholars and economic practitioners.[1] However, the majority of existing integration theories have so far been centered on the European community, as it started the integrational process earlier than others.[2] According to Luke Ashworth, "the concept of integration is closely related to that of interdependence and suffers from similar problems of ambiguity."[3] In the Vietnamese literature, the matter of international integration is regarded as "the force of gravity" to nation-states as it has become one of the significant trends of inter-state relations in the post-Cold War era.[4]

Vietnam has made a remarkable stride in the perception of the integrational process since the introduction of *Doi Moi*. Such perception has been coupled with Vietnam's practical efforts to integrate into the region and the world. It has evolved from "regional integration" during the 1990s as initial steps for international integration at a later stage, and international economic integration signified by the CPV Politburo's Resolution No. 7 on "international economic integration" in 2001, to the idea of comprehensive international integration, marked by the Politburo's Resolution No. 22 on "international integration" in 2013. In 2016, the Government of Vietnam introduced an overall strategy for Vietnam's international integration up to 2020 with a vision towards 2030. This strategy aims to enhance, in reality, the effectiveness of Vietnam's full integration.[5]

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[1] Richard G. Lipsey, "Forward," in *The Economics of International Integration*, 2nd edition, ed. Miroslav N. Jovanović (Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), xi.

[2] Dinh Quy Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Khai Niem Va Noi Ham 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te' Cua Viet Nam Trong Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on the notion and contents of 'international integration' of Vietnam in the new period), *International Studies 91*, no. 4 (December 2012): 21.

[3] Luke Ashworth, "Integration," in *Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics*, ed. Martin Griffiths, (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 410.

[4] Van Hien Vu, "*Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam*" (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), in *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Phat Trien Ben Vung – Kinh Nghiem Cua Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Dang Cong San Phap Va Dan Chu Xa Hoi Duc* (International integration and sustainable development – Experiences from the Communist Party of Vietnam, Communist Party of France and Social Democratic Party of Germany), ed. *Central Theoretical Council* (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2016), 236.

[5] Prime Minister of Vietnam, "*Chien Luoc Tong The Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Den Nam 2020, Tam Nhin 2030*" (The overall strategy for international integration up to 2020, vision towards 2030), signed on January 7 2016, *Library of Law*,

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section explores Vietnam's conceptualization of international integration. It presents both the perspectives of the CVP as well as the domestic scholarly community on international integration and puts these perspectives primarily in comparison to IR functionalism. This section also discusses Vietnamese perspectives on factors that promote the process of international integration. The second section investigates the relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration. The CPV has identified this relationship as one of the "major relations" that Vietnam needs to address in the transitional period to socialism.[6] The Vietnamese phrase "integration without dissolvement" (*hoa nhap nhung khong hoa tan*) basically means that Vietnam wants to join the world but does not want to lose itself in the process. As a result, sound management of the relationship would enable Vietnam to join the world without losing its national identity and socialist-oriented goal.

8.1. Conceptualizing International Integration

The idea of integration has become a topic of great interest to the political elite as well as the IR community in Vietnam over the past decades. In Vietnamese political discourse, the term "integration" (*hoi nhap*), previously known as "linkage" (*lien ket*), is more often used in recent decades, as Vietnam has devoted itself to international integration in practical terms in the cause of *Doi Moi*. This term is also connected to the term "globalization" (*toan cau hoa*), which frequently appears in Vietnamese literature and media.

Generally, the Vietnamese literature tends to link the idea of international integration to the specific conditions of Vietnam rather than generalizing knowledge of integration into a theory. This is one of the typical cases in which IR studies in Vietnam are intricately connected to the agenda of the Party-State system, and aim to serve the effective implementation of Vietnam's foreign policy. As a result, much Vietnamese IR literature on international integration in the Vietnamese language is related to Vietnam's objectives, guidelines, and preparational and operational tasks rather than theories of integration. However, examining these matters would help draw some conclusions on the theoretical dimension of international integration.

https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Thuong-mai/Quyet-dinh-40-QD-TTg-phe-duyet-chien-luoc-tong-the-hoi-nhap-quoc-te-2020-2030-2016-299890.aspx (accessed March 24, 2019).
[6] Sy Phan Tran, "*Nhan Thuc Ve Cac Quan He Lon Trong Van Kien Dai hoi XII Cua Dang*" (Perception on the big relations in Documents of the Twelfth National Party Congress), *Vietnam's Social Sciences* 106, no. 9 (2016): 3.

The CPV Documents on International Integration

The CPV perception of international integration has been developed and clarified throughout each of its national Party congresses since the adoption of *Doi Moi*. Marked as the introduction of the *Doi Moi* process, the Sixth National Party Congress (1986), however, did not mention the term "international integration" explicitly. Instead, it stressed Vietnam's participation in "the division of international labor." The documents stated that "in order to combine the strength of the nation with that of the epoch, our country has to participate in the division of international labor."[7]

The Seventh National Party Congress stated that "the modern revolution in science and technology, together with the trend of the internationalization of the international economic life is an opportunity for development."[8] As such, up to the Seventh National Party Congress (1991), the notion of "integration" had not been introduced into the CPV documents. However, the conception of "the internationalization of the international economic life" is the first step towards the development of the conception of "international economic integration" at a later stage.[9]

The official documents of the Eighth National Party Congress (1996) introduced, for the first time, the term "integration" or "integrate" *(hoi nhap)*, declaring that Vietnam needed to "build up an open economy, integrate into the region and the world."[10] While the Eighth National Party Congress mentioned "proactive participation [of Vietnam] in the life of the international community," it was not until the Ninth National Party Congress (2001) that the phrase "international economic integration" *(hoi nhap kinh te quoc te)* was officially adopted. The documents stated that it is essential for Vietnam to:

> proactively integrate into the international and regional economy by bringing into play the best of the national strength, enhance the effectiveness of international cooperation, assure

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[7] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VI* (Documents of the Sixth National Party Congress) (Hanoi: Truth Publishing House, 1987), 81.

[8] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dang Thoi Ky Doi Moi Va Hoi Nhap* (Documents of the national Party congresses in the era of renovation and integration) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2008), 230.

[9] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Khai Niem Va Noi Ham 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te' Cua Viet Nam Trong Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on the notion and contents of 'international integration' of Vietnam in the new period), 24.

[10] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dang Thoi Ky Doi Moi Va Hoi Nhap* (Documents of the national Party congresses in the era of renovation and integration), 342.

independence [-] self-control and socialist orientation, safeguard national interests and security, preserve national identities, [and] protect the environment.[11]

In 2001, the CPV Politburo's Resolution No. 7 on "international economic integration" reviewed the shortcomings and achievements of the integrational process that Vietnam has achieved for the previous period. It also outlined the objectives, guidelines, and specific tasks for Vietnam's implementation of economic integration.[12]

The Tenth National Party Congress (2006) added the term "active" (*tich cuc*) when it came to Vietnam's efforts of integration and initiated the idea of deeper international involvement in other domains beyond the economic domain. The documents emphasized that Vietnam needed to be "proactive and active in international economic integration, at the same time, expanding international cooperation in other fields."[13]

Clarifying the terms "proactive" and "active" in international integration in the CPV's documents, Nguyen Viet Thao and Nguyen Viet Thong state that "proactive" (*chu dong*) is understood as the degree of integration. It means that the state identifies the fields, level, and roadmap of integration on the basis of national goals and strategies of development. In the case of Vietnam, international integration is promoted in the economic area first, and in other fields later, which is compatible with domestic preparedness and the safeguarding of national interests. Being "proactive" in international integration also means not to be subjective, hasty, or slow in conducting the tasks of international integration.

Similarly, being "active" means conducting necessary preparations for the process of integration. It denotes the avoidance of passivity or postponement in generating prerequisites and conditions conducive to the progression of the state's integration. Additionally, being "active" implies that the state performs a wide range of tasks. They include the investigation of international and regional

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[11] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa VIII Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IX Cua Dang*" (The political report of the Eighth Central Committee at the Ninth National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, February 22, 2017, http://dangcongsan.vn/tu-lieu-van-kien/van-kien-dang/van-kien-dai-hoi/khoa-ix/doc-592420154233656.html (accessed January 4, 2019).

[12] The Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Nghi Quyet Ve Hoi Nhap Kinh Te Quoc Te*" (Resolution on international economic integration), signed November 27, 2001, *Library of Law*, https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Thuong-mai/Nghi-quyet-07-NQ-TW-hoi-nhap-kinh-te-quoc-te/112630/noi-dung.aspx (accessed March 1, 2018)

[13] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu X* (Documents of the Tenth National Party Congress), 112.

institutions' regulations and the drawing of a conclusion from other states' experiences of integration. The activeness of international integration requires the state to develop and implement the strategies and roadmap of integration at various domestic levels and to train human resources, among others.[14]

In the years following the Tenth National Party Congress (2006), the CPV continues to reconfirm the pursuit of and developing Vietnam's perception of international integration. The Eleventh National Party Congress (2011) restated Vietnam's "proactive and active in international integration."[15] Remarkably, the CPV Politburo's Resolution No. 22 on "international integration" in 2013 is an upgraded version of the resolution of 2001 on international economic integration. From the spirit of the new resolution, Vietnam aimed at a more comprehensive integration, which is not limited to the economic realm but expanded to other realms.

This resolution pointed out Vietnam's multiple objectives of international integration, including the pursuit of national interests:

> [i]nternational integration is to consolidate a peaceful environment, make the most of international conditions favorable to the nation's fast and sustainable development, upgrade people's living standards; to firmly uphold independence, self-control, unity and territorial integrity and the firm safeguarding of the socialist Homeland of Vietnam; to promote the image of Vietnam, preserve and bring into play national identities; to enhance the national synergy, upgrade the international reputation and position of the nation; to actively contribute to the cause of peace, national independence, democracy and societal progress of the world.[16]

The resolution also set out the general line for the integration as follows:

> Proactively and actively integrate into the world on the basis of securing the line of the foreign policy of independence, self-control, for the interest of the nation-state, for peace, cooperation, and development, the foreign policy of openness, multilateralization, and diversification of international relations.[17]

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[14] Viet Thao Nguyen, Viet Thong Nguyen, *Tim Hieu Mot So Thuat Ngu Trong Van Kien Dai Hoi XI Cua Dang* (Learning some terminologies in the documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011), 63-64.

[15] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XI* (Documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress), 236, and Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII* (Documents of the Twelfth National Party Congress) (Hanoi: Office of the Party Central Committee, 2016), 35.

[16] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Nghi Quyet Ve Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Resolution on international integration), signed 10 April 2013, *Library of Law*, https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Bo-may-hanh-chinh/Nghi-quyet-22-NQ-TW-nam-2013-Hoi-nhap-quoc-te-203954.aspx (accessed April 4, 2018).

[17] Ibid.

As such, the CPV's perception of international integration has constantly evolved for more than three decades since the introduction of *Doi Moi*. Though the idea of "international integration" (*hoi nhap quoc te*) has become a buzzword in Vietnam over the past decade, the definition of the term has remained absent in CPV documents. The CPV political discourse shows that integration is a long-term process, and needs to be implemented in a considerate and careful manner, appropriate to Vietnam's specific conditions. Vietnam's integration has been progressing from a passive to a proactive and active stance. Also, economic integration is conducted first, paving the way for integration in other domains at a later phase. In addition, regional integration is the foundation for international integration.[18]

Domestic Scholarly Works on International Integration

Most major academic works on the topic of international integration have only been introduced in recent years. In 2011, in a significant research project aiming to prepare for the documents for the Eleventh National Party Congress, Nguyen Xuan Thang[19] defined international integration as "a process of linkages with specific objectives and orientations, attached to the scale, degree and specific conditions of a state."[20] As such, integrational acts are guided by national objectives, which are promoted by the specific circumstance of the state. As Nguyen Xuan Thang explained, the state needs to identify factors associated with the acts of international integration such as roadmaps, steps, and solutions, which are contingent upon the specific conditions of the state in political, economic, and societal terms. By integrating into the world, the state performs two acts concurrently. The first act is to enter into and participate in international institutions and organizations in which member states negotiate to reach and abide by the established rules and fulfill their commitments towards other member states. The second act is to conduct domestic reforms that would enable the state to fulfill its international commitments effectively.[21]

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[18] Thanh Son Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2015), 17.

[19] He was once the vice president of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, and is currently the president of the Central Theoretical Council of the CPV, concurrently the president of Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.

[20] Nguyen, *Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi* (Independence, self-control and international integration of Vietnam in the new context), 50.

[21] Ibid., 49-50.

Pham Binh Minh explained in 2011 that international integration refers to a process that a state "dares" to accept the rules of the game (both written and unwritten) and play them in global and regional playgrounds against the backdrop of globalization in the post-Cold War era.[22] Sharing the views of Nguyen Xuan Thang and Pham Binh Minh, Dang Dinh Quy further stressed in 2012 the objective of "national interests" in the definition of international integration. He put it this way:

> [i]nternational integration is an advanced form of international cooperation, the process of actively accepting, applying, and participating in the building of international regulations and standards to best serve the interests of a state.[23]

The two most fundamental elements of the concept of international integration, in the accounts of Dang Dinh Quy, are (i) a shared playground; and (ii) common rules (principles, standards, and norms).[24]

In 2016, Vu Van Hien, incumbent vice president of the Central Theoretical Council of the CPV, defined international integration as "the participation of a state either in an organization or in a certain process."[25] He added that integration implies a "status" (*trang thai*) into which a state is attracted to or drawn. Stated another way, international integration reflects both the *active* and *passive* posture of the state: while the former means the state's internal desire of participation, the latter represents the state's responses to external impacts.[26]

For many Vietnamese scholars, whereas both international cooperation and international integration represent concerted acts by states in a peaceful manner to achieve common objectives,[27] they differ in multiple ways. According to Dang Dinh Quy, inter-state interactions can be divided into three levels: (i) discussions and consultations; (ii) policy coordination and the deployment of coordinated acts and

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[22] Pham, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*" (Some reflections on the shaping of the new foreign policy), 59.

[23] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Khai Niem Va Noi Ham 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te' Cua Viet Nam Trong Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on the notion and contents of 'international integration' of Vietnam in the new period), 29.

[24] Ibid., 28.

[25] Vu, "*Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam*" (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 237.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 225.

shared projects; and (iii) the building and application of shared rules and standards. The third level is regarded as international integration.[28]

According to Hoang Khac Nam, whereas international integration is related to the formation of a new entity or system, cooperation is not necessary to be so. Also, the act of integration requires the participating state to conduct internal changes considerably and make concessions so that it can adapt itself to the entity or system to which it accedes. However, the act of cooperation does not require the cooperating state to do that much.[29]

Besides this, while integration aims at longer-term linkages, cooperation can be implemented for either short or long-term purposes. Furthermore, the commitments in terms of regulations or rules are tighter, stricter, or higher in demanding for acts of integration than those of cooperation. Last, but not least, it is more difficult for integrating states to manage the matter of national sovereignty than cooperating states. Upon integration, states usually have to submit part of their national power, inclusive of aspects of sovereignty, to institutions in which it takes part. However, when it comes to cooperation, it is up to states to choose the areas for cooperation and to avoid those ones that potentially harm their sovereignty.[30]

With a review of IR theoretical studies and empirical observations worldwide, Dang Dinh Quy points out the four dominant features of international integration. First of all, international integration frequently commences with the economic domain, but is not limited to this domain. Economic integration will lead to integration in multiple fields later. As from the Marxist approach, the internationalization of economic aspects will certainly trigger that of other aspects, forming shared norms and standards of international life. Second, international integration is a constant process without time limits. The process can contain both bilateral and multilateral engagements, progressing from one stage to another. As a result, no states would declare that they have "completed" their integrational processes. Third, international integration is not limited to a state's engagement in multilateral schemes, but does include involvement in multiple domains. Fourth, the nature of

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[28] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Khai Niem Va Noi Ham 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te' Cua Viet Nam Trong Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on the notion and contents of 'international integration' of Vietnam in the new period), 29.
[29] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 225.
[30] Ibid.

international integration is related to the building and application of shared principles and standards.[31]

Echoing the viewpoints of Dang Dinh Quy, Bui Thanh Son added that while international integration is an inevitable trend of cross-national interactions in the post-Cold War world, it is up to a state to decide whether or not it integrates into the world, or the degree of integration that it finds appropriate. Such decisions are usually made on the basis of their approach to national interests. Furthermore, the internal strength of a state plays a significant role in determining if it succeeds in its integrational efforts. Competitive edges and production capabilities are of vital importance to a state's efforts in catching up with others in global production chains.[32]

Vietnamese scholars have some similarities and different views on the functionalist perspective of integration. In a seminal journal article, namely, "International Integration: The European and Universal Process," Haas defines integration as:

> the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new and larger center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states.[33]

In Hass's accounts, the emergence of a new full entity (a new and larger center) would be the outcome of an integrational process. Hoang Khac Nam appears to share the accounts of Hass as he tended to stress "a new full entity" when he defined international integration in 2016. He wrote that international integration is "a process of combination of separate states into the status of a new full entity on the basis of the assurance of the principal interests of the state."[34]

From a neo-functionalist perspective, integration is perceived as "moving from surface-level cooperation down a progressive ladder into deeper forms of collaboration." [35] Accordingly, the integrational process can go through three basic steps. The first step is to set up a free trade area. The

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[31] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Khai Niem Va Noi Ham 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te' Cua Viet Nam Trong Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on the notion and contents of 'international integration' of Vietnam in the new period), 22-23.

[32] Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 78-80.

[33] Ernst B. Haas, "International Integration: The European and the Universal Process," *International Organization* 15, no. 3 (1961): 366-367.

[34] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 224.

[35] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 139.

second step is to "establish free movement of land (resources), labor, and capital—the factors of production—in a common market." The third step is to build up "an economic and monetary union."[36]

However, in a writing section on "Integration," in the *Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics*, Luke Ashworth points out that there are three main types of integration by goals. The first type is the integration of separate territories into a single state to become a nation-state. The second type is "regional integration," in which nation-states in the region promote "pooled sovereignty," focusing greater cooperation on security, economy, and development. This type of integration results in the formulation of a "regional superstate" as the case of the European Union, or a limited scope of international integration in which regional states promote a specific area of cooperation, as in the cases of ASEAN or NATO. The third is "Westernization" or "international society" in which nation-states integrate themselves into "the dominant social, economic, cultural and political norms of the world" shaped by the West, which is promoted by institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.[37]

Vietnam's perception of international integration tends to be similar to Ashworth's third type of integration. Generally, from Vietnamese perspectives, international integration is a state's voluntary process of active participation and responsiveness to, and deeper engagement over time in, multiple regional and international institutions in order to gain a better position to pursue national interests. It is not necessary that the outcome of an integrational process is the emergence of a new larger entity as Hoang Khac Nam or Hass have argued. In contrast, the outcome would be a complex and deep connectedness through multiple channels between the nation-state and the world.

Factors Promoting International Integration

A common perception among Vietnamese IR writers is that international integration is closely connected to economic globalization. Pham Binh Minh states that since "states cannot stand beyond the process of economic globalization," they need to integrate into the world, not only in economic

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[36] Ibid., 139-140.
[37] Ashworth, "Integration," 410-411.

domains but also in other domains, in order to serve the objective of national development.[38] Similarly, a document from the Central Department of Propaganda and Training of the CPV points to the fact that the advances in science, technology and market economy require states to open up their markets to best mobilize and utilize their internal and external resources. This results in the formation of regional and international markets. In the same vein, the process of socialization and labor division that transcends national borders has brought about an increase in internationalization and deepened cooperation at bilateral, sub-regional, regional, and global levels.[39]

Nguyen Xuan Thang declares that economic globalization is the basis and driving force of international integration.[40] He explains that through global transactions in trade and services, globalization has exerted strong influences on nation-states and blurred national borders. Globalization has created a global market economy, which is driven by the liberalization of trade and investment, and competition. Also, globalization causes structural changes on a global scale. As a result, a state's integration into the world is inevitable.[41] He further points out that in order to best mobilize and utilize internal and external resources, states need to continually conduct domestic reforms to adapt themselves to international standards and norms.[42]

Contents of International Integration

From Vietnamese perspectives, the acts of international integration can take place in specific domains or across multiple domains with various forms, scopes, and nature,[43] contingent on national goals and specific conditions. Many domestic IR writers state that international integration mainly takes place

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[38] Pham, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*" (Some reflections on the shaping of the new foreign policy), 47.

[39] Central Department of Propaganda and Training, "*Huong Dan Chi Tiet Chuyen De 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te'*" (Detailed guidance on the topic of 'international integration'), *Propagandar and Training*, October 14, 2017, http://www.tuyengiao.vn/Home/Tulieu/tulieuchuyende/105840/Huong-dan-chi-tiet-chuyen-de-Hoi-nhap-quoc-te (accessed July November 2, 2018).

[40] Nguyen, *Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi* (Independence, self-control and international integration of Vietnam in the new context), 47.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 53.

[43] Tat Giap Nguyen, Thi Que Nguyen and Hoai Anh Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2015), 24.

in four domains: (i) economic integration, (ii) political integration, (iii) socio-cultural integration, and (iv) national defense-security integration.

Accordingly, economic integration is the process of attaching one state's economy to those of others in the region and the world. The economy can be integrated by the state's efforts of liberalization and opening up of the economy under a wide range of levels such as bilateral, sub-regional, regional, inter-regional and global engagements.[44] There are various forms of economic integration, such as participation in preferential trading and free trade agreements, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, customs unions, common markets, and currency-economic unions.[45]

 Political integration refers to the process of common power mechanisms in which linkages or connections among states are promoted so that states can share their fundamental values, goals, interests, resources, and especially power. The purpose is to achieve common goals and encourage states to behave in a way that is guided by the established rules.[46] Forms of political integration include involvement in regional associations or schemes, or super-national organizations or institutions.[47]

Socio-cultural integration means the process of opening up, exchanging cultural values, joining cultural organizations in the region and the world. This type of integration aims at the construction of a cultural and societal community on a regional and international scale.[48] Some forms of this integration are signings of agreements or cooperative treaties on education, conservative tasks, promotion of cultural values, and participation in specialized international agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, and the like.[49]

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[44] Ibid., 24-26.

[45] Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 70-71.

[46] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 24-26.

[47] Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 72-73.

[48] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 24-26.

[49] Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 76-77.

National defense-security integration is related to the process of reaching bilateral or multilateral agreements concerning national defense and security through coordinated acts. Integration in this realm aims to uphold peace and security.[50] Forms of this type of integration can consist of involvement in security dialogues, exchange of military activities, arrangements of collective security, and military alliances.[51]

Out of all of the domains of integration, a CPV document states that economic integration is the core. Integration in other domains such as politics, security, military, culture, and society is also necessary because it helps create favorable conditions for economic integration, and contributes actively to the growth of the economy. It also contributes to the consolidation of national defense, the assurance of national security, the preservation and promotion of national identity, and the promotion of socio-cultural development.[52]

The Vietnamese IR community holds that these domains of integration are interconnected. Some Vietnamese scholars note that the acts of political integration usually take place only after the phase in which the state's economic and socio-cultural integration has reached a certain point. Integration in the political domain is much more difficult to conduct than in other domains because states tend not to submit themselves to others when it comes to their sovereign political rights.[53] In some cases, however, integration in the political-security domain can precede other domains. Such integration is to pave the way for integration in other domains that follow. The integration of the ASEAN bloc is a typical case in which integration in the realm of political-security takes place before integration in other realms.[54] Integration in the socio-cultural domain is usually more limited than other domains because the benefits gained from this integrational domain are usually more modest than the state's efforts to preserve the identity or maintain the social order.[55]

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[50] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 24-26.

[51] Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 73-76.

[52] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Nghi Quyet Ve Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Resolution on international integration).

[53] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 230.

[54] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 24-26.

[55] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 230-231.

However, advocating for the comprehensive approach to international integration, Pham Binh Minh states that empirical observations reveal that integration is not limited to one aspect of international life. It encompasses all aspects of international life on both regional and global scales. A state's participation in all aspects of international life means its involvement in economic, political, and culture-societal terms. As a result, a state's integration is not limited to the economic aspect, yet it includes political and culture-societal aspects. From the dialectical materialism of the Marxist approach, the internationalization of economic aspects will inevitably lead to that of other aspects. Put another way, the activities of integration cannot be limited to the economic domain only, but economic integration will "spill over" into other domains. To some extent, economic integration cannot work well if there is an absence of deeper socio-cultural integration. If there is no integration in cultural and economic terms, then political integration lacks a foundation or space to take place and be expanded.[56]

Regarding the forms and levels of integration, under the accounts of Bui Thanh Son, there are two forms and two levels. In terms of the form, the basic form is one that the state participates in common activities (such as dialogue or bilateral and multilateral cooperative acts) and becomes involved in popular movements or trends of the region and the world. The advanced form is one where the state accepts and applies established principles and standards such as international and regional norms, agreements, and accords.[57]

The level of integration refers to the degree to which the state gets involved in the international community in terms of both the width (quantity) and depth (quality). As far as the width is concerned, at a lower level, the state commits itself to cross-national collaborative acts. However, for this level, there are limits to partners, scopes, and forms of cooperation. At a more advanced level, the state engages in various forms of cooperation with many partners in different fora. With regards to the depth, at a lower level, the state only gets involved in limited interactions with other states in order to avoid certain law-abiding rules. At a higher level, the state is willing to accept clearly-defined standards, and in many cases, even legally binding commitments. At the highest level, the

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[56] Pham, "*Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*" (Some reflections on the shaping of the new foreign policy), 59.

[57] Bui, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam* (International integration and emerging issues for Vietnam), 67.

state can even join super-national institutions in which it has to submit part of its sovereign rights to these institutions.[58]

8.2. Independence and Self-control in the Process of International Integration

While Vietnam has been engaging deeper into the region and the world under the cause of *Doi Moi*, it is still determined to pursue the socialist-oriented goal. As one among just a few remaining socialist countries against the backdrop of changes in political regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the matter of independence and self-control has become more critical to Vietnam in the post-Soviet context. While Vietnam conducts its opening-up policy, and pursues the policy of multilateralization and diversification of international relations, it is still determined to preserve national independence, self-reliance, and socialist orientation. Hence, the matter of interdependence and self-control is one of Vietnam's top priorities in the process of international integration.

8.2.1. Conceptualizing Independence and Self-control

The issue of independence and self-control has drawn growing attention to Vietnamese political discourse as well as scholarly works in the *Doi Moi* era, especially in recent years. While the CPV did not introduce the official definition of independence and self-control, the mention of these terms in various documents of the CPV indicates that independence and self-control are related not only in political terms but also in terms of economy, national defense, and security. Concerns about independence and self-control are always stressed in the process of Vietnam's foreign policy.

The CPV has viewed "independence" and "self-control" as matters of principle, consistency, and importance throughout the history of the Vietnamese revolution. The CPV adoption of these terms can be traced back to early national Party congresses before the introduction of *Doi Moi.* In economic terms, the Third National Party Congress (1960) stated that it was important to "build our economy into the self-controlled, relatively complete one as the basis for our country's independence." In political terms, the Fourth National Party Congress (1976) stressed that "the political and military

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[58] Ibid., 68-69.

lines of independence [,] self-control and rightfulness are important elements that have brought about the victory of the war against American aggression."[59]

The Eighth National Party Congress (1996) required "the establishment of an independent, self-reliant position" regarding economics, national defense, and security. It also demanded that "self-control goes hand in hand with the expansion of international cooperation."[60] In fact, the Ninth National Party Congress (2001) mentioned "a close attachment of an independent [and] self-controlled economy to proactive integration into the international economy."[61] The Tenth National Party Congress (2006) pointed out that "theories have not been able to resolve the relationship between independence and self-control, and the proactiveness and activeness of international integration."[62]

Notably, as of the Tenth National Party Congress, in the official documents, in addressing Vietnam's foreign affairs, a comma is added between the term "independence" and "self-control." The Ninth National Party Congress (2001) stated that Vietnam "consistently implements the foreign policy of independence [-] self-control, expands, multilateralizes, [and] diversifies its international relations."[63] The Tenth National Party Congress stressed that Vietnam "consistently implements the foreign policy of independence, self-control, peace, cooperation, and development."[64] It should be noted that the change in the expression does not simply exhibit a change in word use. It does imply a change in the mindset. In the accounts of Phan Trong Hao, "independence" and "self-control" are the two aspects

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[59] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dang Toan Tap – Tap 37* (Full collection of Party's documents - Volume 37) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2002), 484.

[60] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu VIII* (Documents of the Eighth National Party Congress), 84.

[61] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IX* (Documents of the Ninth National Party Congress), 89-91.

[62] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu X* (Documents of the Tenth National Party Congress), 69.

[63] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa VIII tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu IX Cua Dang*" (Political report of the Eighth Party Central Committee at the Ninth National Party Congress).

[64] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa IX Ve Cac Van Kien Dai Hoi X Cua Dang*" (Report of the Ninth Central Committee on the documents of the Tenth National Party Congress), *CPV Online Newspaper*, September 24, 2015, http://www.dangcongsan.vn/tu-lieu-van-kien/van-kien-dang/van-kien-dai-hoi/khoa-x/doc-292420154423456.html (accessed January 6, 2018).

of equal significance, and represent the dialectical relationship between these two ideas in relation to national sovereignty in the context of Vietnam's engagement with the outside world.[65]

The domestic scholarly community has recently made efforts to clarify the idea of independence and self-control. Generally, Vietnamese scholars tend to agree that national independence and self-control refer to the state's ability to determine its own internal and external policies without being controlled or dependent upon other states. Specifically, a group of IR researchers from the IIR-HCMNAP wrote in 2015 that independence and self-control refer to:

> the ability that an entity determines on its own all aspects of domestic and international affairs, including the choice of a political regime, internal and external policies, which is neither dependent upon or interfered, controlled, affected by any other states, nor 'bandwagons' with others.[66]

According to Nguyen Van Huyen, a former head of the Institute of Politics, a member unit of HCMNAP, the concept of "independence" (*doc lap*) can be interpreted from different angles. From the political angle, "independence refers to a political entity, whose status is not dependent upon or controlled by another entity." From the sovereign angle, independence is understood as "an autonomy in which a state's activities are sovereign and not controlled by any forces or other states."[67] Concerning "self-control" (*tu chu*), he holds that from the political angle, "self-control is the ability to control, master and determine all activities of a state, representing the people's will and national interests."[68]

Regarding the relationship between independence and self-control, a widespread consensus among Vietnamese IR writers is that independence and self-control are closely linked to each other. In the

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[65] Trong Hao Phan, "*Su Phat Trien Nhan Thuc Cua Dang Ta Ve Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong, Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Qua 30 Nam Doi Moi (1986-2016)*" (Our Party's development of perception on the relationship between independence, self-control and proactiveness, activeness in international integration through the thirty years of the *Doi Moi* (1986-2016)) in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 131-132.

[66] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 19.

[67] Van Huyen Nguyen, "*Cach Tiep Can Ve Doc Lap Va Tu Chu Trong Chu Quyen Quoc Gia – Lich Su Va Logic*" (Approaches to independence and self-control on national sovereignty – History and logic), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 9.

[68] Ibid.

accounts of Nguyen Viet Thao, former editor-in-chief of the *CPV Online Newspaper*, current vice-president of HCMNAP, independence means the status of not being dependent upon any other external forces; and self-control is the ability to control and make policies that best serve the state's goals.[69] As such, independence tends to be more reflective of the external dimensions of an entity, while self-control tends to do more with the internal dimensions of the same entity. Thus, independence and self-control are consistent and homogeneous. The concept of independence and self-control are combined to convey both external relations and internal movement of the entity (a state).[70]

Vietnamese scholars state that the contents of independence and self-control are not fixed, yet changing over time, contingent upon the state's specific conditions. Nguyen Xuan Thang holds that independence and self-control are not invariant or unchanged over time. He notes that whereas independence and self-control is a great desire, they are not the ultimate target of a state. He quotes the words of Ho Chi Minh as saying that "if a state is independent, yet its people do not enjoy happiness, [and] freedom; then such independence is meaningless."[71]

Tran Van Phong, head of the Institute of Philosophy, a member unit of HCMNAP, explains that a state's independence and self-control is attached to its fundamental interests and its people, and is a tool to achieve national interests. For each specific duration of the national history, a state's interests and priorities can change, which result in changes in the perception of national independence and self-control accordingly.[72]

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[69] Viet Thao Nguyen, "*Dam Bao Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Securing the relationship between independence, self-control and international integration), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 67.

[70] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 19.

[71] Chi Minh Ho, "*Thu Gui Uy Ban Nhan Dan Cac Ky, Tinh, Huyen Va Lang*" (Letter to the People's Committees of Regions, Provinces, Districts and Villages), *Toan Tap – Tap 4 (1945 - 1946)* (Complete Works - Volume 4) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995), 56; and Xuan Thang Nguyen, "*Xu Ly Tot Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi*" (Good handling of the relationship between independence, self-control and international integration of Vietnam in the new context), *Communist Review*, January 24, 2017, http://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/Nghiencuu-Traodoi/2017/43205/Xu-ly-tot-moi-quan-he-giua-doc-lap-tu-chu-va.aspx (accessed July 24, 2018).

[72] Van Phong Tran, "*Bien Chung Cua Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong, Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (The dialectics of the relationship between independence, self-control and proactiveness and activeness in international integration), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining

Nguyen Viet Thao also argues that there is a need to avoid the two extreme perceptions of independence and self-control. The first is that self-control is an unchanged constant, and the content of self-control is unchangeable and incompatible with international integration. The second is that in globalization and international integration, states do not need and cannot maintain and consolidate their national independence, self-control, and sovereignty.[73]

8.2.2. Independence and Self-control in International Integration

The relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration is "fundamental, multi-dimensional, multiple aspects" as Vietnam is deeply integrating into all aspects of international life. The matter of safeguarding national independence and self-control during the process of international integration has become critical to Vietnam's socialist-oriented construction.[74]

The Relationship between Independence and Self-control, and International Integration

There is a convergence among Vietnamese scholars on the "dialectical relationship" between independence and self-control, and international integration. They have reciprocal impacts on one another. While independence and self-control are the targets, international integration is the way to achieve the targets. That said, independence and self-control are the national targets, which can be achieved by the acts of international integration through the making and deployment of national policies.[75]

In Vietnamese literature, upholding national independence and self-control is a prerequisite for international integration. Independence and self-control allow a state to determine its process of international integration, especially in terms of roadmaps, approaches, contents, partners, and

independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 29-31.

[73] Nguyen, "*Dam Bao Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Securing the relationship between independence, self-control and international integration), 67.

[74] Van Hien Vu, "*Bao Cao De Dan Hoi Thao Khoa Hoc: Giu Vung Doc Lap Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Introductory report of the scientific conference: Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 6.

[75] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 26.

domains of integration. With independence and self-control, a state can proactively pursue optimal solutions, and bring into play its comparative advantages.[76] Also, a state with independence and self-control would minimize negative potentials caused by other states through international transactions, especially when such undesirable consequences are critical to the state's interests.[77]

In the accounts of Le Huu Nghia, a former president of HCMNAP and an incumbent member of the Central Theoretical Council of the CPV, without independence and self-control, a state can become "dissolved." It means that the state fails to preserve its identity, and is not able to achieve its national goals. In a worse case, the state can even depend on other states and face national security risks.[78]

On the one hand, international integration contributes to a state's increasing capability of the safeguarding of independence and self-control. As Le Huu Nghia argues, international integration is the best approach to transforming external forces into internal ones, or international strength into national strength.[79] Specifically, acts of integration can bring about opportunities to mobilize external resources such as capital, technological, and managerial resources from other states to serve the national goals.[80] On the other hand, in the accounts of Nguyen Vu Tung, the incumbent president of the DAV, international integration also exposes challenges to independence and self-control such as an increase in dependence on other states and intrastate societal divisions.[81] Other Vietnamese writers add that by integration, the state is required to carry out internal reforms in order to be compatible

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[76] Tran, "*Bien Chung Cua Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong, Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (The dialectics of the relationship between independence, self-control and proactiveness and activeness in international integration), 29-31.

[77] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 26.

[78] Huu Nghia Le, "*Ban Chat, Noi Ham Cua Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (The nature and intension of the relationship between independence, self-control and international integration), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 25.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Tran, "*Bien Chung Cua Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong, Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (The dialectics of the relationship between independence, self-control and proactiveness and activeness in international integration), 31-33.

[81] Vu Tung Nguyen, "*Nhung Thuan Loi, Kho Khan Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Trong Xu Ly Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Doi Voi Nuoc Ta Trong Thoi Gian Toi (Den 2025)*" (Advantages, difficulties and emerging issues for handling the relationship of independence, self-control and proactiveness and activeness in international integration in our country in the upcoming time (towards 2025), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 293.

with the law-abiding regulations of organizations or institutions in which the state takes part. As a result, the state is not able to do whatever it wants or to ignore the interests of other states.[82]

Nguyen Vu Tung further argues that while international integration can cause changes in the perception of independence and self-control, it does not erode independence and self-control. He, however, admits that international integration changes the contents and methods of the safeguarding of independence and self-control. By integration, a state is active and voluntary to transfer part of its power to global and regional institutions to which it accedes.[83] In return, the state can join decision-making processes beyond its national border, on regional and global scales. Such would enable the state to gain an advantageous position to defend its independence and self-control.[84]

The Idea of "Integration without Dissolvement"

This idea of "integration without dissolvement" (*hoa nhap nhung khong hoa tan*) has appeared in the Vietnamese literature at least since the publication of an edited book in 1995.[85] The publication entitled, *Hoi Nhap Va Giu Vung Ban Sac* (International integration and good preservation of identity) presented the selected works, speeches, and interviews in the early 1990s of multiple leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[86] The spirit that reflects throughout the publication is that while Vietnam makes efforts to engage the world outside, Vietnam's policy is consistent on the maintenance of the principles of independence, sovereignty and national security, and the preservation of national identities.[87] Stated another way, on the one hand, Vietnam wants to integrate into the region and the world to mobilize external resources to contribute to the accomplishment of national goals. On the other hand, it is highly aware of potential harms to national security and the social-oriented regime as a consequence of the international process.

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[82] Nguyen, Nguyen and Mai, *Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te O Viet Nam Hien Nay: Nhung Van De Ly Luan Va Thuc Tien* (The relationship between independence, self-control, and international integration in Vietnam at present: Some theoretical and practical issues), 28.

[83] Nguyen, "*Nhung Thuan Loi, Kho Khan Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Trong Xu Ly Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Doi Voi Nuoc Ta Trong Thoi Gian Toi (Den 2025)*" (Advantages, difficulties and emerging issues for handling the relationship of independence, self-control and proactiveness and activeness in international integration in our country in the upcoming time (towards 2025), 293.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Giu Vung Ban Sac* (International integration and good preservation of identity) (National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1995), prefix.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

After more than two decades have passed, the Vietnamese political and IR community still maintains that "the preservation of national identity" is one of the challenges facing Vietnam's international integration. In the words of Nguyen Vu Tung, independence is "the anchor of identity" (*chiec neo ve ban sac*). He explains that the deeper a state integrates into the world, the more critical it is to preserve its identity.[88] It is the national identity that enables the state not to dissolve or lose control over itself during the integrational process.[89]

Among the main growing concerns for Vietnam's "dissolvement" of its "identity" in the *Doi Moi* era are associated with "peaceful transition" (*dien bien hoa binh*), "self-evolution" (*tu dien bien*) and "self-transformation" (*tu chuyen hoa*). In Vietnamese political literature, Vietnam's current period of international integration is more conducive to the "hostile" acts of "peaceful transition," "self-evolution," and "self-transformation." Failing to prevent and defeat these acts threatens the survival of Vietnam's socialist-oriented goal.

Vietnam has long been cautious of the USA-led strategy of "peaceful transition" (*dien bien hoa binh*). In Vietnamese literature, "peaceful transition" is understood to be a process that enables the occurrence right within the socialist states of anti-revolutionary agents who are supported and assisted to become the opposing political force against the ruling communist party and socialist states.[90] The primary aim of this strategy is to sabotage and remove socialism and the international communist movement when the imperialist force is not able to gain victory in military terms. This strategy is deployed by the combination of many "tricks" and methods in multiple realms (economy, politics, ideology, culture, and the like) and can be supported by military threats if necessary.[91] Part of the strategy is promoted by the use of emerging features of international relations such as the combination of both cooperative and competitive acts, regionalism, internationalization, globalization, or matters related to religion, ethnicity, democracy, human rights, and so on.[92]

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[88] Nguyen, "*Nhung Thuan Loi, Kho Khan Va Nhung Van De Dat Ra Trong Xu Ly Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Doi Voi Nuoc Ta Trong Thoi Gian Toi (Den 2025)*" (Advantages, difficulties and emerging issues for handling the relationship of independence, self-control and proactiveness and activeness in international integration in our country in the upcoming time (towards 2025), 301-302.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Muu Trinh and Hoang Giap Nguyen (eds.), *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te: He Cao Cap Ly Luan Chinh Tri – Hanh Chinh (Tai Ban Lan Thu 10)* (The lecture book of International Relations: Advanced program of political theory – administration, (10th edition)) (Hanoi: Administrative - Political Publishing House, 2012), 314.
[91] Ibid., 313.
[92] Ibid., 314.

Hence, since the early 1990s, the CPV has identified "peaceful transition" as one of the four threats to Vietnam's revolution.[93] Since then, throughout the national Party congresses and central plenums, the CPV always stresses the determination to fail hostile forces' attempt of "peaceful transition," especially to prevent and repel the acts of "self-evolution" and "self-transformation."[94] The political report of the Twelfth National Party Congress in 2016 reaffirmed the four threats mentioned previously, including "peaceful transition by hostile forces to sabotage the country."[95] The Vietnamese political and IR community believes that the fundamental objective of this strategy in Vietnam is to sabotage Vietnam's revolution, eliminate the leadership of the CPV, and eventually remove the socialist-oriented regime in the country.

According to Nguyen Bac Dinh, in order to achieve this objective of "peaceful transition" in the current context of globalization and Vietnam's enhancement of international integration, "hostile forces" have promoted multifaceted cooperation with Vietnam, partially as a way to gain deeper penetration into the country to promote "self-evolution" and "self-transformation."[96] In the accounts of Nguyen Viet Thong, General Secretary of the CPV Central Theoretical Council, "self-evolution" and "self-transformation" are closely linked to the "peaceful transition" strategy. The former is the internal, subjective element, and the latter is the external, objective element. The latter promotes the former, and in turn, the former reinforces the latter. In this reciprocal relationship, the former plays a decisive role.[97]

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[93] *"Hoi Nghi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Giua Nhiem Ky Khoa VII (20 - 25/1/1994)"* (The mid-term plenum of the Seventh Central Committee (20 - 25/1/1994)), *CPV Online Newspaper*, 15/4/2018, http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-vii/hoi-nghi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-giua-nhiem-ky-khoa-vii-20-2511994-15 (accessed June 12, 2018).

[94] Viet Thong Nguyen, *"Moi Quan He Va Tac Dong Cua 'Dien Bien Hoa Binh' Voi 'Tu Dien Bien,' 'Tu Chuyen Hoa' Trong Noi Bo"* (The relationship and the impact of 'peaceful transition' on internal 'self-evolution' and 'self-transformation'), *Nhandan Online*, May 29, 2018, http://www.nhandan.com.vn/hangthang/item/36543902-moi-quan-he-va-tac-dong-cua-%E2%80%9Cdien-bien-hoa-binh%E2%80%9D-voi-%E2%80%9Ctu-dien-bien%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%9Ctu-chuyen-hoa%E2%80%9D-trong-noi-bo.html (accessed February 25, 2019).

[95] Communist Party of Vietnam, *"Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa XI Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII Cua Dang"* (The political report of the Central Committee of the Eleventh National Party Congress at the Twelfth National Party Congress).

[96] Bac Dinh Nguyen, *"Thu Doan Moi Trong Chien Luoc 'Dien Bien Hoa Binh' Chong Pha Cach Mang Viet Nam Cua Cac The Luc Thu Dich"* (New hoaxes of the hostile forces in the strategy of 'peaceful transition' against Vietnam's revolution), *National Defense Journal*, March 03, 2018, http://tapchiqptd.vn/vi/phong-chong-dbhb-tu-dien-bien-tu-chuyen-hoa/thu-doan-moi-trong-chien-luoc-dien-bien-hoa-binh-chong-pha-cach-mang-viet-nam-cua-cac-the-/11435.html (accessed March 2, 2019).

[97] Nguyen, *"Moi Quan He Va Tac Dong Cua 'Dien Bien Hoa Binh' Voi 'Tu Dien Bien,' 'Tu Chuyen Hoa' Trong Noi Bo"* (The relationship and the impact of 'peaceful transition' on internal 'self-evolution' and 'self-transformation').

In addition to the concerns about "peaceful evolution," "self-evolution" and "self-transformation," Vietnam's caution of "dissolvement" during the integrative process is also related to its perception of national security. The CPV Resolution No. 13 of 1988 marked a radical shift in Vietnam's perception of national security. The focus was shifted from a military dimension to a more comprehensive security approach that allowed activities in foreign policy to play a more significant role in securing the country and supporting economic growth.[98] During the early 1990s, Vietnam believed that "threats to security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of a country lie within the national border" or internal factors ("poverty, famine, and backwardness").[99]

In 1994, at a mid-term plenum of the Seventh Central Committee, the CPV elaborated, for the first time, the four threats to national security. They include: (i) economic backwardness in comparison with countries in the region and the world; (ii) deviation from socialist orientation; (iii) corruption, and inefficient bureaucracy; and (iv) a peaceful transition by hostile forces.[100] Since then, these threats were reconfirmed in CPV documents. In 2016, the CPV restated the four threats and expanded more on the internal elements that face the country such as the erosion of political ideology, ethics, the lifestyle of part of officers, Party members, state employees, inefficient bureaucracy, corruption and waste, the growing rich-poor gap, and degradation of social morality.[101]

These threats to Vietnam's socialist-oriented goals became critical during Vietnam's promotion of comprehensive international integration. Hence, properly handling the relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration is crucial to Vietnam's "integration without dissolvement." Various Vietnamese scholars have their insights on this relationship. In 2011, Nguyen Xuan Thang also offered two main points for consideration of the relationship. First, independence, self-control, and the relationship between these two concepts and international integration must be interpreted from the historical perspective of national sovereignty. Whereas

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[98] Vu Tung Nguyen, "Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies," Paper presented at The International Workshop on Asia Pacific Security: Asia Pacific Countries' Security Outlook and Its Implications for the Defense Sector, *The National Institute for Defense Studies*, Japan, 2010, 109.

[99] Ibid., 108-110.

[100] "*Hoi Nghi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Giua Nhiem Ky Khoa VII (20 - 25/1/1994)*" (The mid-term plenum of the Seventh Central Committee (20 - 25/1/1994)).

[101] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Bao Cao Chinh Tri Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Khoa XI Tai Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII Cua Dang*" (The political report of the Central Committee of the Eleventh National Party Congress at the Twelfth National Party Congress).

national sovereignty has to be exercised in a careful and precise manner, such an exercise has to be flexible and sensible. In legal terms, independence represents sovereignty. In reality, independence is the prerequisite to exercise sovereignty. Self-control represents sovereignty in reality, and self-control is the prerequisite to exercise sovereignty. In other words, independence and self-control are the two dialectical constituent elements of the notion of national sovereignty.[102] However, in reality, independence and self-control must be analyzed from the historical perspective as they can change over time, and are subject to the changes in the state's interest.[103]

Second, national interest must be taken as the most fundamental principle in the management of the relationship between interdependence, self-control, and international integration. Independence and self-control are tools to achieve national interest. Hence, identifying the elements or priorities of national interest for each period of the national development is the prerequisite for the state to secure independence and self-control.[104]

In 2017, Thai Van Long, current deputy head of IIR-HCMNAP, suggests two criteria for the assessment of the relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration. These criteria work as the bases to decide whether or not the management of the relationship is effective in reality. The first criterion is related to the promotion of national synergy or comprehensive national strength. The national synergy, as Thai Van Long argues, mainly consists of four constituents: (i) the position, the role and strong leadership of the CPV; (ii) Vietnamese values, especially, traditional patriotism, and people's solidarity; (iii) Vietnam's potential strength of economy, culture, national defense, security, science and technology and the like; and (iv) Vietnam's position in the international arena. He explains that only when the national synergy is improved, then the international integration of Vietnam can be assessed as effective because when the state integrates into the world, it has to face fiercer international competition. Only when the sound management of the relationship has been developed, then the state can enlarge its national synergy.[105]

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[102] Nguyen, *Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi* (Independence, self-control and international integration of Vietnam in the new context), 236-237.

[103] Ibid., 237-238.

[104] Ibid., 240-242.

[105] Van Long Thai, "*Tieu Chi Danh Gia Viec Xu Ly Moi Quan He Giua Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Chu Dong, Tich Cuc Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*" (Criteria for the assessment of the handling of the relationship between independence, self-control, and proactiveness and activeness in international integration), in *Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te (Ky Yeu Hoi Thao)* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration (Conference papers)), ed. Central Theoretical Council (Hanoi: Central Theoretical Council, 2017), 74-76.

The second criterion is based on the growth of the state's position and relative power in the international arena. The state's international integration is not effective when the state's independence and self-control have been eroded. New challenges to national independence and self-control arise on both international and domestic scales when the state is more integrated into the region and the world.[106]

As such, from the Vietnamese perspective, independence and self-control are of vital importance to the state's survival and development in interactions with other states. Whereas independence and self-control are the supreme principles of the state's international integration, the perception of the content of independence and self-control should not be rigid. In contrast, it should be flexible to reflect the specific internal conditions and external context. National independence and self-control do not contradict the state's process of international integration. However, proper management of the relationship between interdependence, self-control, and international integration would enable the state to obtain national goals on the one hand, and not erode national independence and self-control in the process of integration into the world on the other hand.

Conclusion

Many IR theories engage in the matter of integration. While from the viewpoint of classical realism, the idea of integration is more unlikely, from the perspectives of neo-liberalism, international integration can thrive.[107] Other IR theories, such as functionalism and neo-functionalism are also interested in the matter of international integration.[108] Luke Ashworth notes that much of the existing literature considers integration as "a voluntary process" though "coercive integration" has been widely practiced in history.[109]

From the Vietnamese perspective, international integration is a voluntary process in which the state "proactively and actively" integrates into the region and the world to better pursue its national interest. Globalization and interdependence are the driving force that promotes the process of international integration. The Vietnamese point of view is similar to that of neo-functionalists who

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[106] Ibid., 76-79.

[107] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 247-249.

[108] Ibid., 233-244.

[109] Ashworth, "Integration," 410.

argue that interconnections and linkages across states encourage mechanisms for integrative acts. These interconnections and linkages cover dimensions or sectors in economic and political realms, and matters of pure techniques. However, they also state that "the demand for integration does not automatically lead to integration…. For integration to occur, even when key social actors want it to occur, collective-action problems have to be overcome."[110]

Many Vietnamese scholars hold that international integration denotes both status and process that a state becomes deeper involved in regional and global institutions where member states build and apply shared rules in pursuit of national interests. A state's international integration progresses from one status to another with a more advanced level at a later stage towards the targeted goal of comprehensive international integration. Each status represents a different level of integration.[111] It is not necessary that integration always leads to the emergence of a new full entity. Regional integration is the initial step for international integration.[112]

The Vietnamese political and IR community also believes that the content of international integration is centered on, but not limited to, the economic domain, because integration on other domains is inevitable and helps reinforce the economic one. This point of view is similar to David Mitrany, the first scholar explicating the idea of integration. As Mitrany explained, fruitful cooperation in one particular non-political realm leads to more cooperative acts in other realms. As a result, states would encourage the expansion of cooperative activities to make absolute gains in transnational transactions.[113] However, Mitrany downgraded the importance of the political dimension in global politics.[114]

Neo-functionalist advocates argue that the integration of economic sectors would lead to the integration of other sectors:

[110] Mary Anne Madeira and James A. Caporaso, "Regional Integration (Supranational)," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science,* eds. Bertrand Badie Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 2242.
[111] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 224.
[112] Ibid., 230-231.
[113] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 138.
[114] Ibid., 139.

increased integration in particular economic sectors would "spill over" into other related sectors—a process carried by politically connected elites seeing positive gains to be found in increased collaboration as states became increasingly integrated economically.[115]

However, from the neo-functionalist perspective, integration of foreign policies, defense and the like is "a matter of choice" for integrative states.[116] On the contrary, the Vietnamese political and IR community holds that while the integration of the economy is the focal dimension, integration of politics-security, defense, culture, and society are significant to the promotion of economic integration. As a result, Vietnam has, in reality, expanded from international economic integration to comprehensive international integration.[117]

The Vietnamese IR literature also provides some insights into the relationship between international integration versus national independence and self-control. A state would face the risk of "dissolvement" or losing control of itself in the process of international integration. While Vietnam has made efforts to join the world community, it is still in pursuit of the socialist-oriented construction at the same time. Thus, the proper management of the relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration is of crucial importance. Vietnamese scholars note that the contents of independence and self-control are not fixed but change over time in the process of international integration. As a result, the perception of independence and self-control must be analyzed from the historical context, reflecting the best interests of the nation-state.

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[115] Ibid., 140.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Hoang, *Giao Trinh Nhap Mon Quan He Quoc Te* (The textbook of introduction to International Relations), 230-231.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

This study has investigated the Vietnamese perspectives on fundamental concepts of international relations such as the international system (in Chapter 4), international actors and power (in chapter 5), national interest (in Chapter 6), cooperation and conflict (in Chapter 7), and international integration (in Chapter 8). These concepts are not only fundamental to global IR studies, but are also crucial to the construction of Vietnamese IR thinking. More importantly, the ideas of national interest, international cooperation and conflict, and international integration have recently been put on top of Vietnam's political agenda.

This study has primarily compared the Vietnamese perspectives with those of realist and liberal IR theories in the West to assess whether there is a distinct Vietnamese perception of IR. As the thesis has argued (in Chapter 3), the formation of the Vietnamese IR standpoints is affected by a wide range of factors such as the geographical, historical, and cultural traditions of Vietnam, and the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought. It should be noted that while the thought of Ho Chi Minh on diplomacy and international relations still have great effects on the formulation of the Vietnamese foreign policy. However, the ideas of Ho Chi Minh on IR are not elaborated in the empirical chapters of this thesis because these chapters aim to discuss the ideas or conceptions of those living Vietnamese IR writers or the CPV that dominate the domestic IR literature and directly promote the ongoing Party-State agendas in the country. The Vietnamese perspectives are also informed by Vietnam's international experience of the Cold War and its efforts to integrate into the neighboring region and the world, but maintain the socialist-oriented construction of the nation at the same time in the post-Cold War era.

The development of the international political environment and the domestically socio-economic crisis urged Vietnam to launch its *Doi Moi* process at the Sixth National Party Congress of 1986. This Congress paved the way for Vietnam to revise its worldview and initiate the process of integrating into the world. As a result, Vietnam made a remarkable shift in its worldview around the final years of the Cold War. As discussed in Chapter 3, Vietnam changed from its "two-camp" worldview that

stressed "who would triumph over whom," and "proletarian internationalism" during the Cold War, to the idea of "interdependence," "peaceful co-existence," and "more friends, fewer enemies" in the post-Cold War period. In practical terms, as Sung-Chull Kim described in 2007, Vietnam has moved from socialist dependency prior to 1986, to the experiment of peaceful co-existence from 1986 to 1990, and then to adaptive engagement in the post-Cold War era.[1]

The adoption of process tracing as the prominent method has enabled the study to point out international and domestic junctures or events of significance that prompted the CPV elite to embrace or revise its certain IR concepts. Notably, it is not a single juncture or event that urges the domestic political and IR community to absolutely abandon or embrace an IR concept. Instead, it is the result of a series of remarkable events that helps the CPV-led political community to refine their thoughts over time. Tracing sequential events to the formulation of Vietnamese IR concept reveals that the CPV is careful in promoting its IR concepts (for example, the concept of "national interest" or "international integration"). It tends to experiment with the ideas in reality first to assess whether they are valid before it decides to embrace them officially.

The empirical findings reveal that Vietnam is at an early stage of developing its way of IR thinking. In the words of Abuza in the mid-1990s, "Vietnam still thinks like a neo-realist, but acts in ways that neo-realists do not predict because such strategies previously failed."[2] However, this study suggests that Vietnamese perspectives on IR appear neither as "pessimistic" as realist standpoints have assumed, nor as "optimistic" as IR liberal thinking has suggested. Whereas Vietnamese IR studies are influenced by foreign sources in interpreting international relations, they reveal some novelty in their approaches.

Vietnamese Perspectives versus Realist and Liberal IR Theories

IR as a discipline has long been established in the Western world. Many Western scholars concur that IR theories are associated with efforts to both "explain past state behavior and to predict future state

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[1] Sung-Chull Kim, "Transformation of National Strategy in Postwar Vietnam: Dependency to Engagement," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies 16*, no. 1 (2007): 209-234.
[2] Abuza, "Coping with China: Vietnamese Elite Responses to an Emerging Superpower," 16.

behavior."[3] However, IR studies in Vietnam are still "in search of its identification as a discipline."[4] They are strongly connected to the reality of Vietnam's involvement in international activities.

Vietnamese Critique of Realist and Liberal IR Theories

Like many other scholars around the globe, Vietnamese scholars state that realism and liberalism are among the most influential theories in interpreting many dimensions of international phenomena. Nguyen Bang Tuong admits that understanding Western IR theories, including realism and liberalism, would enable Vietnam to draw "reasonable" points in understanding the world.[5] According to Vu The Hiep, the realist argument on the struggle for power among states is appropriate to analyze international realpolitik. This is because asymmetric capabilities in an unstable international environment can cause conflicts of interest among states. The realist approach to the system-level analysis is also meaningful in explaining the mode of interactions among states in international politics.[6] Vu The Hiep concludes that realism continues to be the most influential theory in explaining the real world of international politics as it is centered on security, conflict, and war, all of which keep dominating the minds and efforts of the human race.[7] Similarly, Hoang Khac Nam holds that the realist argument on the international system is still useful and may become even more potent in the future when the world becomes more systematically developed.[8]

Concerning liberalism, Vietnamese scholars maintain that the liberal IR tradition reflects the positive dimension of international life. Liberalism advocates the possibility of cooperation, peaceful coexistence, consolidation and promotion of unity and connections among states.[9] Additionally, liberalism introduces appropriate approaches to the analysis of international relations, such as interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. Liberal advocates hold that there is a connection

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[3] Jonathan Cristol, "International Relations Theory," *Oxford Bibliographies*, September 27, 2017, http: DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0039 (accessed April 4, 2019).

[4] Pham, "Teaching International Relations in Vietnam: Chances and Challenges," 135.

[5] Nguyen, *"Quan Diem Mac-Xit Ve Mot So Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te Cua Cac Nuoc Phuong Tay Hien Nay"* (The Marxist perspective on some current Western IR theories), 2.

[6] Vu, *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current views of our Party on international relations), 35.

[7] Ibid., 38.

[8] Khac Nam Hoang, *"Chu Nghia Hien Thuc"* (Realism) in *Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te* (Theories of International Relations), ed. Khac Nam Hoang (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2017), 46.

[9] Vu, *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current views of our Party on international relations), 56.

between international politics and domestic politics, between foreign policies and domestic policies, between politics and economics, and the like.[10]

Notwithstanding, the Vietnamese IR community also rejects many of the points of the argument put forward by both realist and liberal advocates. A group of Vietnamese IR researchers even argue that while realist and liberal IR theories contain some "reasonable" interpretations of international relations, these theories are one-sided. They emphasize certain aspects of international relations, ignore others, or do not see the dialectical relationships among various dimensions of inter-state interactions. Also, as Vietnamese researchers argue, these theories highlight a specific factor and consider it to be a decisive factor in international relations. For example, they argue that realists stress the role of power and anarchy in international politics, whereas liberalists emphasize ethical and ideal factors in global politics.[11] While IR realists are not unreasonable when they advocate the role of power, they go too far in maintaining that power is the only thing that plays a decisive role in international phenomena.[12] Similarly, the emphasis on ethics and ideals that liberalists advocate turns out to be unrealistic in international relations.[13] As a result, these two IR approaches fail to give a full picture of international relations.

Regarding the concept of power, realists tend to overemphasize strength and the competition for power among states and downgrade other factors such as spiritual values, history, and tradition. They demote the possibility of cooperative acts and compromises among states. As a result, their framework of analysis of international relations is too "simplified,"[14] and unable to explain the complex nature of interactions among international actors.[15] In other words, the universalization of realism is only confined to some specific circumstances of international relations rather than all dimensions of inter-state relations.[16] Similarly, the realist perception of power and power structure in an anarchical environment implies the advocacy for accepting the world order in which great powers

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[10] Khac Nam Hoang, *"Chu Nghia Tu Do"* (Liberalism) in *Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te* (Theories of International Relations), ed. Khac Nam Hoang (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2017), 78-9.

[11] Nguyen, *"Quan Diem Mac-Xit Ve Mot So Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te Cua Cac Nuoc Phuong Tay Hien Nay"* (The Marxist perspective on some current Western IR theories), 4.

[12] Hoang, *"Chu Nghia Hien Thuc"* (Realism), 46.

[13] Nguyen, *"Quan Diem Mac-Xit Ve Mot So Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te Cua Cac Nuoc Phuong Tay Hien Nay"* (The Marxist perspective on some current Western IR theories), 4.

[14] Vu, *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current views of our Party on international relations), 37.

[15] Hoang, *"Chu Nghia Hien Thuc"* (Realism), 51.

[16] Ibid.

dominate and set the rules for international politics.[17] That could unintentionally trigger the mindset and the deployment of tyrannical foreign policies, in turn, giving rise to mistrust and antagonism among states.[18]

Similarly, the liberal IR approach tends to be "ideal" and "utopian" because it lowers the complicated and fierce nature of transnational interactions concerning matters such as contradiction, conflict, imposition, exploitation, tyranny, and war.[19] Liberals tend to center the Western culture and civilization in world politics and homogenize these values with humankind.[20] In reality, each state has its conditions on politics, economy, history, culture, and society. As a result, it is impossible to impose the models and perspectives of the West on non-Western states which have their specific contexts.[21] Notably, liberals advance the ideas of "humanitarian intervention," and the "legitimacy" of states. In reality, these ideas have been abused by some great powers in justifying the deployment of tyrannical foreign policies whereby they impose their values on, and intervene in, the domestic affairs of smaller and weaker states.[22]

Similarities and Differences on Some Specific Concepts

There is both convergence and divergence on IR thinking between the Vietnamese political and IR community and both realists and liberals. On the one hand, Vietnamese scholars borrow some IR realist vocabulary such as security, competition, conflict, war, national interest, the nation-state, and the international system, among others. On the other hand, they adopt words that are typical of liberal IR thought such as interdependence, integration, cooperation, globalization, institutions, shared interests, global governance, democracy, and peace. However, when it comes to each specific concept, Vietnamese scholars use the same vocabulary but do not refer to the same meaning as those IR traditions mean. Stated in another way, they import the vocabulary from Western IR theories but interpret them in a way that is informed by the specific context of Vietnam.

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[17] Ibid., 52.

[18] Vu, *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current views of our Party on international relations), 37.

[19] Ibid., 57.

[20] Ibid., 56-57.

[21] Hoang, "*Chu Nghia Tu Do*" (Liberalism), 82.

[22] Vu, *Ba Mo Hinh Ly Thuyet Va Quan Diem Cua Dang Ta Hien Nay Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Three models of theory and the current views of our Party on international relations), 57.

In regard to the concept of international actors, and similar to the realist line of thought, the Vietnamese IR community states that the nation-state is the main actor of the international system. For realists, non-state actors such as international and transnational organizations (multinational corporations, terrorist groups and the like) are less significant to international politics.[23] However, from the Vietnamese standpoints, non-state actors such as non-governmental institutions, transnational organizations, and the world's movements (such as those for peace, democracy, and societal progress, among others) play a growing role in post-Cold War global politics. This point of view, however, is similar to those of IR liberal advocates who state that multiple kinds of international actors (both state and non-state) have substantial impacts on world politics.[24] However, unlike liberals who view the erosion of the state's role in world politics, Vietnamese scholars still believe that the nation-state plays a central role and needs to reinforce its autonomy in international politics against the backdrop of an increasingly interdependent and globalized world.

For the international system, Vietnamese scholars hold that the nation-state is an integral part of the international system which affects state behaviors. They believe that big countries or great powers and relations among them play a dominant role in the formulation of the rules and the evolution of the system. As a result, smaller powers, regardless of whether or not they are the allies of great powers, have to pay close attention to the moves of great powers to avoid potential harm. These points of view are akin to IR realists who claim that great powers dominate the international system. Realists also argue that as the nature of international politics is anarchical, states need to promote self-help to secure themselves. In contrast, IR liberals state that the anarchy of the international system, as IR realists point out, can be "molded" by institutionalizing international relations.[25] Similarly, Vietnamese scholars also call for states to comply with international law and norms in the pursuit of national interests.

Regarding power in international relations, Vietnamese scholars agree with those IR realists who declare that power is the means for states to attain their goals in inter-state relations.[26] However, the Vietnamese political discourse prefers the term "comprehensive national strength" or "national strength" to the term "power." From the Vietnamese perspective, national strength is crucial in

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[23] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 39.
[24] Ibid., 129.
[25] Knud Erik Jorgensen, *International Relations Theory: A New Introduction* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 59.
[26] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 41.

helping states gain interest in transnational activities. Ho Chi Minh once used the image of a gong to refer to the state's power and how the possession of power enabled the state to achieve their national goals through foreign policies. He stated that "the real power is a gong and diplomacy is the sound. Only when the gong is big, then the sound is loud."[27] He also said that "[only when] we are strong enough, they pay attention [to us]. [If] [w]e are weak, we are just an instrument in the hands of others, even though they are our ally."[28]

For some realists, power is concerned with "the sum of military, economic, technological, diplomatic and other capabilities at the disposal of the state."[29] From Vietnamese scholars, comprehensive national strength is not merely the result of the addition of all capabilities together, but the one from how these capabilities are combined and deployed together. In addition, Vietnamese scholars also believe that the epochal strength or external resources would be tapped in combination with the national strength in order to maximize the state's capacities in pursuit of national interests.

Concerning national interest, from the perspectives of IR realism, national security and survival, in particular, is the ultimate objective that drives state behavior in international politics. Similar to the realist perspective, the Vietnamese political and IR community believes that national interest is put on the top of the state's agenda. As Vietnamese scholars explain, national security, national development, and international influence are the three main goals that all states pursue through their international activities.

Whereas IR realists believe that national interest is relatively fixed or permanent across ruling governments, Vietnamese scholars state that the identification of the state's national interest changes over time, contingent upon both the international and local contexts. Whereas realists also tend to ignore moral standards in pursuit of national interest, Vietnamese political and IR writers stress the legitimacy of national interests (*loi ich dan toc chan chinh)*, and the harmony of interest (*hai hoa loi ich*)

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[27] The original expression in the Vietnamese language is "*Thuc Luc La Cai Chieng, Ma Ngoai Giao La Cai Tieng. Chieng Co To Tieng Moi Lon*." Source: "*Loi Bac Day Ngay Nay Nam Xua*," (The words that Uncle [Ho] taught on this day in the old year), *People's Army Newspaper*, December 25, 2018, https://realsv.qdnd.vn/ho-so-su-kien/loi-bac-day-nam-xua/thuc-luc-la-cai-chieng-ma-ngoai-giao-la-cai-tieng-chieng-co-to-tieng-moi-lon-558981 (accessed April 20, 2019).

[28] The original expression is "*Ta Co Manh Thi Ho Moi Chiu Dem Xia Den. Ta Yeu Thi Chi La Mot Khi Cu Trong Tay Cua Ke Khac, Dau Ke Ay Co The La Ban Dong Minh Cua Ta Vay*." Source: Viet Hoang, "*Ta Co Manh Thi Ho Moi Chiu Dem Xia Den*" (We are strong enough, and they pay attention [to us]), *Infonet*, February 09, 2016, https://infonet.vn/ta-co-manh-thi-ho-moi-chiu-dem-xia-den-post190405.info (accessed April 20, 2019).

[29] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, 52.

between national interests and international interests. They also call for nation-states to comply with international law in pursuit of their interests to avoid circumstances in transnational transactions where "big fish swallow small fish" or the strong bullies the weak. This point of view is similar to the liberal advocates who believe that harmony of interest among states can be achieved in global politics.[30] As Jonathan Cristol has pointed out, liberal IR theory views international law as a tool to manage state behavior in transnational activities.[31]

As far as the matter of cooperation and conflict in international relations is concerned, from the Vietnamese perspectives, cooperation and conflict in international relations are driven by interests. Accordingly, cooperative acts take place where international actors have interests in common and conflicts happen when the interests among the parties involved conflict. In other words, it is the interest that is believed to have long been the root cause of cooperation and conflict, or peace and war in international relations.

On the one hand, Vietnamese scholars have similar views to those IR realists who maintain that competition and conflict are inevitable in international relations. However, from the Vietnamese perspective, these mainly originate from inevitable differences in terms of ideology, national system or interest among international actors rather than the anarchical and self-help nature of the international system, as realist IR advocates argue.[32] However, as one Vietnamese scholar states, it is the very anarchical dimension of international relations that maintain and prolong inter-state conflict and competition because states seek to advance their interests and ignore those of others.[33]

On the other hand, unlike the realist line of thought, the Vietnamese political and IR community argues that, despite the existence and growing complicated nature of conflicts and competition, international cooperation has emerged as the primary trend of the post-Cold War era. In the assessment of the post-Cold War era, the CPV stated in 2011 that:

> [t]he fundamental contradictions of the world manifested in different forms and levels still exist and grow. Peace, national independence, democracy, cooperation, and development are significant trends; but ethnic struggles, class struggles, local wars, armed conflicts, conflicts

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[30] Naaz, "Liberalism," 153-154.

[31] Jonathan Cristol, "Liberalism," *Oxford Bibliographies*, July 26, 2017, http: DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0060 (accessed April 5, 2019).

[32] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 57.

[33] Hoang, "*Khai Niem Va Co So Cua Xung Dot Quoc Te*" (Notion and basis of international conflicts), 20.

related to ethnic and religious matters, arms race, the activities of interventions, subversion, terrorism, disputes of territory, sea, island, resources, and fierce competition for economic benefits continue to take place in a complicated manner.[34]

From Vietnamese perspectives, growing interdependence among states, facilitated by advances in science, technology, and globalization means more chances for collaborative acts among international entities. This point of view is akin to those liberal IR advocates who argue that increasing economic interdependence means fewer possibilities for conflict and war. Additionally, neoliberalists hold that it is even possible for inter-state cooperation to take place even in the anarchic condition.[35] Neoliberal institutionalists explain that states try to maximize their interest through cooperation. Regional and global cooperative acts have been expanded to other realms beyond trade (such as security, environment, terrorism, conflicts, human rights, and drug trafficking).[36] Vietnamese viewpoints are similar to those of pluralists who declare that transnational cooperation brings about positive outcomes and is necessary to solve global matters.[37]

Whereas realist IR advocates view competition and conflict as the dominant features of international politics, liberalists see cooperative acts, rather than conflicts, dominating the agenda of global politics. In contrast, Vietnamese scholars view cooperation and competition as two inseparable dimensions of international relations. It means that both cooperation and conflict can take place concurrently in transnational relations. While states promote cooperative acts to achieve national security and developmental goals, they have to struggle with each other due to differences or conflicts of interests that emerge through the interactive process. However, the aim of the struggle, as Vietnamese scholar believe, is not to reduce, but to maintain and boost collaborative acts in the long term.

Originating from such a standpoint, Vietnam has introduced the idea of "object of cooperation" (*doi tac*) and "object of struggle" (*doi tuong*) in international relations. Accordingly, the identification of cooperative dimensions or conflictual dimensions in transnational activities is based on national interest and the specific context of the state. Where there are shared interests, there are opportunities for states to cooperate, but where there are conflicts of interest, states need to struggle to maintain

[34] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi (Bo Sung, Phat Trien Nam 2011)*" (The platform for national building in a transitional period to socialism (Supplemented and developed in 2011)).

[35] Naaz, "Liberalism," 162.

[36] Ibid., 163.

[37] Ibid., 161.

cooperative chances. Hence, states can both perform coordinated acts and struggling activities at the same time in their international involvements.

Concerning the concept of integration, Vietnamese scholars fundamentally admit that growing interdependence among international actors and globalization are the salient features of the post-Cold War world. As a result, Vietnam has empirically promoted the idea of "integration" and "interdependence." From the Vietnamese perspective, enhancing and deepening ties and connections with other countries, especially with big countries, would not only be beneficial to Vietnam but also bring the stake of Vietnam's stability and prosperity to those countries involved. This can reduce the potential behaviors that these countries can cause Vietnam, because if they do, that will hurt themselves.

However, as neoliberalists argue, the authority and power of the state are "retreating" or "leaking" to the globalized market and transnational corporations.[38] Vietnam has empirically tried to manage adverse impacts to which the integrational process can cause the country. Whereas Vietnam stresses the necessity of integration, it also promotes balance between integration and the maintenance of national independence and self-control in international relations. The following provides a summary of Vietnamese IR perspectives versus realist and liberal IR traditions.

Table 9.1. Vietnamese Perspectives versus Realist and Liberal IR Theories

Approaches Concepts	Realism	Liberalism	Vietnamese Perspectives
International system	• The nature of the international system is anarchy; • Great power dominates the system; • States promote self-help to secure themselves	• Anarchy in global politics can be "molded"[39] by institutionalizing international relations (international agreements, regimes, and international law)	• Each state is an integral part of the international system, so the system does affect nation-state behavior; • Big countries set the "game rules," that influence the entire system, and decide the evolution of the system; • Relationships among big countries do affect smaller

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[38] Naaz, "Liberalism," 165.

[39] Jorgensen, *International Relations Theory*, 59.

			countries and the entire system
International actors	• The state is the main actor; • Non-state actors are less important to international politics	• Both state and non-state actors do matter to global politics; • The growing erosion of state roles in world politics	• The state is the main actor; • Non-state actors are playing a growing role in international relations, but are still subject to the will of the state[40]
Power	• Competing for and using power is central to international politics; • Anarchy urges states to seek for more power as a way to secure itself • Power is the means and goal of a state; • Three types of power (hard, soft, and smart) can be deployed to advance the state's objectives; • Competition for power is a zero-sum game;[41] • Military and economic capabilities are the main components	• International institutions and law can manage state behavior; • Complex interdependence reduces the chances of using military force in global politics as it causes reciprocal effects among states involved	• Power reflected in terms of both capability and relationship is a means to achieve national interests; • National comprehensive strength (NCS) is made up of material and non-material elements; changing over time and contingent upon national and international factors. • Economic, not military aspect, plays a decisive role in the making of CNS in the post-Cold War world; • States can combine national strength with epochal strength (international movements for peace, national independence, democracy, and societal progress) to maximize their capabilities
National interest	• The fundamental national interest of a state is to 'protect [its] physical, political and cultural identity against	• States' interests are multiple and changing;[44] • National interest is less significant due to the preference of transnationally unrestricted trade ties;	• States' fundamental interests are security, development, and external influence; • National interest is pursued through foreign policy; • Advocates (i) the legitimacy or righteousness of national interest (*loi ich dan toc chan chinh*); (ii) harmony between international interest and

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[40] Hoang, "*Chu Nghia Hien Thuc*" (Realism), 45.
[41] Rumki Basu, "Realism," in *International Politics: Concepts, Theories and Issues,* ed. Rumki Basu (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2012), 174.
[44] Cristol, "Liberalism."

	• encroachments by other nations;'[42] • National interest can be achieved through foreign policy; • Promotion of national interest is crucial to a state; • National interest is fixed, permanent, unchanged among ruling governments; • Downgrades the state's international responsibilities,[43] or moral standards in pursuit of national interests	• Harmony of interest among states is possible	national interest; and (iii) compliance to international law and norms in the pursuit of national interest; • Elements of national interest change over time subject to national conditions and international context; • The promotion of "interwoven interest" (*dan xen loi ich*) can create harmonized interest among international actors and reduce conflict
Cooperation and conflict	• Conflict dominates international politics; • Cooperation is contemporary or limited due to mutual fear, and mistrust; • Cooperative acts, if feasible, are mainly in military terms • The unequal distribution of power makes it hard to promote international institutions and norms in reducing competition and conflict among states[45]	• Cooperation thrives; • International actors work together to cope with global issues; • Increasing economic interdependence means fewer chances of conflict and war; • Conflict (war) can be reduced through the promotion of common goals, collective security, and international institutions; • Neoliberalists state that anarchy is not necessary to lead to conflict because states (rational actors) can choose to cooperate	• States cooperate with others to mainly promote national interest and solve global problems; • Conflict is inevitable due to the diversified nature of the world; • Cooperation and conflict are driven by interest: collaborative acts take place for shared interests; conflicts emerge when the interests are divergent; • Cooperation and conflict can take place concurrently in transnational transactions; • Introduces the concept of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" (*doi tac* and *doi tuong*)
Integration	• Downgrade integration;	• Increasing linkages across states create	• Integration and interdependence are global trends;

[42] Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: University Press of America, 1951), 172.

[43] Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, 212.

[45] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, 42.

	• Anarchical and self-help nature of the system makes it hard to achieve inter-state collaboration as states are more concerned with relative gains than absolute gains	mechanisms for integrative acts; • Successful cooperation in one sector "spills over" other sectors; • Integration of economy is the core; that of others (foreign policy, defense) are optional; • Integration can be achieved by the construction of collective security, the promotion of democracy, a market economy, international law, and international institutions	• The national borders and sovereignty still matter upon integration; • States need to integrate into the world to better pursue national interest

Source: The author's compilation

As such, the Vietnamese political and IR community tends to look at international relations as a complicated, interconnected web of both nation-state actors and non-state actors in which the former plays a crucial role. International relations are not confined to political-security realms alone, but include other realms such as economy, culture, and society. Influenced by the Marxist approach, Vietnamese scholars view interest as the primary factor that determines whether collaborative acts or confrontational behaviors are likely to take place in international relations. However, a growing complex and interdependent world in the post-Cold War tends to encourage states to both cooperate and struggle with one another at the same time for their national interests. Also, since integration is a significant trend of the post-Cold War world, states promote their integrative processes as a way to maximize their chances for national development.

In short, this thesis has argued that the main standpoints of the Vietnamese political and IR community differ somewhat from those of the realist and liberal IR advocates in the West. On the one hand, the Vietnamese perspectives are influenced by the Marxist approach, especially the tenets of dialectical and historical materialism when interpreting relations among states. On the other hand, there is both convergence and divergence between the Vietnamese political and IR community, and

realist and liberal IR theories in explaining many dimensions of interactions among states in the post-Cold War world.

Components in the Construction of Distinctive Vietnamese IR Thinking

This thesis argues that there are three main underlying factors that can explain the reason why the Vietnamese political and IR community has some distinguishing characteristics of IR thinking. They are associated with Vietnamese perceptions of the relationship between theory and reality, and pragmatism in IR studies in Vietnam, and Vietnam's insistence on the socialist-oriented construction in the *Doi Moi* era. The convergence of these factors is crucial to the construction of Vietnamese distinct IR thinking in the post-Cold War era.

The Relationship between Theory and Reality

Understanding the Vietnamese political and IR community's perception of the relationship between theory (*ly luan*) and reality (*thuc tien*) might shed some light on the reason why local IR scholars have some unique points of view on IR. Influenced by the Marxist approach, the local political and IR community believe that there is a dialectical relationship between theory and reality. The theory is understood as the system of knowledge that is generalized from reality, and represents the robust link among, and the nature of, things and phenomena.[46] The reality is generally perceived as all materialistic activities of human beings driven by objectives in a socio-historical context that aim to improve nature, society, and human beings themselves.[47]

From Vietnamese perspectives, building theories must be firmly attached to reality, reflecting the requirements of the reality, and representing the practical dimension of the reality. For those theories that fail to represent the authenticity of reality or explain the reality, they would be rejected eventually. In return, activities in the real world are guided by theories; however, such an application

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[46] Ministry of Education and Training, *Giao Trinh Triet Hoc - Dung Cho Hoc Vien Cao Hoc Va Nghien Cuu Sinh Khong Thuoc Chuyen Nganh Triet Hoc* (Textbook of Philosophy – Designed for non-philosophy majored postgraduate and Ph.D. students) (Hanoi: Political Theory Publishing House, 2007), 361.
[47] Ibid., 358.

of theories must be based on specific conditions of the historical context.[48] Put in another way, whereas the reality and the theory reinforce each other, the former plays a crucial role.

Therefore, the Vietnamese political and IR community tends to form their IR standpoints based on the reality of Vietnam's international experience and the "reality" or empirical studies of relations among international actors. In other words, from Vietnamese perspectives, any construction of theories that is neither centered on nor able to explain the reality of international phenomena would be invalid. This also implies that among the many existing theories on international relations, the Vietnamese community of scholars tends to accept only dimensions that can describe real-world relations among international actors or the reality of Vietnam's international relations.

The words of Ho Chi Minh in 1927 can clarify such a spirit of Vietnam towards existing international theories. He stated that "nowadays there are so many doctrines, [and] so many theories, but the most righteous, assured and revolutionary doctrine is Leninism."[49] Although Marxism-Leninism has been adopted as Vietnam's national ideology since the early days of Vietnam's revolution, the Vietnamese political elite has tried to avoid the rigid application of this doctrine into Vietnam. Instead, they have "creatively adopted"[50] the doctrine in a way that suits the specific socio-political context of Vietnam. In this regard, Vietnam's *Doi Moi* process is a typical example of such an application.

The Pragmatism of IR Studies in Vietnam

The pragmatism of IR studies in Vietnam presents practicality at which the local community of political IR scholars aims. In general, Vietnamese IR studies are attached to the reality of Vietnam's international relations, and aim to serve Vietnam's national goals. The growth of IR research since around the mid-1990s, and the robust progress in recent years, represent such practicality of studies in the country. As Chapter 2 explained, Vietnam began to speed up its efforts to join the region and the world since the mid-1990s. That required an increasing understanding of the outside world so

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[48] Ibid., 373.

[49] Chi Minh Ho, *Toan Tap – Tap 2* (Complete Works – Volume 2) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2002), 268. The original expression in the Vietnamese language is: "*Bay Gio Hoc Thuyet Nhieu, Chu Nghia Nhieu, Nhung Chu Nghia Chan Chinh Nhat, Chac Chan Nhat, Cach Menh Nhat La Chu Nghia Le-Nin*."

[50] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII* (Documents of the Twelfth National Party congress), 199.

that Vietnam could conduct the integrative process effectively. Vietnam's enhancement of full integration in recent years has also encouraged more IR studies in the country.

As discussed in Chapter 1, post-Cold War IR studies in Vietnam have primarily focused on foreign policy and diplomacy to serve Vietnam's formulation and deployment of multilateralization and diversification of international relations. It also means that local studies on theoretical aspects are still very modest. For IR theoretical aspects, Vietnamese scholars tend to concentrate on those themes that are of growing concern to Vietnam's foreign policy in the *Doi Moi* period such as integration, independence, self-control, national interest, globalization, interdependence, cooperation, and conflict. Understanding these theoretical aspects would contribute to the creation of a reliable platform for Vietnam's development of effective foreign policies and diplomatic strategies and tactics.

The pragmatism of IR studies is also reflected by a close connection between the Party-State system and the community of scholars. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the configuration of Vietnam's socio-political system encourages local scholars to strengthen the system rather than weaken it. With regards to the perception of international relations, while the line of the CPV is "official," that of the domestic scholar community is mostly to explain, clarify, develop, or in many cases, spread that of the CPV. This has led to the fact that the viewpoints presented in the publication of scholarly works are fundamentally consistent to that of the CPV and SOV. Also, for the most part, the perspectives among Vietnamese scholars are supplementing, rather than contradicting one another.

The case of international integration studies can serve as an excellent example of how IR studies in Vietnam are strictly linked to Vietnam's practical demand for understanding this subject matter. As discussed in Chapter 8, the CPV officially adopted the term "integration" for the first time in 1996. It was not until 2001 that the CPV introduced the resolution on "international economic integration," and then "international integration" in 2013. The evolution of the idea of integration presents the CPV's prudence or carefulness in the experiment of ideas that are crucial to the country. The political and IR community have been working significantly towards this process. Scholarly works engage in spreading, elaborating, clarifying, or developing those ideas that are relevant to the CPV's political agenda.

In 2011, Nguyen Viet Thao and Nguyen Viet Thong provided an explanation of the term "proactive and active in international integration" that the CPV had introduced previously.[51] In the same year, in an edited book, *Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi* (Independence, self-control and international integration of Vietnam in the new context), Nguyen Xuan Thang and others, discussed significant matters related to Vietnam's preservation of independence, self-control and international integration that the CPV had previously stressed. In 2012, in a journal article on the *International Studies* of the DAV, Dang Dinh Quy discussed the notion and contents of Vietnam's international integration.[52]

In 2016, the National Political Publishing House published an edited book, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Va Phat Trien Ben Vung – Kinh Nghiem Cua Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Dang Cong San Phap Va Dan Chu Xa Hoi Duc* (International integration and sustainable development – Experiences from the Communist Party of Vietnam, Communist Party of France and Social Democratic Party of Germany). In 2017, the Central Theoretical Council of the CPV held a conference under the theme of "*Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te* (Firmly maintaining independence, self-control in international integration), which attracted multiple local experts in the field. As the CPV has already stated that independence and self-control versus international integration is a "major relation" that needs to be well managed,[53] this conference was undoubtedly to facilitate the CPV's attempts at managing this relation.

The practical nature of IR studies in the country is also manifested in the way that the local community of scholars interprets international phenomenon. Vietnamese perspectives are based on the specific conditions of Vietnam and fundamentally speak for the interests of itself. As discussed in the section above, from Vietnamese perspectives, the reality is the basis for perception, and it is only the reality that validates if any theories or doctrines work. This line of thought explains the reason why there is both convergence and divergence between the Vietnamese perspective and realist and liberal IR theories.

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[51] Nguyen and Nguyen, *Tim Hieu Mot So Thuat Ngu Trong Van Kien Dai Hoi XI Cua Dang* (Learning some terminologies in the documents of the Eleventh National Party Congress), 63-64.
[52] Dang, "*Ban Them Ve Khai Niem Va Noi Ham 'Hoi Nhap Quoc Te' Cua Viet Nam Trong Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on the notion and contents of 'international integration' of Vietnam in the new period), 19-31.
[53] Tran, "*Nhan Thuc Ve Cac Quan He Lon Trong Van Kien Dai hoi XII Cua Dang*" (Perception of the big relations in the Documents of the Twelfth National Party Congress), 3.

Vietnam's Insistence on the Socialist-oriented Goal in a post-Soviet Era

Vietnam's pursuit of a socialist-oriented goal in the post-Soviet era adds to the distinctiveness in Vietnam's IR thinking. The widespread collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR had significant impacts on Vietnam. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Vietnam identified itself as an outpost of socialism in Southeast Asia in the Cold War. Vietnam's socialist construction received significant support from its socialist allies both materially and spiritually during that time. However, the failure of the socialist model in Eastern Europe and the USSR urged Vietnam to reconsider its model itself. Though there was an internal debate of the CPV on Vietnam's model of development in the 1980s, the Vietnamese political elite has never quit their efforts to pursue the socialist objective.

In the post-Soviet era, whereas many believe that socialism has become "old-fashioned" and the "end of history," the Vietnamese political elite still believes that "according to the law of the historical evolution, the humankind will undoutedly advance to socialism."[54] The political community in Vietnam believes that throughout the national party congresses in the spirit of renovation, Vietnam's perception of the road to socialism has become "more enlightened."[55] In the "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Le Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Bo Sung Va Phat Trien Nam 2011* (The platform for the construction of the country in the transitional period to socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011), the CPV stated that Vietnam insists on the building of a socialist regime that is "compatible with the specific condition of Vietnam and the trend of the world."[56]

In the post-Cold War era, Vietnam normalized relations with China, the largest remaining socialist nation in the world. However, Vietnam and China have become involved in the Eastern Sea (South China Sea) disputes, which at times becomes the flashpoint of security in the region. That also has triggered anti-Chinese sentiment in Vietnam, which is partially represented by street demonstrations

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[54] Communist Party of Vietnam, "*Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi (Bo Sung, Phat Trien Nam 2011)*" (The platform for national building in a transitional period to socialism (Supplemented and developed in 2011)).

[55] Ngoc Tan Ta, "*Phat Trien Ly Luan, Lam Sang Tao Con Duong Di Len CNXH O Viet Nam*" (Develop the theory of, [and] enlighten the path to socialism in Vietnam), *Public Security News*, January 25, 2016, http://cand.com.vn/Van-de-hom-nay-thoi-su/Phat-trien-ly-luan-lam-sang-to-con-duong-di-len-CNXH-o-Viet-Nam-380800/, (accessed April 21st, 2019).

[56] Communist Party of Vietnam, *Van Kien Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Toan Quoc Lan Thu XII* (Documents of the Twelfth National Party Congress), 16.

in many big cities across the nation in recent years,[57] demanding China stop "bullying" Vietnam.[58] In addition, Vietnam is concerned about increasing dependence on China, especially in economic terms.[59] Similarly, Vietnam has normalized bilateral ties with the USA since 1995. Whereas Vietnam would like to upgrade ties with the USA mainly for economic reasons and as a way to balance China's behavior towards the disputes, Vietnam is still skeptical of the American motivation of "peaceful transition" that aims to remove the socialist regime of Vietnam.

In the spirit of renovation, Vietnam wants to integrate into the Asian region and the world. It also wants to maintain its endeavor for socialist-oriented construction. This has put Vietnam in a situation where it has to be strong-minded enough to uphold its socialist goal and at the same time, be flexible enough to adapt itself in a post-Soviet international environment. Although Vietnam needs to socialize itself into many Western-led international institutions, it also needs to be reassured that it is on track to achieving the socialist objective. As discussed in the section above, Vietnamese IR scholars view that reality is crucial to the formulation of the theory. Such a situation of Vietnam's international relations results in some distinctiveness of Vietnam's IR thinking.

Research Implications

Vietnamese IR thinking in the *Doi Moi* era represents a reality-based approach to the post-Soviet international relations. Vietnamese perspectives on IR can, to some extent, represent the voice of those nations that aim to both integrate themselves into the world and maintain national independence and self-control in the post-Soviet international environment. They call for the compliance of international law and norms in the pursuit of national interest. They also demand the construction of international interactions that feature a fairer and more equal representation of less developing nations, because superpowers or great powers have manipulated international politics.

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[57] Keegan Elmer, "Anti-China Protests in Vietnam Set to Aggravate Tensions with Beijing," *South China Morning Post*, Jun 13, 2018, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2150653/anti-china-protests-vietnam-set-aggravate-tensions (accessed April 21, 2019).
[58] Esmer Golluoglu, "Protests in Vietnam as Anger over China's 'Bullying' Grows," *The Guardian*, August 6, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/06/protests-vietnam-china-bullying-grows (accessed April 21, 2019).
[59] Brantly Womack, "Vietnam and China in an Era of Economic Uncertainty," *The Asia Pacific Journal – Japan Focus*, September 7, 2009, https://apjjf.org/-Brantly-Womack/3214/article.html (accessed April 21st, 2019).

Despite still being modest, post-Cold War Vietnamese IR thinking reflects some novelty in IR studies. The Vietnamese political and IR community has introduced the concept of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" in international relations. This concept can be deployed to explain the dynamics of a complicated inter-state, especially asymmetric relations in the post-Cold War era.

As almost no nations are self-sufficient, they need to engage with other nations to supplement their shortcomings. That said, nations are required to cooperate with other nations to secure their national goals. However, differences in national backgrounds and aims or priorities require them to perform struggling acts to secure their interests. Whereas nations can promote cooperative activities in one sector or domain with another nation, they perform struggling activities in other domains with the same partner. Even in one domain, they might need to cooperate and struggle with each other concurrently due to differences or conflicts of interest emerging out of the cooperative process. Take the case of the USA-China as an example. Whereas the USA and China promote collaborative activities in economic and trade domains, they still struggle on the issue of human rights, among many other domains and issues. Even in the domain of trade, both of the countries still struggle with each other due to differences in or conflicts of interest, to make sure that their trade interests are protected.

Also, the idea of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" is also useful in explaining the dynamics of asymmetric relations in international politics. In asymmetric relations, the weaker party needs to maintain cooperative connections with the stronger party to achieve its goals on the one hand. The former also needs to struggle to avoid being bullied or imposed upon the latter on the other hand. In addition, adopting this concept also enables nations to be flexible in the formulation and deployment of their foreign policies. That is, nations can seek to enhance cooperative efforts with any international actors in any realms that benefit them, and at the same time adapt themselves to manage emerging conflicts through the interactive process. Proper management of disputes enables nations to maintain and enhance collaborative attempts in return.

The Vietnamese political and IR community views interest as the defining characteristics of international relations. The interest can be in materialistic or non-materialistic form and can be reflected directly or indirectly. It can also be short-term or long-term, and for narrow-minded or broad-minded purposes. From the Vietnamese perspective, it is not the pursuit of interest for one

nation that ignores those of others. Preferably, such advancement of national interest conforms to international laws and is in harmony with the interest of the international community. This point of view reveals the idea that less powerful nations can use international law as a "shield" that can prevent other more powerful nations from the acts of intervention or encroachment in the name of the pursuit of their national interests.

Besides this, Vietnamese IR thinking is closely connected to Vietnam's foreign policy and its international integrative process over the past decades. Thus, the examination of Vietnamese standpoints on principle matters of transnational transactions can help, to some extent, provide some framework for analyzing Vietnam's post-Cold War foreign policy. It can help explain Vietnam's foreign policy of independence, self-control, integration, and development in the *Doi Moi* era. Vietnam's concept of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" and "national interest" can particularly be used as a framework for interpreting Vietnam's engagement with China and the US in the post-Soviet international environment. The idea of national interest is the most fundamental principle that guides Vietnam's enhanced efforts of full integration into a fast-changing, globalized world these days.

Understanding Vietnamese IR thinking would help shed some light on the way that Vietnam has engaged the US and China, the two most influential state-actors in the post-Cold War international relations. Given the influence of big countries on both international and regional matters, the Vietnamese political elite always takes "big-country factor" seriously in the construction and deployment of Vietnamese foreign policies in the *Doi Moi* era. The introduction of the idea of "object of cooperation" and "object of struggle" can serve as an important guideline for Vietnam's handling of its relations with international partners, especially with the US, a former foe, and China, a giant neighbor.

Management of bilateral relationships with these two countries has great implications on Vietnam's growth. A strong IR realist approach would advocate Vietnam's bandwagoning with either China or the US to be against the other for the promotion of Vietnam's national interest. Reality shows that it is not Vietnam's desire to go with one country to be against another country. Instead, Vietnam finds it necessary to strike a balance in its relations with big countries as maintaining balanced ties with these countries would help Vietnam avoid being isolated in the international stage.

In the same way, a typical IR liberalist would suggest that Vietnam increases unrestricted trade ties and economic interdependence with both the US and China concurrently with less emphasis on national ideological and sovereign issues. Unfortunately, such IR liberal approach would mean Vietnam has to face greater threats to its socialist-oriented construction and protection of national sovereignty posed by the US and China, respectively.

Vietnamese IR thinking represents an approach that lies somewhere between IR realist and liberal approaches. While Vietnam considers the US as "object of cooperation" in economic, scientific and technological terms, it takes the US as the "object of struggle" in ideological terms, especially on issues of "human rights", "democracy" among other matters related to the perceived "peaceful transition" led by the US. Similary, while Vietnam views China as the "object of cooperation" in multiple terms, it contends with China over territorial disputes over the East Sea of Vietnam (or South China Sea) and considers China as the "object of struggle" concurrently. In other words, whilst Vietnam needs to increase ties with both the US and China at the same time; such increasing ties would not allow any sacrifices to be made when it comes to national socialist and sovereign goals.

Research Limits and Potential Extensions

As revealed by the section on literature review in Chapter 1, this study reflects the initial endeavors of exploring Vietnamese standpoints on IR systematically. As a result, shortcomings and limitations of this study are unavoidable. The study tried to draw the sources of reference from a wide range of channels where possible, so that it can present a more inclusive voice of domestic scholars on the matter under investigation. However, for various reasons, limited access to Vietnamese national projects on some IR-related studies would have impeded the inclusiveness of views discussed in this study.

Given the time constraints, this study is limited to some very dominant topics of IR-related concepts, as discussed in Part 2. Other topics that have drawn different degrees of attention to Vietnamese scholars in helping elaborate the Vietnamese IR thinking are not discussed in detail in this study. These topics include nation-state, sovereignty, international organizations, international security, globalization, terrorism, world trends, and geo-politics in international relations. Similarly, the comparison is primarily confined to realist and liberal IR perspectives, while there would be more

significant points of comparison between Vietnamese views and other IR traditions such as the English School, constructivism, among others. Hence, there remains a large area for further investigation into Vietnam's post-Cold War views on IR./.

Appendix 1: Summary of Some Major Vietnamese Works on IR-related Matters

Author	Name of the work (the type of work, and year of publication)	Main discussions or IR-related focus
Vo Dai Luoc	*Thoi Dai Ngay Nay: Noi Dung Va Nhung Dac Diem Chu Yeu* (Current epoch: Major contents and features) (Research project, 1994)	Contents and characteristics of the contemporary world
Hoang Van Hien, and Nguyen Viet Thao	*Quan He Quoc Te Tu 1945 Den 1995* (International relations between 1945 and 1995) (Book, 1998)	The formation and change in the world order
Nguyen Co Thach	*The Gioi Trong 50 Nam Qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi Trong 25 Nam Toi (1995-2020)* (The world in the past fifty years (1945-1995) and the world in the coming twenty-five years (1995-2020)) (Book, 1998)	The world in the past and in the future
Faculty of International Relations, Hanoi Branch of HCMNAP	*Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te Va Duong Loi Doi Ngoai – Chuong Trinh Cu Nhan Chinh Tri* (The lecture book of IR and the line of foreign policy – The BA program of political science) (Book, 2001)	Empirical studies of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy
Pham Thai Viet	*"He Thong Quan He Quoc Te Duong Dai"* (The system of contemporary international relations) in *Trat Tu The Gioi Sau Chien Tranh Lanh: Phan Tich Va Du Bao* (The post-Cold War world order: Analyses and predictions), eds. Lai Van Toan and others) (Book chapter, 2001)	Theories and empirical aspects of the contemporary international system
Nguyen Bang Tuong	*"Quan Diem Mac-Xit Ve Mot So Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te Cua Cac Nuoc Phuong Tay Hien Nay"* (The Marxist perspective on some current Western IR theories) (Ministry-level research project, 2001)	The perspectives of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Lenin, and Ho Chi Minh on some aspects of international relations; critiques of some Western IR theories, including realism and liberalism
Doan Van Thang	*Quan He Quoc Te - Cac Phuong Phap Tiep Can* (IR – Various approaches) (Book, 2003)	The origin and nature of international relations, objects and contents of IR discipline, and some western IR theories
Nguyen Duc Binh, Le Huu Nghia and Tran Huu Tien (eds.)	*Gop Phan Nhan Thuc The Gioi Duong Dai* (Contributing to the understanding of the contemporary world) (Book, 2003)	Practical dimensions of the contemporary world
Nguyen Quoc Hung, and Hoang Khac Nam	*Quan He Quoc Te: Nhung Khia Canh Ly Thuyet Va Van De* (International relations: Some theoretical aspects and issues) (Book, 2006)	World order, cooperation, and conflict

Trinh Muu, and Nguyen Hoang Giap	*Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Viet Nam Hien Nay - Hoi Va Dap* (International relations and Vietnam's foreign policy at present – Questions and answers) (Book, 2007)	Matters of the current epoch and international relations; the foreign policies of some great powers and Vietnam
Hoang Khac Nam	"*Cong Ty Xuyen Quoc Gia – Chu The Quan He Quoc Te*" (Transnational corporations – actors of international relations) (Journal article, 2008)	Transnational corporations as non-state actors
Ho Vu	"*Thu Ban Ve Cuc Dien Quoc Te Hien Nay*" (An attempt to discuss the current configuration of the world) (Journal article, 2008)	World configuration
Vu Duong Huan	*Mot So Van De Quan He Quoc Te Va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam – Tap 1* (Some matters of international relations and Vietnam's foreign policy – Volume 1) (Book, 2009)	World order and configuration, and national interests
Vu Duong Huan	"*Ban Chat Va Dac Thu Cua Quan He Quoc Te*" (Nature and distinctiveness of international relations) (Journal article, 2010)	Nature and distinguishing characteristics of international relations
Nguyen Dinh Luan	"*Mot So Dac Diem Canh Tranh Quyen Luc Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*" (Some characteristics of power competition in the first two decades of the twenty-first century) (Journal article, 2010)	Competition for power
Vu Le Thai Hoang	"*Quan He My – Trung Va Trat Tu Khu Vuc Chau A – Thai Binh Duong*" (The USA-China relations and the order of Asia-Pacific region) (Journal article, 2010)	The order of the Asia-Pacific region
Le Minh Quan	*Hoa Binh - Hop Tac Va Phat Trien: Xu The Lon Tren The Gioi Hien Nay* (Peace – cooperation and development: Big trends of the current world (Book, 2010)	Major trends of the post-Cold War world
Nguyen Dinh Luan	"*Ve Ba Dac Diem Cua He Thong Quoc Te Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*" (Regarding the three characteristics of the international system in the first two decades of the twenty-first century) (Journal article, 2010)	Crises of the global security and the development model; the polarization of the global economy; the tug-of-war between unipolar and multipolar world order
Dang Dinh Quy	"*Ban Them Ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*" (Further discussion on nation-state interests in Vietnam's activities of foreign affairs in the new period) (Journal article, 2010)	Difficulties in the identification of national interest; the national interest of some countries; Vietnam's approach to the national interest
Phan Van Ran, and Nguyen Hoang Giap	"*Chu Quyen Quoc Gia Dan Toc Trong Xu The Toan Cau Hoa Va Van De Dat Ra Doi Voi Viet Nam*" (The sovereignty of the nation-state in the trend of globalization and emerging issues for Vietnam (Book, 2010)	The perception of sovereignty, how globalization affects national sovereignty and countries' policy responses; Vietnam's

		sovereignty in the context of globalization
Do Thanh Hai	*"Ban Ve Trach Nhiem Cua Quoc Gia Trong Quan He Quoc Te"* (Discussion on national responsibilities in international relations (Journal article, 2010)	The notion of the nation's international responsibilities, Vietnam's international responsibilities
Pham Binh Minh	*Xu The Phat Trien Cua Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020 Va Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Cua Vietnam* (Trends of development of the world's configuration towards 2020 and Vietnam's strategic direction of foreign affairs) (Book, 2010)	World configuration
Vu Van Hien	*Nhan Thuc Ve Thoi Dai Ngay Nay* (Cognition of the current epoch) (Book, 2010)	Characteristics of the contemporary world
Vu Le Thai Hoang	*"Ban Ve Cach Tiep Can Cua Ly Luan Phuong Tay Ve Trat Tu The Gioi"* (Discussing the Western approaches to the world order) (Journal article, 2011)	Notion, attributes, and criteria to identify the world order
Nguyen Xuan Thang	*Doc Lap, Tu Chu Va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te Cua Viet Nam Trong Boi Canh Moi* (Independence, self-control, and the international integration of Vietnam in the new context (Book, 2011)	The evolution of thought, the past practice, and direction of Vietnam's management of the relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration
Vu Duong Huan	*"Vai Nhan Thuc Ve He Thong Quan He Quoc Te"* (Some understandings of the system of international relations) (Journal article, 2011)	International system
Pham Quoc Tru	*"Quyen Luc Mem Trong Quan He Quoc Te"* (Soft power in international relations) (Journal article, 2011)	The notion of soft power, and the exercise of the soft power of the USA and China in international relations
Tran Ngoc Dung	*"Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Tinh Hinh Nghien Cuu Quan He Quoc Te Sau Nam 1945 O Viet Nam"* (Some thoughts on the situation of IR research in Vietnam after 1945), in *Quan He Quoc Te Thoi Hien Dai – Nhung Van De Moi Dat Ra* (International relations in the modern times – emerging issues), eds. Binh Thanh Do and Thanh Ngoc Van (Book chapter, 2012)	Current situation of IR studies in Vietnam
Pham Binh Minh	*Cuc Dien The Gioi Den Nam 2020* (The world's configuration towards 2020) (Book, 2012)	World configuration
Nguyen Dinh Luan	*"Nam Dac Diem Cua Tu Duy Ve Quan He Quoc Te Sau Chien Tranh Lanh"* (Five features of thinking on international relations after the Cold War (Journal article, 2013)	Features of post-Cold War IR thinking
Tran Nam Tien	*"Loi Ich Quoc Gia Trong Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Viet Nam Thoi Ky Doi Moi"* (The national interest in Vietnam's foreign policy of the renovation era (Journal article, 2013)	The notion of national interest, the factor of national interest in the deployment of Vietnam's foreign policy

Doan Van Thang	*"Su Phu Thuoc Lan Nhau Trong Quan He Quoc Te"* (Interdependence in international relations) (Journal article, 2013)	Notion, nature, field, level of interdependence, what influences interdependence, and implications for states
Ngo Phuong Nghi	*"Ban Ve Chu The Trong Quan He Quoc Te"* (Discussion on actors in international relations) (Journal article, 2013)	International actors
Le Dinh Nam	*Giao Trinh Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh Ve Quan He Quoc Te* (Textbook of Ho Chi Minh Thought on international relations) (Book, 2014)	Ho Chi Minh thought on fundamental matters and principles of international relations
Hoang Khac Nam	*Mot So Van De Ly Luan Quan He Quoc Te Duoi Goc Nhin Lich Su* (Some issues of IR theories from a historical perspective) (Book, 2014)	The international system, power, non-state actors, regionalism, global governance, causes of war
Luu Thuy Hong	*Ngoai Giao Da Phuong Trong He Thong Quan He Quoc Te* (Multilateral diplomacy in the system of international relations) (Book, 2015)	International system
Le Van Anh, and others	*Quan He Quoc Te Thoi Hien Dai* (International relations in the modern time) (Book, 2016)	Empirical dimensions of international relations throughout various stages of the world (mainly between 1918 and now)
Vu Van Hien, and Bui Dinh Bon	*Buc Tranh The Gioi Duong Dai* (The picture of the contemporary world) (Book, 2017)	Features and trends of the contemporary world
Tran Bach Hieu	*Cuc Dien Chinh Tri Dong A – Giai Doan 1991-2016* (The political configuration of East Asia – period 1991-2016) (Book, 2017)	World configuration and regional configuration
Hoang Khac Nam (ed.)	*Ly Thuyet Quan He Quoc Te* (IR theories) (Book, 2017)	Realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism, green politics, critical theory, and post-modernism
Nguyen Thai Yen Huong	*Quan He My – Trung, Hop Tac Va Canh Tranh: Luan Giai Duoi Goc Do Can Bang Quyen Luc* (The USA-China relations: Cooperation and competition – An explanation from the balance of power perspective) (Book, 2017)	Power and balance of power
The Central Theoretical Council of the CPV	*Giu Vung Doc Lap, Tu Chu Trong Hoi Nhap Quoc Te - Ky Yeu Hoi Thao* (Firmly maintaining independence, [and] self-control in international integration) (Conference papers, 2017)	The perception, practical management, emerging issues of the management of the relationship between independence and self-control, and international integration

Source: The author's compilation

Appendix 2: Chronology of Key Events of Vietnam's International Involvement

Year(s)	Events
Ancient period (2879–111 BC)	
2879 BC	Xich Quy, later renamed as Van Lang, the first state of Vietnam, came into being under the rule of Hung Kings
179 BC	Trieu Da, a Chinese general, invaded Au Lac and formed the new nation of Nam Viet
Chinese control and resistance period (111 BC – 938 AD)	
111 BC	China's Han authority invaded Nam Viet and started its rule (first Chinese domination)
40 AD	Trung Sisters' successful rebellion against the Han authority
40–43	Trung Sisters ruled the nation
43–544	Dominated by various Chinese authorities (second Chinese domination)
544	Ly Nam De proclaimed Van Xuan as an independent state
544–602	Ruled by early Ly dynasty
603–905	Dominated by various Chinese authorities (third Chinese domination)
905	The successful uprising of Khuc Thua Du to gain independence
930	Invaded by the Southern Han troops of China
931	Duong Dinh Nghe defeated the southern Han invaders
938	Southern Han invaders returned and were defeated in the Bach Dang Battle
National feudal period (938-1858)	
938–1407	Reigned under Ngo, Dinh, early Le, Ly, Tran, and Ho dynasties
1407–1427	Occupied by China's Ming dynasty (the fourth Chinese domination)
1427-1858	Reigned under Mac, later Le dynasty, Trinh and Nguyen lords, Tay Son, and Nguyen dynasties
French colonial era (1858–1945)	
1858	French naval troops landed in Da Nang
1862-1945	Vietnam was under the French "protectorate" and was divided into three "pays": Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin-China; various patriotic movements took place
1930	Nguyen Ai Quoc (later Ho Chi Minh) founded the Indochinese Communist Party to oppose the French rule
1940	The Japanese fascists invaded Indochina to establish new bases against the Allies of the Second World War
1941	Ho Chi Minh formed the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh)
1945, Mar	The Japanese fascists launched a coup d'état to oust the French colonialists in Indochina
Independence and unification era (1945-1986)	
1945	The August Revolution against foreign rules succeeded, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was established
1946	The French colonialists returned, and Vietnam fought the First Indochina War
1950	China and the USSR recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
1954	The French defeated at Dien Bien Phu battlefield, the Geneva Accord signed, putting an end to the First Indochina War; Vietnam was divided into North and South, delineated by the 17th parallel
1956	China seized the eastern group of the Paracel Islands
1965	American ground forces started to land in Da Nang

1968	Tet Offensive took place
1972	The USA warned to bomb North Vietnam "back into the Stone Age"
1973	Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed
1974	Chinese military units seized islands in the Paracels which had been occupied by South Vietnamese armed forces
1975	A successful 1975 Spring Offensive liberated South Vietnam and reunified Vietnam; Pol Pot troops of the Khmer Rouge regime started its first attempt of attacks on Vietnam's southwestern borders
1976	Vietnam was renamed as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
1977	Vietnam became the 150th member of the UN
1978	Vietnam's troops arrived in Cambodia to help the removal of the regime of Pol Pot
1979	Chinese troops launched an offensive on the six northern border provinces to "teach Vietnam a lesson"
Doi Moi era (1986 to 2016)	
1986	The Sixth Congress of the CPV marked the introduction of *Doi Moi*
1988	Vietnam and China fought a naval battle off the Spratly Islands
1989	Vietnam unconditionally pulled out its last troops from Cambodia
1991	Vietnam normalized relations with China
1995	Vietnam normalized relations with the USA relations (11 July), and became a member of ASEAN (27 July)
1999	Vietnam signed the Land Border Treaty with China
2000	Vietnam signed the Bilateral Trade Agreement with the USA
2006	Vietnam first hosted an APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting
2007	Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization
2008	Vietnam-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Cooperation signed; Vietnam first became a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council (for the 2008-2009 tenure)
2014	Drilling rig HD-981 incident between Vietnam and China took place
2015	Vietnam and the USA signed a joint vision statement on defense relations
2016	American embargo on sales of lethal weapons to Vietnam was removed, marking the full normalization of Vietnam-USA relations

Source: The author's compilation

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