

Vietnam in the Post-Cold War era: New Foreign Policy Directions

Luong Ngoc THANH

Graduate student

Graduate school for International Development and Cooperation

Hiroshima University

1-5-1 Kagamiyama, Higashi Hiroshima, 739-8529 Japan

E-mail: d102816@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

Abstract

As a special phenomenon in the human's history, the Cold War during its beginning, existence and ending, has changed the face of our world; its impacts and remnants have contributed significantly to shaping a new world order. For countries, adjustments and changes of national strategies are indispensable in attempts to create or at least get favorable positions in the new world order. Such adjustments and changes have had great impacts on the small and medium countries--pieces on the world's grand political chessboard of the leading superpowers (Brezinski, 1999). Vietnam is not an outsider of this process. The most important thing for Vietnam is to determine suitable national policy and development strategy so that it will neither be excluded from this strategic game nor be abused, exploited, controlled by big countries, causing negative impacts on the country's interests. This strategy also has decisive influences on the country's effort to overcome crisis, integrate with the international community, maintain national sustainable development while keeping independence and national sovereignty.

Key words: Vietnam, foreign policy redirection, renovation policy, Cold War.

1. Introduction

Following the end of the Cold War, the Yalta bi-polar World order collapsed, the global geo-political structure has been changed fundamentally with far-reaching and great changes in the distribution of power (Drezner, 2007). The world order is being rearranged. There are many stances about the being-formed model of the new world order such as: unipolar empire without competitors or challengers, a "pax Americana" (Cheney, 1993); "unipolar moment" (Krauthammer, 1990/1991); "multipolar", or "multipolar with one superpower," and even "non-polar" (Haass, 2008). Recent movements seem to show that our world is in transition to a multipolar and multi-center world order, which seem to be the prominent trend. However, this process is influenced by a number of factors and it takes time to reach a stable world order.

In the processes to adjust their diplomatic strategies, all major countries focused on strengthening and expanding foreign relations to impose their full influences, gain benefits (Jissi, 2011) in all aspects and set up the highest and the most profitable position in the new world order. Peace and security in some regions are sometimes in a state of instability (Son and Du, 2006: 185). In this context, national interests play in a dominant position to define the objectives, contents and guidelines of domestic and foreign policies as well as methods to concentrate forces of each country (Ngoc and An, 2008: 52); and due to the differences in countries' national strength and position in the world political arena, the amplitude of strategy and policy restructuring of each country is different.

Based on the theoretical points on "change and restructuring in foreign policy" and the real situation of Vietnam during the last 25 years (1986-2011), in this paper, we argue that Vietnam is in the process in which it is consistently seeking way to develop, fundamentally restructuring its policies especially foreign policy to adapt itself to a rapid changing international political-economic environment after the Cold War. Vietnamese foreign policy is not only changing implementation methods but also reorienting foreign allegiances and setting new guiding ideologies. These changes will continue in the future with certain level and pace. Based on these starting points, we have defined these following research questions: How these changes have actually been happened? They were such reorientations or just policy adjustments? How will be the adjustments and changes in the future? Simultaneously, we also aim to make comment on the impact of these changes to the political-socio-economic situation of Vietnam.

In international relations theory, adjustment, change and restructuring is an inherent characteristic of a national foreign policy. No nation can avoid this, as Charles F. Hermann (1990: 3) once stated: “We are in period of profound change in international relations and foreign policy. These developments call attention to the state of our knowledge about change processes in governmental decision making.” However, how, what and when to adjust, change or even reorient have always been questions to scholars. Moreover, why at the same time, in the same international political-socio-economic environment, one nation decides to reorient its strategic direction, while the others do not? This question is also raised when we study the process of restructuring of foreign policy of Vietnam in the context of the post-Cold War in this article.

To find out the answers for these questions, besides the introduction and conclusion, the article consists of two main sections as follows: 2. Theoretical foundations, and 3. Vietnam in the Post-Cold War: Foreign policy restructuring.

Section 2 will analyze basic theories and foundations of foreign policy restructuring. This can be considered as a core theoretical foundation of the article. In section 3, we analyze Vietnam’s political-socio-economic context as well as international environment in the post-Cold War era in which Vietnam is struggling to find its place and determining its position. This period could be specified from 1986¹ up to now: *Doi moi*--“Renovation” period as Vietnamese always considers. Scope of time can be extended further to the past--in the early 1980s, due to the role and impact of these happenings at that time on Vietnam’s policies. We aim to identify the dominant, influenced and decisive factors on the restructuring process of foreign policy, as well as the content of specific policies that were reoriented by the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) and Government of Vietnam (GOV). These analyses lead us to a conclusion that: due to the influence of these factors, Vietnam has changed its foreign policy basis from ideological considerations to a foreign policy guidelines that focus on national interest and pragmatic, realism diplomacy.²

To conduct the analysis, we have used some viewpoints from Rosenau (1981), Holsti (1982), Goldmann (1988) and especially the theoretical model of Hermann (1990) on the change, and reorientation of foreign policy. We have also used the ideas of the Neorealism; and, especially the Marxist-Leninist historical materialism approach which, we believe, is applicable in analyzing Vietnam’s political-socio-economic context.³

2. Theoretical foundations

Basically, foreign policy consists of strategies, tactics, guidelines, decisions and measures chosen and implemented by the state in an active and effective involvement process into international relations in each historical period, to safeguard national interest, in accordance with the development trend of the world and international law. We also agree with the view of Cohen and Harris, foreign policy is “a set of goals, directives, or intentions, formulated by persons in official or authoritative positions, directed at some actor or condition in the environment beyond the nation state, for the purpose of affecting the target in the manner desired by the policymakers” (Cohen and Harris, 1975: 385).

To some extent, foreign policy is the continuation of domestic policy, formulated based on the country’s economic, political, and social structures. Foreign policy is determined by many factors, including levels of socio-economic development, social politics, geo-political location, traditional history, targets and requirements to ensure the country’s sovereignty and security.

2.1. Foreign policy restructuring: Theoretical reviews

Adjustment and change in foreign relations policy have always been the research objective of national policies of political science. Rosenau (1981: 1-2) wrote “...the political organism is always experiencing both the continuities and change, and thus is always in motion, slipping behind, moving ahead, holding fast, or otherwise adjusting and changing in response to internal developments and external circumstances.”

James N. Rosenau is perhaps the one who put the first theoretical foundations in the studies on restructuring foreign policy. In his 1981-book, *The Study of Political Adaptation*, Rosenau stated that political phenomena must be considered as the adaptation of humans and political institutions “...always experiencing both the continuities and change.” Therefore, he thought that foreign policy was a mechanism or instrument for a country to adapt itself to or cope with changes in the externally political-economic environment.

While Rosenau described the consequences that happened to a country when changes were made to its foreign policy, Kal Holsti with his later edited book, *Why Nation Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, began to build the theory of what were happening when the country adjusted and changed its foreign policy. Holsti continued his work by classifying types of adjustments and changes that a country can do to its foreign policy. The types of adjustment and change then were synthesized in four typical types of foreign policy: “isolation,” “self-reliance,” “dependence,” and “nonalignment-

diversification” (Holsti, 1982: 4-7). In his theoretical framework, Holsti also outlined the role of factors that affected the foreign policy structuring process at the national level. They are “external and domestic factors,” “cultural and historical factors,” and also “internal factors” that occurred inside the policy formulation process. Holsti found that in fact, it was much easier for a country to announce its intention or plan to change the foreign policy than actually deploy and implement these announcements.

Kjell Goldmann had a different approach to the issue we are discussing. In the book, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*, instead of paying attention on “adjustment” or “change,” he focused on the concept of “stabilizers” (Goldmann, 1988: 6), “the process of detente” (Goldmann, 1988: 26-69) by examining patterns of political action. He said that: “There is an inevitable tension between viewing international politics as the pursuit of policies and seeing it as variable responses to shifting situations. Yet the tradition in foreign policy analysis is to do both” (Goldmann, 1988: 3). Goldmann studied the pressures that forced a country to change its policies, and on the contrary, to continue with existing policies (Goldmann, 1988: 3-4). He stated that: “A change in policy has “sources,” but sources do not produce policy change directly. Sometimes pressure for change produces change, but sometimes it does not” (Goldmann, 1988: 5).

Charles F. Hermann’s studies were presented in the article titled *Changing Course: When Government Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy*. According to Hermann (1990: 3), foreign policy change is indispensable, and it has always been happening. He also emphasized “Changes that mark a reversal, or at least, a profound redirection of a country’s foreign policy are of special interest because of the demands their adoption pose on the initiating government and its domestic constituents and because of their potentially powerful consequences for other countries” (Hermann, 1990: 4). Hermann tried to solve the following questions, “Under what circumstances do these kinds of changes occur in which an existing government recognizes that its current course is seriously inadequate, mistaken, or no longer applicable? What are the conditions under which self-correcting change may arise?” (Hermann, 1990: 5). Hermann paid attention on the basic restructuring of national foreign policy which we are also focusing on. According to him, there are four levels of foreign policy change: (i) Adjustment changes, (ii) Program changes, (iii) Problem/Goal changes, and (iv) International Orientation changes. Hermann assessed the fourth level of change as “The most extreme form of foreign policy change involves the redirection of the actor’s entire orientation toward world affairs” (Hermann, 1990: 5). At this level of change, one country is often, even always, being influenced by the alignment change with other countries or by major changes of its role in an international linkage (with one or more other countries). Hermann’s ideas also facilitated us when studying the “condition for change” (Hermann, 1990: 5) for the case of Vietnam. According to Hermann, the conditions of change consist of four factors: (i) Domestic political system, (ii) Bureaucratic decision making, (iii) Cybernetics, and (iv) Learning (Hermann, 1990: 6). His analysis had focused in the factor “domestic political system,” as he thought, “In the domestic political system, two things are necessary to effect change in foreign policy. First, there must be a change in that system and, second, that systemic change must trigger a change in the government’s foreign policy” (Hermann, 1990: 10-11).

Vietnamese scholars have gained certain achievements in the study of foreign policy restructuring. Typically, they are researches conducted by Trinh Muu (Muu and Giap, 2008), Duong Xuan Ngoc (Ngoc and An, 2008), Vu Duong Huan (Huan, 2008), Nguyen Khac Hung (Hung and Nam, 2006). In their studies, they emphasized the reason of the change or restructuring, including change in both domestic and international political and socio-economic environment. Vietnamese political scientists did not build any theoretical model of a country’s foreign policy changing and reorientation process. They thought that these changes were complex, influenced and ruled by domestic and external factors. With the historical materialism and dialectical methodology of Marxism-Leninism, they thought that the continuous changes of the country’s domestic situation, the movement of international political and economic environment affected directly each country and its behaviors towards the other countries through foreign policy. Foreign policy itself consists of many internal factors that can lead to adjustment and change. Adjustments and changes are made depending on the interaction between domestic and external factors, flexible but at the same time, always in conformity with the state’s strategic direction and diplomatic stance. According to Vietnamese scholars, factors that are identified as the basis for foreign policy making process include: (i) Objectives of economic and political development and performance capacity, (ii) Diplomatic stance, (iii) Domestic context, and (iv) International context.

With the above reviews, we supposed that, Hermann’s and Goldmann’s ideas are suitable for Vietnamese case. Hermann concepts and model will be used as the core analytical framework. We will analyze Vietnam’s political-social context and find out Hermann “change agents.” Those agents, in their turns will be put in the “condition for changes” concept in order to know what has happened in Vietnam during 1980s and after the Cold War. To complete our goals, this analytical framework also combines Goldmann’s concept of “stabilizers”. This concept will help us to examine contradictory trends in Vietnam’s society and especially inside the VCP itself at that time. Overall, Hermann’s ideas provide guidance to approach Vietnam foreign policy restructuring process. Simultaneously, ideas proposed by Rosenau, Holsti and some Vietnamese political scientists will

be used to analyze empirical data.

2.2. Theoretical foundations of Vietnam's foreign policy restructuring

Political science allows us to answer the question why countries select certain policies and help us to predict more accurately their behaviors in the future. The adaptation of Vietnam to the international environment after the Cold War should be viewed with appropriate theoretical tools. This sub-section is intended to build a theoretical framework for the rest of the article.

General issues

Any research about modern Vietnam's foreign and security policy must recognize the impact of communist ideology and the influence of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Therefore, we must study Article 4 of Vietnam's Constitution⁴ which states that the VCP has unique, absolute, direct and comprehensive leadership over Vietnam. It is impossible to examine Vietnam's foreign policy without a basic understanding of the constitutional provisions in Article 4.

Vietnam has a realist perspective about its political power as well as the power of other nations in East Asia and all over the world. Vietnam is a developing country, despite its rich natural and human resources, Vietnam is facing big difficulties and challenges caused by the consequences of wars in the past and some inappropriate policies right after the war. Poor infrastructure, backward industrial development level, imbalanced economic structure, low-quality human resources, less competitive society and labor productivity, unstable socio-economic development policy are the major obstacles for Vietnam's development.

Vietnam is in a very important geopolitical position, in the heart of ASEAN and next to China, the rising giant. With its important location, in the past Vietnam was the strategic competition point among superpowers, and no one has dared to confirm that this would not be repeated in the future. As a next-door country of China, Vietnam tends to hamper China's ambitious expansion and influence to the South. For China, perhaps, Vietnam has become an obstacle to their regional ambition. The ups and downs between Vietnam and China during history have proved that. The recent happenings in the South China Sea (in Vietnam called the East Sea) have increased the tensions and raised not new but urgent problems for the GOV. Although the term "China Threat" is not mentioned much nowadays, but for Vietnam, the threat of Chinese power is inevitable. In addition, because of the interdependence among countries as a dominant characteristic in international relations and China's undeniable role and influence in the region, policies towards this rising power always hold a priority position in Vietnam's foreign policy. Defining appropriate attitudes and behaviors towards China, handling disagreements between two countries smoothly to create favorable conditions for the country development has been and will be a big question for the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam.

In the world political power environment, with the influence of realism perspectives, countries must rely on themselves and seek alliances to ensure their existence against the outside threat. Vietnam is a small country, so it cannot only choose to use military force to protect itself. The lessons from the past have shown that it had to pay a heavy price for any goal reached by this way. Vietnam, unlike Japan with strategic relations with the United States, does not have any choice in terms of alliance after the Vietnam-China relationship was broken and the Soviet Union collapsed. The difference in ideologies and the obstacles from the past have also prevented Vietnam in a certain degree from approaching the United States as a "supporter" to fill the "power vacuum" in Southeast Asia, to counterbalance China's growing influence. Moreover, it seems that a "dependent" foreign relations policy is not supported in Vietnam due to the country's long fighting history, lessons drawn from relations with major powers, as well as the people's psychological characteristics. The only choice for Vietnam is probably a more active, dynamic and innovative foreign policy strategy based on independence, autonomy and a balanced perspective (Thayer, 2008) and (Son and Du, 2006: 185-205) and (Manyin, 2005). Also, the approach to multilateralism, multilateral mechanisms and institutions is also an appropriate way for Vietnam (Tung, 2007: 483).

Since 1978 China has carried out the policy of reform and opening up. Also in the Soviet Union, M. Gorbachev began to implement the reform policy in 1986 with radical changes. But these changes were very slow to appear in Vietnam despite the worsening social and economic situation. During early 1980s, Vietnam's economy became totally deteriorated. Sometimes the question of whether Vietnam can survive or not has been raised instead of the question of whether Vietnam can restructure its national policy. Despite some positive signs, it seemed that partial adjustments following VCP's Forth (1976) and Fifth Congress (1982) were not enough and the country must have much stronger and more fundamental changes. Under the Gorbachev's pressure to put Vietnam's economic house in order and make more effective use of Soviet assistance, VCP leaders agreed to take some further steps. However, leaders of Vietnam at that time seemed unprepared for the changes, which they thought were too liberal, too aggressive and could lead to negative consequences for political stability of Vietnam. Inside the Party, there were number of intense debates over the merits of pragmatism versus ideology. Conservative, as someone

called them, intended to change and adjust the policy slowly, step by step following a certain route, to be able to control and monitor anything that might occur.⁵ Therefore, the changes in Vietnamese society were very slow. Perhaps, Vietnam needs a new generation of leaders, who are more active and courageous. During 12 to 19 July 1983, when General Secretary Le Duan⁶ was on holiday in the Soviet Union, Nguyen Van Linh⁷ organized “conferences” with three Party top leaders: Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong and Vo Chi Cong. The content of these meetings was lately used by VCP top leaders to prepare the documents for the Tenth plenum of Central Committee⁸ and the Sixth Party Congress (1986)⁹ that initiated the strong and synchronous reform in Vietnam. It must be emphasized that the change in generation of leaders has created a breakthrough in the “Renovation” of Vietnam. In addition, the socio-economic and political dire straits of Vietnam, and the strong influence of international and regional context at that time¹⁰ had led to indispensable changes in the perception of leaders as well as the leadership structure in Vietnam (Thayer, 2008 and Koh, 2001). And in turn, the changes of individual leaders have brought in significant changes in Vietnam’s national policy.

“It’s the economy, stupid”--Bill Clinton’s slogan in the Presidential election campaign is completely true in the case of Vietnam in the 1980s. In fact, in the early 1980s, no leader of Vietnam publicly stated this, but within the Party and among several senior leaders, the economic issue had been identified as a key issue to be addressed. The dire straits of the national economy, the ideological deadlock and, the international isolation had forced Vietnam to change its policy. Vietnam’s leaders then, with a more practical viewpoint, had identified three core contents of national strategy of “Renovation”: (1) give highest priority to economic development through socialist-oriented market economic reform, aiming at society’s living standards improvement, national industrialization and modernization, including army modernization; (2) continue friendly relations with neighboring countries in Southeast Asia to establish economic partnership and friendly diplomacy; (3) improve and strengthen relations with major powers such as the United States, Russia, Japan and especially China, while trying to balance, even prevent that country’s ambitions to expand through relations with other powers (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1991b).

In Vietnam, the VCP maintains its absolute, comprehensive and continuous leadership. In 1986, the Party was fully aware that the irrational of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe’s socialist model, the backwardness of economic management mechanism, the dogma in perception Marxism-Leninism and less attention on Ho Chi Minh’s nationalist ideology had led to severe social and economical crisis. Vietnam was on the verge of collapse. The survival of the State and the socialist regime as well as powerful leadership of the Communist Party depended on the decision to carry out a real renovation, and reorientation and restructuring of national policies. Renewing the economic policy was the first step to be implemented based on the conception that the socialist mode of production and infrastructure are the foundation of social development; only when based on a stable social base infrastructures, and a superstructures consists of political power, can culture and socio-economic structures develop at their highest level. The Sixth Congress mainly focused on overcoming economic crisis of Vietnam. The Central Committee’s Political Report identified means to achieve the above goal, such as: to build and consolidate the socialist relations of production, and to utilize and transform the various economic sectors in an appropriate way; to renovate the economic management mechanism; and to expand and heighten the effectiveness of external economic relations. That means *Doi moi* policy dropped central-economic planning policy--the Soviet style economic management policy which had been applied in Vietnam since 1960s, and pursued socialist oriented market policy.¹¹ Vietnam would have to formulate an open-economic policy for foreign investment from non-socialist countries, and accept the existence of various economic sectors beside the main stream-state owned enterprises. However, with the lessons learnt from the “Reform” of the Soviet Union, the “Renovation” of China, to be conservative, Vietnamese leaders have been very careful with political changes. Political institutions, as they thought, must be kept stable, and will be adjusted, changed at an appropriate degree and suitable route. This condition is said to be crucial to maintain the country’s stability and security.

The theoretical foundation of foreign policy restructuring

In Vietnam, we can see that the Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism and the thought of President Ho Chi Minh have been the foundation of the Vietnamese leaders’ ideology, and the awareness and perception that influence deeply the process of formulating and implementing the country’s foreign policy. Vietnam has pursued the ideas of socialism, but analysis shows that Vietnam has always given prominence to the realistic view and combined that perspective with the Marxism-Leninism doctrine and Ho Chi Minh’s ideology¹² in the process of planning and implementing national policy. The realist foreign policy of Vietnam is not simply based on the theoretical basis of political-traditional realism. Moreover, the country’s foreign policy must be based on the dialectic materialism of Marxism-Leninism--the theory dominating the political, social, economic and cultural life of Vietnam, which has been recognized in the Constitution of Vietnam. With this rule, Vietnam’s foreign policy is the recognition of a polarized world and the self-determination of Vietnam’s position in the socialist system. Vietnam considered itself as the out post of socialism. These perceptions led Vietnam to pursue international commitments under the rule of Marxism-Leninism, such as the international communist movement, international duties with oppressed peoples,

international obligations against the capitalism and imperialism. In 1978, after the unification of Vietnam, VCP's leaders decided to commit to the socialist bloc by joining an alliance with the socialist countries¹³ led by the Soviet Union. For a time, Vietnam has been based its security on the Soviet Union¹⁴ against the threats (according to the GOV) from China, the United States and Western countries.

The decision to join a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union, joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance of the communist bloc during the Cold War reflected a strategy that had been influenced strongly by realism and the Marxist-Leninist's dialectic materialism in the context when Vietnam was under great pressure and international isolation from the United States and other capitalist countries, and the apparent hostile attitudes and threat from China. To some extent, this strategy seemed to be similar to Japan's national strategy in the post-occupation period as Vietnam chose the Soviet Union and Japan depended on the United States to guarantee Japan's security.

The selection of that policy approach had brought certain advantages for the development of Vietnam after the War,¹⁵ and it seemed to be the only option that was appropriate under the circumstance.¹⁶ But keeping this policy for too long without any adjustment in a fast changing international environment has created obstacles for Vietnam¹⁷ and resulted in a long time isolation from the entire world, in addition Vietnam's involvement in international affairs has created negative impacts on international prestige, diplomatic relations and national resources. The alien-based and foreign-relied dependent foreign policy (before 1986) is no longer suitable for Vietnam. The pressure of change came from these factors that were gradually revealed as external shock, leader driven, bureaucratic advocacy, domestic restructuring.¹⁸ These factors that had ever played an important role in keeping stability and maintaining the current policy had gradually decreased (Goldmann, 1988: 26-69). Since 1986, with the dialectic materialism of Marxism-Leninism, and the traditional realistic political ideology, as well as the harsh reality that Vietnam experienced during and immediately after the Cold War had forced the leaders of Vietnam to reselect the path, which according to them, was the most suitable to the characteristics of Vietnam's situation.

Throughout the "Renovation" process, Vietnam has acknowledged and highlighted the role of international organizations like the United Nations, and multilateral institutions such as ASEAN, APEC, ARF and given such diplomatic perspectives as multilateral and diversified approaches (Tung, 2007, 483). This transformation can be seen as a significant change in Vietnam's diplomatic perception and recognition. Vietnam has changed remarkably from dividing the world into "two poles," "two sides," identifying "friend" or "enemy" based on their ideological viewpoint to accepting "coexistence" and "cooperation" for peace and development with those who do not have the same ideology, even those who have opposite ideology (Palmujoki, 1997: 30). It seems Vietnam has redefined its foreign policy-dominated theory to Neoliberalism and Institutionalism. But it is clear that the nature of those above events still reflected Vietnam's realist perspectives towards the international political environment, and the national power, autonomy, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity have always been determined as vital factors in national policy.

Some researchers¹⁹ believe that the current political trends in Southeast Asia are ruled by neorealism and neoliberalism. Basically we agree with this view when analyzing the policies of each individual ASEAN countries and the overall dynamics of this community. Moreover, in spite of many concerns, the neoliberalism seems to be the dominant ideology shaping the world nowadays, and of course, ASEAN countries with their sensitivity and quick response will not miss the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of that movement. After the Cold War, especially after the conclusion of the Central Committee's Political Report (Dang Cong san Viet nam, 1996), in Vietnam, the Communist Party and the Government had accepted the fact that liberalization and globalization are an indispensable process although they are not so interested in. Vietnam cannot develop if it puts itself out of this process. We can consider this as Vietnam's "Neoliberalism and institutionalism approach" to implement its realism and dialectic materialism national strategy and foreign policy. The core of Vietnam's diplomacy is the realism with goals and perceptions of Marxism-Leninism. However in the global context after the Cold War and with Vietnam's limited ability, it is necessary for Vietnam to use and make full advantage of the neoliberalism's approaches, methods and institutions. The world also witnesses the triumph of neoliberalism, the U.S. and Western capitalist countries' commitment and support for globalization. If Vietnam ignored or missed this "train" that means it would eliminate chances to integrate into the world and develop. It would be a very painful scenario for Vietnam due to its severe social-economic condition at that time. Consequently, Vietnam has no other choice than accepting the combination of neorealism and neoliberalism and multinational institutions which seemed to be vague and contradictory. Nature of this combination is the pursuit of national interest which is specified on the basis of neorealism by properly using advantages, methods and mechanisms brought by neoliberalism, globalization and multinational institutions (Tung, 2007: 485). In other words, Vietnam's foreign policy has shown a certain compromise and acceptance in order to reach the ultimate goal of national security. The fact that Vietnam has accepted to a certain extent the influence of neoliberalism and structuralism together with the traditional realism has reflected the actual situation in the country and the regional security environment. The country's limited resources, the difficulty in implementing

foreign policy, the limitation in selecting alliance from history and ideology aspects, has brought Vietnam to accept the combination of neorealism, neoliberalism and multilateral institutions. Vietnam, the country that was driven and controlled by the conception of “independence,” “autonomy” and the need for “self-help,” was put into a harsh reality after the Cold War. There was no way but pursuing relative gains through absolute-gain methods. And whether to pursue or carry out any theoretical foundation matter, just like other countries, the final destination to which Vietnam is striving for is state gain that has been clearly defined by the VCP in the national industrial and economic development strategies.

Unlike other countries, after the Cold War, it seemed that Vietnam had had no strategic choice but to rely on itself and believe in the validity of the multilateral institutions. Perhaps, some Vietnamese leaders and scholars of international politics did not appreciate this selection, but was there any other strategic offer that was more suitable for Vietnam in that situation.

3. Vietnam in the Post-Cold War: Foreign policy restructuring

Theoretically, research must be carried out at the three levels, specifically: the level of the international system, the level of the individual, and the level of the state.²⁰ For Vietnam’s case, we carried out the research analysis on two levels only: the international system and changes of the world order after the Cold War; and the changes in foreign policies of Vietnam.

3.1. The end of the Cold War and the impacts on perceptions and foreign policy of Vietnam

The Cold War started on its main stage of Europe--where the two ideological systems: capitalism and socialism appeared to be in conflict with each other in terms of ideology and strategic interests. Each side viewed his opponent through the prism of ideology and saw that the existence of the other inevitably led to its own extinction. That view led to the strategy towards of the United States and Western countries as containment and beyond containment and enlargement. That was known in the socialist countries as the “peaceful evolution” strategy.²¹

With the changes happened in the Soviet Union and the socialist system in the early 1980s, the Cold War was expected to end soon.²² But when it happened, it actually caused a great shock to the world, changed the face of the world and altered the global strategic political structure. For most countries, including Vietnam, the “simple” world during the Cold War has become complex. Choices are no longer clear. Decisions have become more complex and much more difficult to implement. Like other countries, the unexpected and unpredictable end of the Cold War has brought radical changes in the foreign policy of Vietnam. Bi-polar confrontation--the world’s dominant situation for nearly 50 years after the end of the 2nd World War has ended in such a way that virtually no country has been prepared for it. For remaining socialist countries like Vietnam, the world has seemed to turn upside down in turmoil. During the Cold War, while trying to pursue an independent foreign policy, Vietnam nonetheless, still complied with the structures of politics and diplomacy of the socialist system when constructing and institutionalizing its primary architecture of foreign policy. This architecture seems unsuitable with the new situation and will inevitably lead to a policy restructuring process. Now, Vietnam must make its own choice, identify and struggle for itself and for a position in a world of uncertainties.

With the collapse of the bi-polar World order, the diversity of interests among actors in international relations has formed many bilateral and multilateral relationships which make the world situation more and more complicated (Ngoc and An, 2008: 178). National interest rules international relations (Huan, 2008). For the sake of their country’s core interests, major countries sometimes compromised, aligned and, made mutual concessions in the balance of power in international relations (Huan, 2008: 88). Russia and China are still pursuing consistent and disciplined major country’s policies, but sometimes make concessions with the United States in many international issues (Shleifer and Treisman, 2011). The opportunism and pragmatism can be seen in the modern international relations (Huan, 2008: 89), especially in the relations between big countries with the United States, and particularly in the United States-China relation. We agree with Nguyen Trung’s analyses: The United States-China confrontation will sooner or later happen and this relation will determine the world’s direction of development in the first half of the 21st century (Trung, 2007: 21).

The post-Cold War has made a very complicated context to Vietnam as the country has no truly strategic partner but some powers who used to be its main rivals. In the post-Cold War, without support of the Soviet Union, Vietnam has faced with increased China’s diplomatic influence and trade expansion in Indochina. And it also has to accept the fact that relation with China still plays an important part in its foreign policy. Every diplomatic movement of Hanoi towards other powers especially the U.S. must be considered in the context of Beijing’s reaction. For Vietnam, to balance its relation with China and with the U.S. is not an easy task, as Mark Manyin found out: so that improved relations with one capital not be perceived as a threat in the other (Manyin, 2005).

The huge changes in the international conjuncture after the Cold War have had a significant impact on all nations and

peoples. The world witnessed the weakening, losing position in international economy and political influence of Europe. It also marked the return of Asia to the political chessboard of the world, led to the path toward a multipolar era in the world politics (Drezner, 2007). The American's unipolar moment of power and dominance immediately after the Cold War, has passed (Nye, 2010). The emerging powers like China, India, Brazil, and the re-emerging superpower such as Russia gradually have asserted their roles in establishing a new world order shifting towards multipolar, multi-center, and have challenged the United States' dominance, towards multilateralism in international relations. "But the world is not ready with the new order without the U.S." (Trung, 2007: 10). The United States, although experiencing certain decline (Nye, 2010), is still the world's leading superpower;²³ but it is inevitable that the United States must restructure policies to reconfirm its position and ensure its national interest to cope with increasing economic and political challenges.

During the Cold War, Vietnam and the U.S. saw each other as enemy. Vietnam followed diplomatic paradigm of the Soviet Union which consistently based on the "two camps", "two worlds" view and Marxist-Leninist ideological stricture about the antagonistic contradiction between socialism and capitalism. Vietnam accused the U.S. of having plot and supporting hostile forces to destroy its socialist institution. Despite some dramatic changes in global and domestic context, Vietnam is still highly sensitive to foreign "interferences" which the VCP--especially its conservative faction (Anh, 1993), considers as the "peace evolution" strategy of the U.S. and Western capitalist countries. On the other side, the U.S. and Western capitalist countries supposed that Vietnam was a communist threat to Southeast Asia's freedom and democracy. During that time, tension was very high between the two sides. With such perceptions of Hanoi and also worries of Washington about democracy, human right and political reform in Vietnam, it seems that both sides will have a lot of work to do. After the Cold War, Vietnam suddenly found itself being left alone and isolated. Vietnam's belief in socialism ideology has faded with the collapse of the Soviet Union and other Eastern Europe socialist countries, that had been a harsh reality for Vietnam. What it would do? Who would be its friend? What would happen with its socialist institution and mechanism? A lot of questions were raised for the VCP at that time and there would be no future for the wrong answer.

In the coming years, the conjuncture of global politics will change fundamentally, with the following major characteristics: First, the nature of international relations will shift from opposition to partnership. Second, the relations between big powers reflect uncertainty and instability. They also have featured a mixture of cooperation, compromise, and fighting for their own interests. Strengthening relations with other countries, especially with the United States, will boost one's prestige and advantage. Third, the core struggle axis between major countries has moved from the U.S.-Soviet relations to the U.S.-Sino,²⁴ thus, the center of the world has gradually shifted from Europe to Asia Pacific.²⁵ Being influenced by those characteristics, the major powers will adjust their foreign policies to simultaneously serving their national interests and enhancing their powerful positions in the world--as poles in a multipolar world. The small and medium-sized countries must adjust their foreign policies to cope with the new context to be able to enhance their roles in regional and international politics.

This movement has reflected the multilateral trend in international relations (Kissinger, 1994: 23-24). And the trend of enhancing collective security interests coexisting with national benefits also has occurred.²⁶ However, it seems that interests of the major countries is the measure of power. The major countries themselves publicly or intentionally have emphasized their influence on the world (Simon, 1995: 6). It can be said that the major countries' current foreign strategies are the strategies of a globalization era. In the trend of globalization, small countries have to face increasing pressures from economic competition, security and defense uncertainties, especially when it involves or has problems on the grant chessboard between major countries (Brezinski, 1999: 38-66). The nation-state continues to be the basic unit of the world. Strengthening national strength is always a matter of survival in the globalized world (Trung, 2007: 3).

However, the end of the Cold War has brought about not only a negative reality to Vietnam but also a new approach for the future. Following "reform" efforts in China and then in the Soviet Union, in Vietnam, recognizing those movements and trends, the VCP has then formulated its national strategy--*Doi moi* for the new global and regional context. With the new approach and perception, the VCP could implement some radical economic polices and even some political reforms which quickly brought about positive effects that could improve the social-economic condition of Vietnam. As a results, the end of the Cold War had influenced on Vietnam's perceptions and foreign policy in both negative and positive way.

3.2. Historical background: Vietnamese foreign policy 1975-1985

After the end of the war in 1975, Vietnam concentrated all efforts on the country's building and reconstruction. However, during the years 1975-1985, the national economy, after decades of wars, became exhausted. And the situation even got much worse with the two border wars happened in the Southwest²⁷ and the North.²⁸ In addition, the VCP's mistakes in social and economic managements²⁹ and its mechanical application of the Soviet's socialist model to Vietnam exacerbated the situation.³⁰ In that period, the VCP decided to pursue a policy of building a comprehensive cooperative relationship and strategic alliance

with the Soviet Union and other socialists, and considered that a cornerstone in its foreign policy. In the early 1980s, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe entered a difficult period with economic stagnation and social instability. Vietnam gradually lost the spiritual and material supports from the socialist bloc. This situation forced the Communist Party and State of Vietnam to amend and renovate their thinking and action to adapt to the rapid changes. However, the partial reform and, mistakes by, and shortcomings in leadership and management had put the economy and social stability of Vietnam in severe crisis.

Vietnam tried to fight against and break the policy of containment of the U.S. and the capitalist countries;³¹ and explore the possibilities to solve the Cambodian issues. Vietnam also promoted external activities to move from confrontation to dialogue in order to improve and normalize relations with ASEAN countries. However, although contacts and diplomatic activities were promoted by both Vietnam and ASEAN, due to the difference in the viewpoint,³² the relation had not been improved much.

During the period 1975-1985, despite efforts, external relations of Vietnam made almost no progress, and there were even signs of deterioration. The fact was that Vietnam's military presence in Cambodia for so long had decreased the Vietnam's prestige. The conflict in 1979 turned China into an enemy and the country's isolation became intense. The situation only became brighter as the VCP decided to implement the "Renovation" from 1986 and especially since Vietnam completely withdrew all troops from Cambodia in 1991.

3.3. Foreign policy 1986 to present: a turning point of Vietnam diplomacy strategy

Vietnamese foreign policy after 1986, commonly known as foreign policy of the renovation period, was the policy for the post-Cold War era. However, this policy actually began before the Cold War really ended. It started from the early 1980s, when the socialist countries, including Vietnam had noticed the importance of change in maintaining stability and development. The Renovation foreign policy was a part of the political, social and economic renovation policy that the VCP had planned and implemented from the Sixth Congress.

Since the early 1980s, Vietnam has carried out a number of positive policies and measures to improve the external activities.³³ However, significant changes in Vietnam's foreign policy could be seen clearly from the late 1980s to the early 1990s under the direction of multilateral foreign policy orientation. In other words, Vietnam has gradually lessened its dependence on the Soviet Union and affirmed its independence in foreign policy, and stated that multilateral foreign relations were essential for Vietnam's stability and development. There were many reasons for this fundamental change, including the significant effects of regional and international context and the situation inside Vietnam. At that time, the VCP had been aware of the inevitable trend of global and regional integration. Therefore changes and adjustments of policies have been made to resolve domestic difficulties and integrate the nation into the world and region's common trend. That period marked a remarkable progress in the implementation of Vietnam's multilateral foreign policy such as: integrating actively into the international economy, and strengthening and promoting bilateral relations especially relations with neighboring countries in Southeast Asia. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of strategic allies has not only made huge changes in Vietnam's national policy itself; but also changes in other countries' attitudes towards Vietnam. Vietnam's foreign activities focused on solving the Cambodian issue and normalizing relation with China (1991). Simultaneously, high-level bilateral diplomatic activities with ASEAN countries have been promoted strongly. After joining ASEAN in 1995, Vietnam resumed normal relation with the U.S. (1995), integration into WTO and other international financial institutions. For the first time, Vietnam had diplomatic relations with all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and set up equal, important relations with the world's three major economic pillars: Europe, North America and East Asia. On October 2007, Vietnam became a non-permanent member of the UNSC for the term of 2008-2009.³⁴ Joining ASEAN has contributed to breaking the siege mentality and isolation, and creating a peaceful, stable and more favorable environment for the industrialization and modernization of Vietnam. That period was said to be an important turning point of Vietnamese diplomacy. However, the increasing diplomatic and economic presence of China in Southeast Asia has challenged Vietnam's traditional strategic interests. In the near future, if this trend continues to rise, perhaps Vietnam will have to develop a new foreign policy paradigm to cope with the new context.

After many arguments within the Party on the issue of globalization, the VCP has affirmed the road to globalization, although it emphasized that besides the benefits, globalization always contains risks, negative effects, even inequalities to which Vietnam needs to pay special attention. The policy of "carrying out promptly and firmly the negotiation of trade agreements with the United States and Vietnam's accession to APEC and WTO; preparing specific plans to actively implement the commitments under AFTA" (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1998) has been determined by the VCP at the beginning of the renovation era, and consistently reaffirmed throughout the later national party congresses. This policy of the Communist Party has paved the way for the government to implement particular diplomatic activities to integrate in to global and regional

communities. In 2000, exports accounted for half of the GDP (55%) or almost doubled the amount of 10 years ago (31% of GDP in 1991).³⁵ Vietnam also tried to diversify export products to light industrial products (textiles, footwear, electronics) in addition to the main stream of oil, rice, coffee and seafood. In the first decade of economic reforms and adopting a “socialist-orientated market economy,” Vietnam has become one of the fastest growing countries with the GDP average growth rate of 8%. From a country that frequently had to face food shortages and even had to call the United Nations in 1985 for food aid, Vietnam has become the second largest rice exporter in the world (1989) and the third largest coffee producer.

However, adjustment policies seem not to be enough and did not really pave the way and create enough motivation for economic development. The Asian economic crisis in 1997 worsened the existing problems in the policy of reform. Real GDP growth in 1999 decreased below 5%, FDI--the dynamic of Vietnamese economy, declined to U.S.\$600 million in 1999, the lowest since 1992. Although the Asian economic crisis has been claimed by economists and politicians to be the main cause of these decreases, Vietnam should decide the pace and scope of economic reforms and consistently commit to the policy of international integration if it wants to keep development growth at high rate and maintain social stability. The hesitation clearly showed the struggle between two trends within the VCP about how far the economic reforms and concomitant integration into the international community should be continued and at what speed?

The next breakthrough was made in the late 1999 and the early 2000 when leaders of the VCP decided to sign a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with the United States (2000) showing a strong commitment towards renovation and extensive international integration. With the BTA, Vietnam has received many tariff incentives from the U.S., as well as the MFN status (2001) and PNTR status (2006). The BTA implementation roadmap and efforts to join WTO³⁶ have pushed the GOV to issue a number of policy statements such as: promulgation of the Law on Enterprises, amendment of the Constitution to legitimize private sector, and allow, for the first time, party members to become involved in private business. This event marked a significant change in policy and strategic trend for Vietnam, showed a strong commitment to the economic reform, and was followed by a positive adjustment of political-social policy as well as the change of leadership in the Ninth Party Congress, which was considered to be the winner of renovation trends in the Communist Party.

3.4. Primary policy making mechanism, foundations and stances for shaping the foreign policy

Primary policy making mechanism in Vietnam

Some researchers assessed that the *Doi moi* in Vietnam in late 1980s was mainly the renovation and adjustment in policy of economic, economic management mechanisms, diplomacy and foreign policy orientation (Thayer, 2008). Politics lagged behind economic reforms. It is a characteristic of the renovation process in Vietnam that reflects the fear of the Party for political and power instability if the changes in politics were too radical. However, it has been said even in the Marxist-Leninist theory that changes in economic and “social base-structure” at a certain point of time, will inevitably lead to the changes and adjustments of the “superstructure” that means the political structure. Then the political change, in its turn, will pave the way for the continuation of economic development. The question is, when and how, to what extent such changes will take place in Vietnam?

As mentioned above, Vietnam is a one-party communist state. The Party rules the country and decides policies, then delivers to the legislature--the National Assembly, the executive--the Government and other State bureaucracies and other agencies in the political system for legalization, concretization and implementation. The Central Committee, the most important part of the Communist Party is the party’s core leadership, includes 175 full members, 25 alternative members and the Politburo with 14 members. Since 1986, the mechanism of leadership of VCP is collective leadership, important decisions are formed in the Politburo and Central Committee through a consensus. This change generated when many consequences came from the old mechanism³⁷ as the General Secretary had too much power, and the decisions of an individual, at any angle, may have bigger mistakes.

The Party Congress, held every 5 years, is responsible for deciding high position of the Party and also of the Government. In the Party Congress, important documents that will direct Vietnam’s foreign, economic, political and social policies in the coming years will be discussed and decided. Like all other political parties in the world, the Party Congress is an opportunity for expressing points of view and different trends inside the party, disputes even conflicts sometimes become deeper among factions. And prevailing perspective will become the future trends and policies. The Party’s mid-term congress is organized to review and assess the policies decided in the Party National Congress, evaluate the capacities of the Politburo and Central Committee, and may make policy or leadership adjustment if the Party sees potential risks to political stability and national economic development.

From early 1990s up to now, the VCP has applied the new and radical “thinking” in the process of policy making. Some scholars assumed that was the results of the VCP’s earlier decision to prioritize economic development above ideological

orthodoxy. In the policy making process, the Party still plays the dominant role, but different from the past, it has allowed some socio-political organizations to take part in this process. We could say this has been a dramatic change, as the VCP, to some extent, seems to accept the pluralistic methods that, in the past, had always been rejected. In 1992, Vietnam National Assembly adopted the Constitution amendment. With this amendment, the VCP gave more power to the executive branch in order to enhance the effectiveness of policy making and implementing process. This is the crucial request of *Doi moi* as the economic development has reached a certain level and required a new socio-political environment. According to the 1992 Constitution, Vietnam National Assembly also has more influence in political socio-economic life relative to the past. With its new power and influence, National Assembly seems no longer be dismissed as a rubber stamp for VCP's decisions.

Foundations and stances for shaping the foreign policy in Vietnam's renovation period

The new foreign policy of the Communist Party and State of Vietnam has been formulated and implemented based on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought of diplomacy. Vietnam's diplomacy respects relations with its neighbors and major powers, thoroughly applies the principle of making use of "objects of struggle's contradiction," "more friends less enemies," and "invariables to respond to variables" (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 2003). With these theoretical foundations, the VCP has identified the basis to form its foreign policy for the period after the Cold War: "Firstly, the rapid change and increased complexity of the world in the last stage of the Cold War; Secondly, the situation of Vietnam in the early stage of renovation--an important basis for shaping and implementing foreign policy; Thirdly, useful lessons and experiences drawn from real external activities during the period 1975-1985 as well as challenges created" (Ngoc and An, 2008: 295-305). We can see that the basis for shaping foreign policy by the VCP are very closed to the factors of change raised in studies on change and stability by Hermann and Goldmann.

At the Sixth Congress, the VCP confirmed the tasks and policy for external activities as "taking advantage of favorable international conditions to build socialism and defend the Fatherland, while actively contributing to the common struggle of peoples for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism" (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1986). For the first time in its long and hard history, the VCP adopted a new codification of foreign policy objectives which set up priority on economic development and used the term "national interest" in stead of "ideology objective." The Resolution No.13³⁸ called for a "multi-directional foreign policy orientation" and emphasized on means and methods to stabilize the domestic situation and economic development. With this Resolution, the VCP was no longer maintaining the "two camps", "two worlds" view and shifting toward the concept of an "independent world." (Porter, 1990) That mean, for VCP's foreign policy, "confrontation" was replaced by "accommodation." The Resolution No.13 formulated a "comprehensive and long-term regional policy toward Asia and Southeast Asia" along with its first special foreign policy with the Soviet Union. Today, most of scholars considered the Resolution No.13 was a major landmark in Vietnam's external relations. Even before the Soviet collapse, at the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP reaffirmed the targets, tasks and policies of the external activities initiated by the Sixth Party Congress, these confirmations were based on the persistence in renovation. The Seventh Congress also adopted a crucial amendment and modification to the Sixth Congress's policy as well as to the Politburo Resolution No.13 by emphasizing a key foreign policy on "diversify and multilateralise economic relations with all countries and economic organizations..." (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1991a). This political report also stated "We stand for equal and mutually beneficial co-operation with all countries regardless of different socio-political systems and on the basis of the principle of peaceful co-existence" (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1991a). In this point, we can see the ideas of M. Gorbachev of abandoning the concept of "two worlds" and advocate "the interests of all mankind" in his address to United Nations General Assembly in 1988.³⁹ According to this new economic-oriented direction, VCP's leaders temporarily leave off the guiding stance of Marxist-Leninist ideological strictures about the antagonistic contradictions between socialism and capitalism, the struggle of the two worlds and, emphasize: "quality of diversity and multi-polarity that is becoming the most dominant element that governs interactions between states in the world... Today, national interest, regional interest, and other global interests plays an increasingly important role in the development of the contradiction as well as the concentration of new forces in today's world" (Kiet, 1995). This is a dramatic change in VCP's basis thoughts and policy directions (Thayer, 2008). May be, in the future, as the Party completes its objectives in building the socialism in Vietnam, it will return to the core of Marxism-Leninism and attempt to win the struggle of "who will triumph over whom." But today, things are different.

In security field, the Party has a profound readjustment. In a 1990 speech to all-army political-military conference, General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh announced the spirit of the Politburo Resolution No.2⁴⁰ which was concerned with a "new thinking" on national defense work, evaluating the enemy and friendly situation, and proposing a new defense and security concept of "people's war", of "all people's national defense," and of the "building of the people's armed force." Some Vietnamese scholars, at that time, analyzed that the Resolution No.2 was aimed at "achieving close coordination and intimate attachment between the economy and national defense."⁴¹ That revealed the dramatic change in VCP's viewpoints of national

security policy. With the Resolution No.2, the VCP identified a new strategic doctrine on national security which spelled out new ideas about relation between national defense and economic development. That new thinking had strongly influenced the process of formulating and implementing foreign policy in the renovation period. Following the critical events in Eastern Europe socialist countries and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, VCP's leaders developed a new concept of "comprehensive security" which focused on economic development as a significant factor toward national security. In March 1989, these above ideas were further emphasized by a resolution of Central Committee which pointed out "the need to strongly shift the focus in foreign policy from political relations to political-economic relation" (Nien, 2005: 31).

The Eight (1996) and Ninth Party Congress (2001) have continuously announced VCP's foreign and international economic policy of independence, sovereignty, diversification and multilateralization in the spirit of "Vietnam wants to become the friend of all countries, wants to be a reliable partner of other countries in the world community, and struggle for peace, independence and development" (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1996). The VCP has continued to reconfirm the stances directing its foreign policy in recently Tenth (2006) and Eleventh Congress (2011).

Considering the above point of view, we can see that although the VCP insisted that the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh is the foundation of its ideology and theory, its policy actions have reflected a practical perspective associated with the view of neorealism; national strength is highly respected and being the foundation for achieving strategic development objectives. Vietnam continues to emphasize the importance of independence, autonomy and sovereignty in all international relations. Renovation and openness of the economy are also emphasized (Manyin, 2005). Foreign policy is tasked to create favorable international conditions for economic development (Tung, 2007, 485); in parallel with the continuous pursuit for peace, national independence and social progress--the goal of the proletarian internationalism. This vague choice reflects the struggle to achieve a balance between the two seem to be contradictory goals: maintaining communism ideological purity and promoting market economy.

3.5. Looking forward to the future: Vietnam's foreign policy directions

Parallel to external element analysis and past lesson determination, in its research and analysis, the VCP concluded that in the new situation, numerous challenges emerged to Vietnam's security and development, including four dangers (i) the risk of falling behind other countries economically; (ii) deviation from socialism; (iii) peaceful evolution under the guise of democracy and human rights to interfere in our internal affairs; and (iv) officialdom and corruption. Such elements clearly express VCP's opinions and attitudes towards country development, immanent struggle and development between the two trends inside the Party: promoting economic development and maintaining political stability (Ngoc and An, 2008: 324). By regarding "falling behind economically" as the top risk, the VCP emphasizes economic development; however, political targets are still not ignored as "deviation from socialism" continues to be regarded as the second risk. The VCP is also concerned about capitalist countries' interference, especially after the political incidents--known as "Color Revolutions"⁴² in the post-Soviet Union sphere. Such concern is known as "Peaceful evolution"--as the VCP always considers it. It shows that in the future, despite the continuation of the renovation trend, VCP's foreign policies will probably head to maintaining stability without breakthroughs as notable as in the 1990s⁴³--the beginning of the renovation period.

On the basis of VCP's stance analysis and current as well as the future situation, VCP will continuously commit and implement diplomacy adjustments that have been formulated since the early of *Doi moi* period. It will also break with initial reluctances and obstructions which came from the traditional communist ideology and conservative stance in VCP. The following issues may still be Vietnam's foreign policy directions in the coming time.

(1) From dependent and passive strategies to independent, active and balanced diplomatic strategies toward powers

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had led to the disappearance of the socialist system. The socialist system fell deeper into recession. The world's forces of concentration and mobilization did no longer follow ideological thoughts (Jisi, 2011: 68-79) and, the remaining socialist countries were put into very difficult positions. With the end of the Cold War, it was expected that the world would become more stable and ordered with so-called victory of democracy, freedom and human rights, and the affirmation of fundamental human values. However, perhaps reality was far from expectation. After the Cold War, the world has to face a series of traditional and non-traditional challenges (Krauthammer, 1990/1991: 30), as well as the rise of many emerging powers⁴⁴ that challenged the existing powerful centers, and required deserved positions in the world political arena. We also observed the big attempt of great powers to restructure their foreign policies and international institutions to adapt with the redistribution of the world's power (Drezner, 2007); to find the best place, build a new framework of relations, stabilize and establish new international conditions which could bring more favorable conditions for their positions and confirm their roles in international relations.

Relations with powers is one of Vietnam's important policies of foreign affairs, which requires it to have a thorough grasp

of changes in the face of the world and powers' policies, especially policies towards the Asia Pacific countries. This policy helps Vietnam fulfill pressing requirements of development and ensuring national security in the new international context. After a long time focusing on Middle East and Central Asia, the U.S. tends toward Asia Pacific to find and to assert its inherent role.⁴⁵ Diplomatic activities of the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of Defence: Robert Gates (former) and Leon Panetta in several important security-political-economic fora and summits of this region (such as APEC, ASEM, ARF, Shangri-La Dialogue) have proven this trend. Russia also reveals ambition to come back Asia Pacific--its traditionally influenced region. This movement helps Russia to gain two important goals. One is to break the isolated and encircled status made by NATO and the U.S. in its western border and Central Asia; the other is to pave the way for Russia's approach to East Asia--one of the most dynamic developing region in the world. This also allows Russia effectively exploit its enormous Far East territory. Power countries in this region such as China and Japan also actively assert their roles and scramble for influence. This political context forces Vietnam to formulate a balanced strategic direction in building and implementing foreign relations with powers.

After the Cold War, the nature of relation between powers was extremely complicated with inconsistent benefits and opposite political systems. It was necessary for Vietnam to have flexible reactions to maintain the balance in relation with powers to avoid badly affecting its benefits and relations with other powers due to its relations with certain powers, or to avoid being involved in any anti-country alliances (Vinh, 2010), and, at the same time to take advantages of the support of the powers. On other words we can analyze that, keeping a balance in relations with powers is a choice of Vietnam for a neutral diplomacy, maintaining independent and self-reliance policy while recognizing and using influences of powers for its national interest in the current social-political context in Vietnam and Asia Pacific. Vietnam has recognized and appreciated the roles of powers but tried not to commit its national strategy to any powers. It participates more deeply in the "world grand political chessboard" but at the same time, tries not to be a chess piece in any powers' hand.⁴⁶ This movement represented a strategic adjustment of Vietnam's national strategy and diplomacy from the foundations of ideology toward the realist perceptions which emphasis on national interest, independent and neutral foreign policy and focus on economic development while consistently remain conservative ideas in ensuring the stability of its socialist political structure (Tung, 2007: 496).

In order to implement the above directions, we can say that Vietnam must develop tactful policies and maintain balanced relations between pairs: among the U.S., Japan, China and Russia and three-country groups including the U.S.-Japan-China, the U.S.-Japan-Russia, especially the paired relations of the U.S.-China (Manyin, 2005), and the new movement in the U.S.-Japan relations which will profoundly influence and dominate the Asia Pacific and the whole world in the coming decades.

The policy of establishing balanced relations with major world powers is supposed to be the correct choice of Vietnam. Such policies allow the relations with strong and potential partners in numerous areas to be developed simultaneously, from which investment capital, technologies, and markets and advanced management experiences can be made full use of to meet the demands of rapidly overcoming Vietnam's long-lasting economic crisis and prepare for essential conditions for national industrialization and modernization. On the other hand, Vietnam's enforcement of relations with powers and world key economic-political centers has helped create tightened and well-woven beneficial relations between such partners and Vietnam. The "power element" in each specific relation can be exploited by Vietnam. Vietnam's tactful solutions to its relations with the U.S., as well as Vietnam's exploitation of the U.S.'s, Japan's and Russia's attention in solving disputes on the South China Sea (the East Sea) issue; its application of the U.S. pressure and ASEAN's multilateral diplomatic forum (at ASEAN Summits 2010, 2011) to control China's ambition have been specific proofs of this trend.

Nevertheless, the Vietnam's diplomatic tactics of using "power exploitation" and ensuring "major powers engagement in the region," especially with the United States, seem to be contrary to its independence foreign directions, as well as with the VCP's fear of deep interference in the region on the part of the United States (Manyin, 2005). It can be analyzed that to implement such strategy, multilateral diplomatic "coatings," such as ASEAN, ARF have been tactfully applied by Vietnam to ensure control over the presence of powers. We agree with Kim Ninh's conclusion, "The most noteworthy shift in Vietnam's conduct of external relations and its views of security in the past decade has been the reorientation from its intense preoccupation with big powers, to a more balanced position in which regional cooperation with other Southeast Asia states plays a significant role."⁴⁷ Through this process, the power elements can be made full use of to control China, and the picture-card of China can also be used to control the U.S., Russian and Japanese ambitions. In this situation, with its multilateral diplomacy, Vietnam can still show its independence in its policies, and, at the same time, achieve an active and balanced relationship with powers.

(2) Diplomatic strategy building and deployment process is co-operation and struggle process in relations with powers.

Co-operation and struggle in international relations, especially in relations with powers, have been of great importance to the country's security and development and sovereignty protection. Due to its historical issues as well as certain differences in

awareness of democracy and human rights, Vietnam has been extremely sensitive to external relations and interference, which are considered to be the violation of national sovereignty and unprincipled interference with Vietnam's internal issues (Thayer, 2008).

With the influence of the realism and Marxist-Leninist doctrine, especially its sensitivity about political institution stability, the VCP considers those who respect Vietnam's independence and sovereignty, establish and expand friendship, collaborative, equal and mutual benefit relations with Vietnam to be its partners; in contrast, those with interference plots and actions to sabotage Vietnam's targets in its national construction and protection course to be rivals (Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 2003). Such policy, despite not being new, which has been affirmed since the early 1990s, has now been emphasized more and more, and has become Vietnam's basis of argument for its multilateral strategy implementation and explanation to its close diplomatic relations with the U.S., Japan and European countries over the past years (Thayer, 2008). The VCP, with its inherent caution, which is sometimes considered to be vagueness in its policies, has argued that the advantageous side of each partner also needs to be made full use of and exploited for co-operation, at the same time differences and contradiction in benefits with Vietnam need to be struggled with. Such policy has allowed the VCP to explain its practices whenever questions or objections in the society or in its internal arise.

(3) From self-narrowing, self-isolating and being isolated to expansion of relation, multilateralization, diversification and active international integration

In the past, Vietnam implemented narrow external relation direction in the socialist bloc, divided the world into two sides, isolated itself and was isolated from the outside world. Such policies resulted in negative consequences, even threatened the existence of Vietnam. Awareness of the vitality that Vietnam is an unseparated part of the world, Vietnam had no other choice and could not survive and develop without actively integrating into the international community and expanding its relations. Moreover, the collapse of the socialist system is objective and subjective elements leading to VCP's reorientation of policies: relation expansion, multiateralization, diversification and international integration (Thayer, 2000). However, multiateralization, diversification and integration in what way while maintaining the national sovereignty and socialist direction have always been a hot issue for the VCP.

Globalization integration process has required Vietnam to alter its numerous policies and laws on economy in accordance with international normal practice, which has caused in major difficulties in Vietnam's socialist-oriented market economy development. Vietnam seems to be fully aware of the opportunities and challenges towards its nation's fortune in the globalization context; at the same time affirmed its policy of developing without isolating while effectively integrating into the world and the region. In its statement on internal plenum of making the final decision to join ASEAN, the VCP Politburo stressed, "We join ASEAN in order to preserve our national self-reliance and independence" (Ninh, 2000: 45).

Dependence on foreign economy is indispensable because Vietnam conducted global participation and international economic integration with its weak and underdeveloped economy. The deeper and wider Vietnam's scale of international integration process has been, the more problems and dangerous difficulties and challenges will appear (Trung, 2007). Globalization, to some extent, has made impacts on the national sovereignty implementation. Globalization, for several ideological trends, has violated countries' sovereignty, even threatened the survival of states-nations. For the leftists, globalization means ultra-liberalism in the economy with the expansion of giant power of multinational companies, and the states' restriction on its operation scale and role. Moreover, the states-nations will be weaker when obeying the binding decisions by international organizations, which are regarded as both a tool and embodiment of this ultra-liberalism, including IMF, WB, and WTO. As for the rightists, (especially in the U.S.), national sovereignty will be violated when international laws do not permit the nations to protect its population's rights through administrative or legal policies.

Vietnam, with its robust changes in awareness at the beginning of the renovation period, has clearly seen that the relative sovereignty (or self-determination) must be considered and defined differently. When a country is unable to solve problems optimally in the globalization world, the use of a higher institution is a vital solution, which helps to recover partly the country's activeness due to its solution participation at the multilateral level. In current world context, the best way to maintain the national sovereignty is to participate in the multilateral legal and administration system; by doing so, can a country be acknowledged as an independent body with equal sovereignty with other countries (Trung, 2007). And only when being a member and a subject in an international administrative system, can a country--like Vietnam, overcome the issues which go beyond its borders, and tackle disputes with other countries, protect national benefits and meet the practical sovereignty definition (Tung, 2007). The external relation orientation following the multilateralism and diversification, the appreciation of global and regional multilateral institutions' role, besides the continual affirmation of national sovereignty contents, have shown the awareness governing on the world context, the trend of governing international and national relations as well as trends resulted from Vietnam's specific situation and requirements.

3.6. Thoughts about foreign policy changing process in Vietnam

According to Hermann's theoretical model, the very first point that we should affirm is that any change in Vietnam's foreign policy always is a part of the restructuring and reorientation of national policies in the post-Cold War context. We also could differentiate these self-correcting changes (Hermann, 1990: 5) from the policy changes that could happen when the leadership changed, or regime shifted as in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe communist countries after the Cold War. In Vietnam's case, the existence and development of the nation, and the socialist regime are depended on these policy changes. This case reminds us of one statement of George F. Kennan: "...a political society does not live to conduct foreign policy; it would be more correct to say that it conduct foreign policy in order to live."⁴⁸ Once again, following Hermann's classification of foreign policy changes, those changes in Vietnam could be classified as "Major Foreign Policy Redirection" (Hermann, 1990: 6) which comprised: Program change, Problem/Goal change, and International/Orientation change.

In 1986, or for a broader period in the early 1980s, Vietnam was in the crucial changing process that played a very important role for the existence and development of the nation. It was an indispensable process with some vital requirements such as: overcoming nation crisis, stabilizing macro economy, formulating and implementing new economic directions as well as ensuring social welfare, maintaining political stability and national security. Due to the fragile characteristics of Vietnam's society and the grave socio-economic crisis at that time, the pace and scope of change and restructuring could not be either too radical or fast. Vietnam has got neither enough resource nor insurance of a stable state administrative system (such as in Japan or other developed countries). Therefore, any radical changes could inevitably lead to the crack, even the collapse of entire socio-economic structure and national crisis. We could review this point through a Vietnamese senior official's comment on the dilemma, which the VCP had to solve: "We recognized two shared points. First, we cannot close the door to the outside world. If we do that, our country and regime will collapse. The second point is that if we try to change too quickly and radically, things might go out of control and we are more likely to fall down" (Thayer, 2008). We assume that VCP's carefully conducted renovation policies were the most suitable choice. VCP's decisions which based on theoretical bases and analyses of Vietnam's situation and national capabilities, gave priority to economic adjustments and restructuring in moderate pace. And the economic restructuring would quickly lead to political and social adjustments as VCP's conditions of stability and development were met. In this point, we could see the influence of Marxist-Leninist thought about relation between level economic development and socio-political structure. We could sum up, VCP's stance and Vietnam's dire economic straits at that time had decided both the change and restructuring and also the pace and scope of those renovation efforts.

The change and restructuring process has been conducted carefully and gradually for a time with a number of experiments at both local and field level. Following the Sixth Congress, those changes and restructuring had just been officially implemented at the national level. The VCP weighed the pros and cons carefully and conducted the national level implementation process with moderate itinerary and pace in order to maintain social stability (Thayer, 2008).

The Party thinks that the policy itself, and the policy implementation as well as process of policy changing and restructuring always have to be done in a systematic coherent whole and it takes time to complete. This process also accompanies with assessments, evaluations and studies in order to adjust and perfect these policy directions to be more applicable to the real context and development of Vietnam's socio-economic situation. Similar to Hermann's (1990: 6) and Goldmann's (1988: 4) analyses related to "Learning factor," the VCP's process of changing, reorienting foreign policy is also tasked to identify and summarize lessons for further changes in future.

By evaluating the formulation and implementation of its foreign policy and activities since 1986, the VCP has concluded some experiences and lessons for Vietnam's diplomacy. They are as following: (i) Legitimate national interest must be identified as the highest priority and is the basis for national strategies as well as foreign policy; (ii) Establishing and consolidating friendly relations and stable co-operations with neighboring countries; (iii) Vietnam should always appreciate and tackle carefully, applicably relations with major countries; (iv) Coordinating closely among diplomacy, economy and national defense.

Lesson study is a tradition of the VCP and it is conducted systematically and periodically in every party's national congress. Those lessons allow the VCP to reexamine its past policies and activities, and verify achievements with national strategic goals (Tung, 2007). The VCP also checks ideological trends and movements inside the party and nation wide to ensure that nothing goes too far from the directions and foundations of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology. Those lessons themselves turn to be one of the basis and primary materials for the next VCP's national congress. Hermann's model also analyzes this activity in the process of restructuring foreign policy. Hermann named it as "Learning" factor.

Analyzing these lessons may help us to understand more thoroughly about the way that the VCP uses to formulate and restructure its policies in short and mid-term, between the two national congress. And at the same time, it also reveals some different trends inside the VCP relating to manners, scope and pace of renovation.

Nation should respect legitimate interest of others. This is the dramatic breakthrough in perceptions and thoughts of the VCP, from the foundation of socialism’s interest, ideological basis to national interest and identify it is the core and basis to formulate foreign policy. This strategic change and restructuring could be classified as International/Orientation Changes (according to Hermann’s model). The rapprochement with China and ASEAN, strengthening these relations as well as special relations with Laos and Cambodia⁴⁹ have important and strategic meanings to Vietnam’s national stability, security and development. In Hermann’s model, this is Problem/Goal Changes.

In almost previous wars in Vietnam, there were direct or indirect involvements of such major countries of our world. Therefore, the best choice for Vietnam may be cleverly tackling relations with powerful countries, taking chance to establish and consolidate Vietnam’s position in the regional and global strategic grand chessboard; and, avoiding to be involved in conflicts among powers or the opponent against those countries (especially the U.S. and China) in political, economic and military field. Vietnamese leaders, with the dominance of Neorealism and Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism, have decided that the clearly choice of “the East” or “the West” is not a smart and suitable choice as long as international political relations are still dominated by realism, pragmatism (Koh, 2001). May be for Vietnam’s case, the so-called “vague diplomacy” is the most suitable.

Coordinating closely among diplomacy, economy and national defense: This lesson is considered by the VCP as a vital law for the existence and development of Vietnam. In the process of formulating and implementing foreign policy is in the importance to consider economic and security-defense impacts. In the past, Vietnam used to emphasize the security-defense issues and, reckon military strength as the basis to ensure national security (Manyin, 2005). The dramatic change in Vietnam’s national strategy is the emphasis of synthetic role of economic and diplomatic factors toward security-defense in accordance with the conceptualization of Vietnam’s national security policy such as: all-people’s national defense, people’s war. According to Hermann, such changes could be recognized as Program Change.

An initial analysis of these above lessons reveals that the VCP began to look directly at the Vietnam’s harsh reality and recognized its mistakes. It is obviously the basis for the development of Vietnam. However, there still exists some problems that need to be solved such as: management capability, democracy level, civilian society and role of citizens and other institutions in the formulation of national policy (Koh, 2001); regional and international obstacles: territorial disputes, trade disputes. Especially, the VCP has to solve theoretically and empirically the contradictions between: socialist orientation and capitalist market economy, boosting economic development and ensuring social welfare as well as others socialist objectives which the Party always pursuits.

In analyzing Vietnam’s “Renovation” process, we cannot ignore the struggles inside the Party about the scope and pace of reform efforts, the extent to which Vietnam should open itself for foreign influence, fears of being assimilation and dependency, and threat of “Peaceful Evolution” (Thayer, 2008). It is inevitably a very intense process and struggle that reflects different stances of the party and state’s leaders. According to Hermann, it is the time for “Leader driven” factor plays its role. With collective leadership mechanism, consensus nature of decision-making process, it seems the VCP has not highly appreciated the role of individual leadership. But thing has changed for the past few years. In its official documents, the VCP has recognized outstanding contributions and leadership abilities of some famous leaders such as: Truong Chinh, Nguyen Van Linh, Vo Van Kiet, Do Muoi who with their talents and determinations had found the way, fought with conservative faction to protect renovation efforts and led Vietnam overcome socio-economic crisis. At last, we have to look at the fact that the policy formulation process in Vietnam is very complicated with the domination of the VCP (Koh, 2001). This is a closed cycle which reflects the leadership concentration mechanism of the VCP according to one core principle of socialist state structure: “concentration democracy.”

With all of the above analyses of Vietnam foreign policy change in the “Renovation” period, we could modify Hermann’s original model in Vietnam’s case as follow:

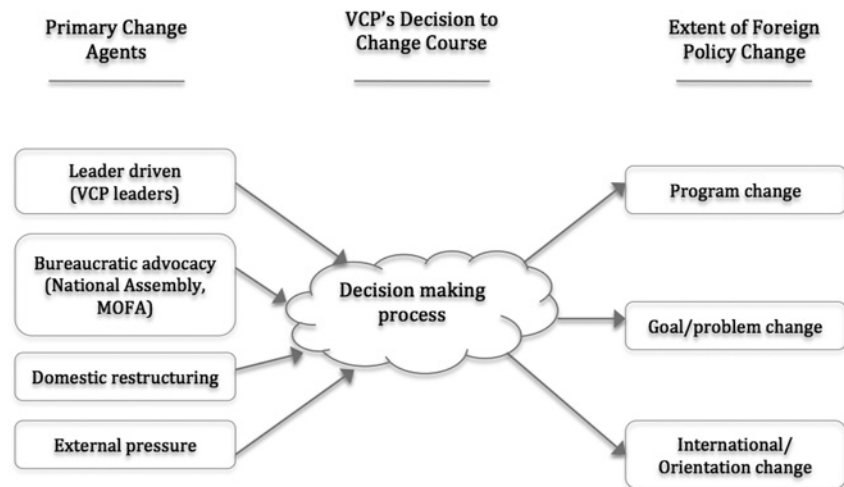


Figure 1: Modification of Hermann’s Model⁵⁰ on Foreign Policy Change: Vietnam’s Case

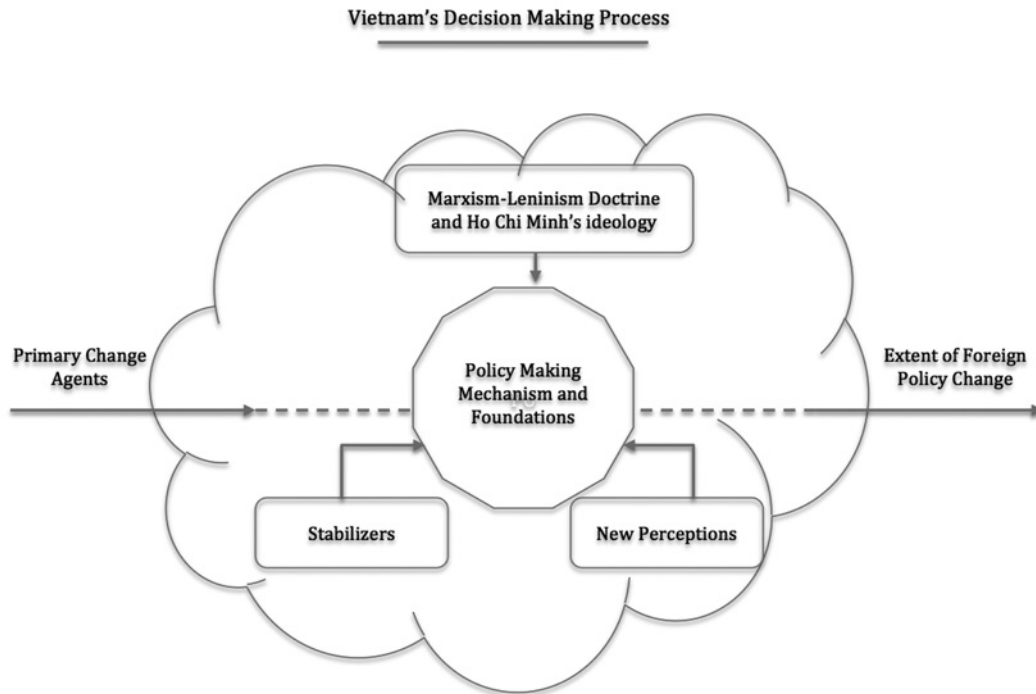


Figure 2: Decision Making Process: Vietnam's Case

4. Conclusion

In pre-modern and modern history, powers and the relations between them play an important role, govern and decide international relationships and the world's order arrangement. It can be summarized to be the contradiction between unipolar and multipolar trends, between emerging superpowers and other powers in redrawing the world maps of political-security-economic benefits. Proper awareness of current powers' roles and positions will help medium and small-sized countries to work out flexible and relevant policies for each agent, to maintain the relations balance between powers to avoid being totally dependent on or being isolated. Therefore, it is crucial for Vietnam to pay attention to and keep abreast with complicated happenings and changes in foreign strategies of powers, which can make impacts on Vietnam.

Relations with powers is one of Vietnam's important strategic policies in its external relations, and Vietnam has initially succeeded in selecting and implementing steps to establish normal and balanced relations with powers, to serve for national and ethnic benefits. However, regarding external relations, it is noted that despite Vietnam's international status and advantageous opportunities, its weakness in national strength and diplomatic activities have made its position in a relatively low priority in most of important partners' foreign policies, including China and ASEAN countries. The fact shows that effective foreign policies are not enough without implementing capacity and firm stuff.

Vietnam's geopolitics is so sensitive in the region with the presence of its neighboring country--China, the most populous country in the world with big ambition in politics and low prestige in international stage. China's attitudes over the past years has clearly indicated its policies of expanding influence sphere, searching development space and energy for development. The Ocean and Island Chains strategies of China have been the specific proofs for such policies. It can be guaranteed that China will not easily abandon its strategic claims in the South China Sea (the East Sea). It is important for ASEAN countries and Vietnam to be side by side in a solidarity community to avoid being separated and isolated by China's strategic moves. China's policies of tackling issues bilaterally, avoid using multilateral and international institutions have proved that it aims at using strength and imposing its strength (in politics-economy and even military) to conquer each ASEAN country. Making full use of multilateral institutions, implementing public foreign activities, taking advantages of the international community in accordance with the international laws with other powers' supervision and control of China will probably be the most relevant choice for ASEAN and Vietnam in the coming time.

China's increasing effects will inevitably lead to Vietnam's enforcement of its national power. However, a more tactful way may be the continuation of diplomatic strategies, that have been done quite successfully by Vietnam over the past years, such as using multilateral institutions and forums, implementing diplomatic activities; applying international law as the basis for handling issues between countries; creating a balanced position of Vietnam among powers' policies; taking advantages of

strength and influence by not only the United States to stabilize regional situation, controlling China's ambition and extreme actions. Probably besides the United States, Vietnam, together with ASEAN countries, should welcome the limited presence by other powers which enjoy direct benefits or pay attentions to Southeast Asia's stability and development including Russia, Japan, India to co-handle the regional issues.

Endnotes

- ¹ The end of the Cold War is not a single event but a continuation of the series of political, social and economic movements in the socialist countries from late 1970s to early 1980s. In Vietnam, since 1986 when the VCP officially launched the renovation perspective, re-shaping the social and economic policy and re-structuring the national target, Vietnam has entered a new historical period at least from the ideological perspective, it was the period of renovation and gradually separating from the Cold War, and from the political dispute between the two systems of thought in the world. Moreover, we could also see that the strong and intensive transformation of Vietnam in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War is exactly the results of the ideological transformation since 1986. Therefore, in order to study Vietnam in the post-Cold War, we can not ignore the important landmarks in the 1986 and late 1980s.
- ² When being faced with the changes of the world's political structure and situation, with a new awareness of the importance of national interests, as well as the failure of the Soviet socialist model, the VCP has re-defined the national strategic objectives of Vietnam and put top priority for prosperity and stability, economic development rather than promoting and continuing to pursue the targets of ideal communism, the goals of proletarian internationalism and struggling with capitalism as before. But the change of focus from the ideological concerns to national interests, realist and pragmatic foreign policy does not mean that Vietnam completely abandon the goals of socialist ideology. The change can be interpreted that it is a temporary switch of the focus from politics to economy, and the development of national resources, building facilities and the foundation of socialism; when it has accumulated enough abilities and conditions, the VCP will reaffirm the objectives of their communist ideology. According to the VCP, Vietnam has just entered the period of transition to socialism when the morphological characteristics of the socialist economy has not been formed, the state still has to use the capitalist mode and relations of production to cater the building of socialism. Therefore, in the present time, from the political point of view, to depend entirely on ideological considerations to formulate the foreign policy is not appropriate, and needs to change.
- ³ With its own political, economic and social features, Vietnam has not yet reached the level of socialist economy, but it did not fully accept the capitalist mode and relations of production, therefore to understand Vietnam, the Marxist-Leninist approach is necessary. In addition, we also see the long-term goal of VCP is to build a socialist Vietnam, therefore, we can not analyze the dynamics of Vietnam policy, if the analysis is not based on Marxism-Leninism.
- ⁴ Constitution of Vietnam (1992), Article 4: "The Communist Party of Vietnam, the vanguard of the Vietnamese working class, the faithful representative of the rights and interests of the working class, the toiling people, and the whole nation, acting upon the Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's thought, is the force leading the State and society. All Party organisations operate within the framework of the Constitution and the law."
- ⁵ The social-political situations in Vietnam during preparation period of the Sixth and Seventh National Congress showed that contrary trends. One significant evidence for that issue was a discussion within VCP about a statement of President Bill Clinton on July, 1995 about the U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic rapprochement. Mr Clinton hoped his decision "will advance the cause of freedom in Vietnam just as it did in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union." This statement was used by conservative faction to prove their assessments of plots of the U.S. and hostile forces against socialist Vietnam. See more about these issues in Anh (1993), Thayer (2008) and Koh (2001).
- ⁶ Le Duan (1907-1986) was the First Secretary of Central Committee of Vietnam Labour Party from 1960 to 1976, and, General Secretary of Vietnam Communist Party from 1976 to 1986.
- ⁷ Nguyen Van Linh (1915-1998) was the then secretary of Ho Chi Minh city Communist party committee. Later, he was appointed the General Secretary of Vietnam Communist Party from 1986 to 1991. He was recognized as the pathfinder of Vietnam's Renovation.
- ⁸ The VCP Tenth plenum hold in Hanoi, May-June 1986, made important decisions to national strategies. Following this plenum, on 9th July 1986, the Politburo adopted Resolution No.32 (32/BCT21) which focused on "peace and development" as the highest priority and identified the basis for "new thinking" in national security strategies.
- ⁹ Hold in Hanoi, December 1986, it was the important Congress that marked the turning point in leading ideologies of the VCP.
- ¹⁰ In 1986, Vietnam's GDP growth rate was 2.8%, inflation rate was 398.1%, this situation had continued to be worse in the following years (see more data at note no.30). In 1990, the Soviet Union officially announced to end of its aid to Vietnam. In August 1990, according to statistics of Vietnam Government, 63% of aid had been cut in the first six months of 1990, many important export contracts had been canceled. Meanwhile, Vietnam was internationally isolated: The U.S. continued the policy of comprehensive sanctions on Vietnam, Western countries restricted their relations with Vietnam at minimum level; the stress relations with China; and almost no relations with the ASEAN countries due to Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia; decreased relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and virtually no relationship in the first years of 1990s due to the difficult situation from both sides.
- ¹¹ See: Manyin (2005) and Thayer (2008.)
- ¹² Ho Chi Minh's thought is the creative application of the theoretical perspective of Marxism-Leninism on the actual situation in Vietnam. The thoughts were written in Ho Chi Minh's various works of political literature, speeches, articles compiled in Ho Chi Minh's Complete Works (2011), Hanoi: National Political Publishing House; Ho Chi Minh did not build his own theory, but rather used the Marxist-Leninist perspective, combined with his nationalism belief and applied it to solve specific problems of Vietnam such as: land reform issues, industrialization with very low starting point of a backward country, colonial issues, and extension of international relations. In the 1970s-1980s, the leaders of the VCP did not highly appreciate these ideas--although they still referred to it. During the renovation period, the views of Ho Chi Minh were assessed as correct and appropriate to the situation and condition of Vietnam. Nowadays, Ho Chi Minh's thought again plays an important part in the theoretical foundation of the VCP.
- ¹³ Vietnam joined the Socialist Economic Community (COMECON) in June 1978.
- ¹⁴ Vietnam signed the 25 year Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the Soviet Union in November 1978.
- ¹⁵ Vietnam's Unification War (also considered as Second Indochina War) ended in 1975.

- ¹⁶ Goldmann. (1988), p.4, "Problem of adaptation."
- ¹⁷ Goldmann. (1988), p.4, "Problem of learning."
- ¹⁸ Hermann. (1990), pp.11-13, "Primary change agents."
- ¹⁹ Simon. (1995), "*International Relation Theory and Southeast Asian Security*."
- ²⁰ Waltz. (1954/1959), "*Man, the State, and War: a Theoretical Analysis*."
- ²¹ According to socialist leaders and scholars, the U.S. and other capitalist countries developed and implemented a Grand Strategy to defeat socialist system which is called "Peaceful Evolution," or "Peaceful Transformation." See: Kennan, George F. (1947) Foreign Affairs, and, Anh. (1993).
- ²² See analyses and data at: Archie Brown, Reform, Coup and Collapse: The End of the Soviet State, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/coldwar/soviet_end_01.shtml; Richard Pipes, The Soviet Union Adrift, *Foreign Affairs*, 1990/1991, Vol.70 Issue 1, America and the World, pp.70-81; William C. Wohlforth, The Stability of a Unipolar World, *International Security*, vol.24, no.1 (Summer 1999), the MIT Press Journals, pp.5-41. Paul Kennedy (1987), The Soviet Union and Its "Contradictions", *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp.488-514.
- ²³ Petras. (Feb 2011), "Rising and declining economic powers: The Sino-U.S. conflict deepens," p.118, quoted, "The U.S. empire covers the world, with nearly 800 military bases, multilateral (NATO) and bilateral military alliances, a dominant position in the self-styled international financial institutions (WB, IMF) and with multinational banks, investment houses and industries in Asia, Latin America, Europe and elsewhere."
- ²⁴ The U.S.-China's rapprochement had its root from both sides' interests and strategies of containing the Soviet Union. With collapse of the Soviet Union, this strategic structure has no reason to exist. Instead China is going to be strategic challenger to national interest of the U.S. This context leads to the modification of the U.S.-China's relation.
- ²⁵ Thong tan Viet Nam. (2008) "*The gioi dang o nguong cua thay doi*," (Vietnamese). Author translation: Vietnam News Agency. (2008) "*The World on the Threshold of Change*".
- ²⁶ Razak. (2011), *Keynote Address in The 10th IISS Asia Security Summit*.
- ²⁷ The Vietnamese southwest border war was officially recognized form December 25, 1978 and lasted until 1989. See more at: http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/bng_vietnam/nr040810155433/#huxbZdli4MhV, accessed: February 6, 2011.
- ²⁸ Vietnam-China border war began on 19 February 1979, lasted for a month and caused both sides heavy casualties.
- ²⁹ In 1985, Vietnamese Government decided to implement a social-economic named "Price-Salary-Monetary Reform" which was always considered the crucial mistake that led to the collapse of Vietnam's economy in the following years.
- ³⁰ Vietnam's main economic indexes in the 1980s: **GDP growth rates:** 1980: -3.5%; 1981: 5.8%; 1982: 8.2%; 1983: 7.1%; 1984: 8.4%; 1985: 3.8%; 1986: 2.8%; 1987: 3.6%; 1988: 5.1%; 1989: 7.4%; 1990: 5.1%. **Inflation rates:** 1980: 95.2%; 1981: 69.6%; 1982: 95.4%; 1983: 49.5%; 1984: 64.9%; 1985: 95.6%; 1986: 398.1%; 1987: 362.6%; 1988: 411%; 1989: 69.7%; 1990: 42.1%. World Bank data, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/vietnam>
- ³¹ On April 30, 1975, the U.S. put comprehensive trade embargo on the whole of Vietnam. See more at: http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/us_vn_relations/timeline/, accessed: February 6, 2011.
- ³² There were the contradictions between Vietnam and ASEAN countries over Cambodian issue. ASEAN countries worried of being involved into the war and about Vietnam, a neighboring country which possessed strong army but weak economy and committed itself in socialism ideology. And on its side, Vietnam asserted that ASEAN countries went along with the U.S. and other Western countries to contain and put embargo on Vietnam; and considered ASEAN as a threat. See: Ngoc and An, 2008: 302-303, Tung, 2007: 486 .
- ³³ Vietnam tried to find solutions for Cambodian issue and promoted dialogue with other ASEAN countries (see: Khoan, 1995: 31); took the initiative of signing a Treaty of Non-Aggression and build Southeast Asia into a region of peace, independence, neutrality, stability and prosperity; proposed to establish a demilitarized zone in Thailand-Cambodia border. Regarding the relationship with China, Vietnam patiently strived to restore friendly relations with this country. From 1980-1987, the Government of Vietnam had sent diplomatic notes seventeen times to propose for continuing China and Vietnam's talks. Vietnam promoted activities to improve diplomatic relations with the United States and other Western countries, collaborated with the U.S. to deal with humanitarian issues related to the Vietnam War (POW/MIA, ODP); joined the Non-Aligned Movement and actively promoted economic ties and trade with developed capitalist countries.
- ³⁴ Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, A brief diplomatic history of Vietnam, http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/bng_vietnam/nr040810155433/#huxbZdli4MhV, accessed: February 6, 2011.
- ³⁵ World Bank data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS?page=2>
- ³⁶ Vietnam became the 150th member of WTO on November 7, 2006, after 11 years of preparation including 7 years of negotiation.
- ³⁷ Le Duan hold the highest post in Vietnam Communist Party for 26 years (1960-1986).
- ³⁸ VCP Politburo Resolution No.13, May 20, 1988 on "*The External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*."
- ³⁹ Gorbachev. M (1988), In that address, Gorbachev abandoned the concept of the "two worlds" and stressed that "the interests of all mankind" should be considered as the basis for the development and stability of all countries; and "Further world progress is now possible only through the search for a consensus of all mankind, in movement toward a new world order."
- ⁴⁰ VCP Politburo secret Resolution No.2 which may be entitled "*On Strengthening National Defence in the New Revolutionary Stage*" was adopted in 1987.
- ⁴¹ Nguyen. (1989), *Nhan Dan Newspaper*, April 10, (Vietnamese).
- ⁴² "Colour revolutions" is a term that was widely used by the media to describe related movements which developed in several states in the Post-Soviet Union Sphere and in former Eastern-European communist countries during the early 2000s such as: Yugoslavia (2000), Georgia (Rose Revolution, 2003), Ukraine (Orange Revolution, 2004), Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution, 2005)...
- ⁴³ During the 1990s, the world witnessed major breakthroughs of Vietnamese diplomacy that helped Vietnam to escape from the isolation and being besieged and to access and integrate into the international community. Vietnam has basically solved the biggest obstacles in its relations with China and the U.S. Vietnam's foreign affairs in the 2000s and from now on is a continuation of these breakthroughs mentioned above, to perform the tasks of creating favorable international conditions for national development. At the moment and in the future, renovation policy has also been implemented in Vietnam, but the VCP always puts high priority on the country's stability, it commits for renovation, but not too radical. At the same time, renovations in Vietnam in the near future will still be changes in socio-economic policy, economic management mechanism, improvement of the legal system, enhancement of state management, fundamental changes in politics, political institutions can hardly be happened, that means Vietnamese diplomatic will continue to maintain the orientation and characteristics formed in the 1990s.
- ⁴⁴ Drezner. (2007), "The New New World Order," quoted: "Today, the distribution of power in the world is very different. According to Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank, by 2010, the annual growth in combined national income from Brazil, Russia, India, and China-the so called BRIC

countries-will be greater than from the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy combined; by 2025, it will be twice that of the G-7.”

⁴⁵ Statement of President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall, Tokyo, the first stop on his first visit to Asia as President of the United States (December 14th, 2009): “The United States of America may have started as a series of ports and cities along the Atlantic Ocean, but for generations we have also been a nation of the Pacific.” and “the fortunes of America and the Asia Pacific have become more closely linked than ever before.” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-suntory-hall>

⁴⁶ According to the VCP this is “integration” but not “assimilation” process. See: Thayer, 2005.

⁴⁷ Kim Ninh quoted by Tung, 2007: 497.

⁴⁸ World of Quotes, <http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/George-F.-Kennan/1/index.html>

⁴⁹ Vietnam and Laos: The special relations of friendship, solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between the two countries have been continuously consolidated through important agreements: Friendship and Cooperation Treaty signed in 1977, Agreement on Cooperation for the period of 2001-2005 and Strategy on Economic, Cultural and Science and Technology Cooperation signed in 2001. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia also enjoy close coordination and cooperation on regional and international fora, such as those at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Co-operation Strategy (ACMECS), the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), the Cambodia-Laos-Myanmar-Vietnam Sub-regional Co-operation and the Vietnam-Laos-Cambodia Development Triangle.

http://www.mofa.gov.vn/vnemb.la/nr070521165956/news_object_view?newsPath=/vnemb.vn/cn_vakv/ca_tbd/mr040819103029/ns071211134730

⁵⁰ Hermann. (1990), Fig 1. The mediating role of decision process between change agents and degree of policy change, p.13.

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