

Doctoral Dissertation

**Vietnam's Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War Era:
Ideology and Reality**

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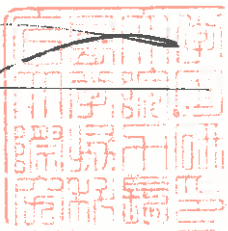
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INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the study

Historical perspective: Vietnamese nationalism and socialism

The famous statement of “Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom” was declared by Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh in the *Call to the People and Soldiers Nationwide* on July 17, 1966, when the Second Indochina War¹ was getting increasingly severe, the United States military intervention was growing more deeply in the South of Vietnam and destructive war spread over the North. Twenty years before when the French troops attacked Hanoi and other major cities of Vietnam to restore French rule in Vietnam and the whole Indochina, Ho Chi Minh had to sign the *National Resistance Order* and the *Call for National Resistance*.² Similar to the two previous Order and Call of 1946, the 1966 statement of Ho Chi Minh expressed the will of a whole nation who have devoted their lives to fight for the right of self-determination,³ the right of freedom, the right to live and to pursuit happiness as other nations in the world.⁴

Colonial disputes and the right of self-determination, imperialism and nationalism, capitalism and communism had made Vietnam to become one of the world’s toughest battle ground for almost all the twentieth century. The pre-modern and modern history of Vietnam is nothing other than the history of long-years struggling for independence, national unity and pursuing communism ideology. Being influenced by nationalism, in

¹ The Second Indochina War begun in 1955 in Vietnam and later spread out over Indochina including Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. It officially ended in 1972 with Paris Peace Accord, but lasted for 3 more years in until 1975 with the reunification of Vietnam. The Third Indochina War or the Cambodia conflict and Vietnam-China border conflict took place in Vietnam, Cambodia, China and part of Thailand from 1978 to 1991 as Vietnam withdrawn its troops from Cambodia in 1989 and the Cambodia conflict was comprehensively settled in 1991.

² On 19 December 1946, after receiving 3 consecutive ultimatums of the French occupation forces, Ho Chi Minh signed the *National Resistance Order* and the *Call for National Resistance* to the whole Vietnamese, part of which stated that, “*Compatriots all over the country! As we desire peace we have made concessions. But the more concessions we make, the more the French colonialist, press on, for they are bent on reconquering our country. No, We would rather sacrifice all than lose our country. Never shall we be enslaved! Compatriots! Stand up! The hour for national salvation has struck! We must shed even our last drop of blood to safeguard our country. Even if we must endure the greatest hardships in our war of resistance, with our determination to lace all sacrifices, we are bound to win. Long live independent and unified Vietnam! Long live the victorious Resistance!*” The First Indochina War (1946-1954) exploded and caused devastated proxy wars in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

³ In this study only, I assume that the term “self-determination” expresses the same meaning as “self-reliance” regarding to issues of foreign policy decision-making and diplomacy implementation process.

⁴ Vietnam’s Declaration of Independence, Hanoi, September 2, 1945.

addition to the dominance of communist ideology, Vietnam with triumphalism of defeating the formidable leaders of the imperialist world proudly considered itself an outpost of socialism. While the whole world focused their efforts on social-cultural improvement and economic development, Vietnam had to gather up its limited national resources to struggle for independence and protect its choice of socialism. Almost a century colonized history, fierce confrontations with imperialist powers, a dilemma situation when being trapped in the strategic chessboard among the superpowers (and their allies) have put heavy stamps on Vietnam's national strategy in general and its foreign policy in particular.

On 31 May 1946, when traveling to France to negotiate the fate of Vietnam and seek peaceful solutions for Indochina, Ho Chi Minh had left an adage for the acting President Huynh Thuc Khang,⁵ which later became one of theoretical premises for Vietnamese diplomacy.⁶ It is said that, "From an unchanging stance, respond to ten thousand changes," (in Vietnamese-Dĩ bất biến, ứng vạn biến). Some scholars analyzed it as the basis orientation to make tactical flexibility while keeping strategic consistency of Vietnamese foreign policy. In some difficult times, Vietnam Communist Party (VCP)'s leaders tended to apply this perspective when choosing, formulating and implementing policy, even when they needed to explain a specific policy to the peoples. According to official assessments of the VCP and academic analyses of Vietnamese scholars, there were many reasons to explain mistakes in diplomatic orientations, foreign policies and foreign affair practices that Vietnam had made during the period of 1975-1986,⁷ one of which was the deflection and deviation from that basis orientation of Ho Chi Minh.⁸

⁵ Huynh Thuc Khang (1876-1947), a Vietnamese anti-colonialist. He took part in the Vietnamese interim government after independence (1945) and hold the post of Interior Minister. When Ho Chi Minh left for France to negotiate with French government, he took charge of Vietnamese government as acting President.

⁶ As Hans J. Morgenthau in his book, *Politics Among Nations*, the term "diplomacy" used in this Dissertation refers to the formation and execution of foreign policy on all levels. See, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp.158, 561-590.

⁷ It was the time of Vietnam's reunification up to the *Renovation* period. In this Dissertation, it could be considered the "Pre-Renovation period."

⁸ Conclusions of the VCP at the Sixth and Seventh Party Congresses on foreign affairs limitations during 1975-1986: *Foreign affairs sections*. See, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986]; and Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

Vietnamese Doi Moi-Renovation⁹ and new foreign policy directions: General issues

Sixty-six years after the 1946 *Call for National Resistance* of Ho Chi Minh, on 16 January 2012, at the Fourth Plenum, the Eleventh Central Committee of the VCP issued an important resolution, namely, *Some Urgent Issues of the Party Building Works at Present*, which is often called the *Fourth Central Committee Resolution*.¹⁰ The VCP once again called for unity within the Party and trust of the people to fight against some signs which according to the VCP are deviations from socialist ideology and degradations in moral values; to ensure economic growth, social stability and maintain the Party's absolute leadership role. As its name would suggest, this Central Committee Resolution focuses on the party building and organizing issues such as, party membership, party's charter, party's apparatuses, party power structure, regulations and rules relating to activities, responsibilities and duties of party members and party organizations; and especially emphasizes the party reorganizing and consolidating works that means the promotion of moral values, leading ability of party members and party organizations, in order to enhance their leadership and strengthen the power of the party, and regain the trust of the people for the party and its supreme leadership. The top leaders of the VCP consider these vital important steps would play a decisive role in ensuring Party's survival and proving its

⁹ Vietnamese *Renovation* began in 1986, together with the Sixth National Party Congress (15-18 December 1986) of the Vietnamese Communist Party. *Renovation* consists a set of strategies and policies designed to transform Vietnam's old-Soviet-fundamentalist-style of socialism to an all new socialist-oriented market model of socio-economic development which could cope with realistic requirements of domestic and international context. *Renovation* is also considered as Vietnamese's version of the Soviet Union's *Perestroika* and Chinese *Reform*. Entering *Renovation* period, Vietnam started a new course of its contemporary history. The official term of post-Cold War era used to be defined as the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union up to now (1991-). Basing on this term, the usual identification of pre-Cold War period in Vietnam could include two stages, (i) the Pre-*Renovation* stage: from the end of the Vietnam War prior to Vietnam's *Renovation* (1975-1986); and, (ii) the Cold War-*Renovation* stage: from Vietnam's *Renovation* up to the official end of the Cold-War (1986-1991). However, in Vietnamese studies, the overlapping stage of 1986-1991 has been the most complicated and interesting one as it consists of both old and new characteristics, conservative and reformist perceptions about the development orientations of Vietnam. It maintains characteristics of both Vietnam's *Renovation* and Cold War strategies. To these extend, regarding to characteristics of *Renovation* strategy, the author argues that Vietnam ended its own Cold War even before the global Cold War ended officially. Therefore, the term "post-Cold War era" in this Dissertation could be used with the same meaning of "Vietnam's *Renovation* period" term. This issue is also mentioned later in this Part as the author identifies the scope of study in page 19.

¹⁰ The official name of this Resolution is the Central Committee's Resolution No. 12-NQ/TW on *Some Urgent Issues of the Party Building Works at Present*, 16 January 2012. See, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 12-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 11, Ve Mot So Van De Cap Bach Trong Cong Tac Xay Dung Dang Hien Nay*, 16 thang 1 nam 2012, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, The Eleventh Central Committee's Resolution No. 12-NQ/TW, on *Some Urgent Issues of the Party Building Works at Present*, 16 January 2012].

leadership ability. That VCP's call for solidarity and unity within the Party inspired by Ho Chi Minh's analyses¹¹ on the importance of preserving the Party unity and purity for the ultimate goal of developing the country and building socialism. It can be seen as a drastic step of the VCP in the sector of political reform, which derived from the urgent requirements of the society and the VCP itself.¹²

It takes time to assess the extent and scope as well as the real results of these steps, but it can initially be seen as the consistent commitment of the VCP to continue *Renovation* efforts. Despite VCP's several policy commitments and practical efforts, Vietnam's *Renovation* course has been in the intensive arguments both inside and outside the country. Many scholars stated that reforms in Vietnam happened strongly in the late 1980s, reduced in the 1990s and made no significant breakthroughs on the grand strategy in the recent years.¹³ The VCP has been confused with requirements to push for further economic reform, while ensuring political stability and maintaining Party's leadership role. In the mean time, the VCP is reluctant to implement the "too radical" political reform, or something that is considered to be against the Party's recognized power. Those scholars also argued that the reform in Vietnam was mainly economic reform, while there had been almost no significant change and reform in politics. This fact would continue and inevitably hamper the development of Vietnam.¹⁴

¹¹ President Ho Chi Minh's Testament of 1969, "Unity is an extremely precious tradition of our Party and people. All comrades, from the Central Committee down to the cells, must preserve the unity and oneness of mind in the Party as the apple of their eye. Ours is a party in power. Each Party member, each cadre must be deeply imbued with revolutionary morality, and show industry, thrift, integrity, uprightness, total dedication to the public interest and complete selflessness. Our Party should preserve absolute purity and prove worthy of its role as the leader and very loyal servant of the people." See, Ho Chi Minh, *Di Chuc*, 10 thang 5 nam 1969, trong *Di Chuc cua Chu Tich Ho Chi Minh*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1999, (Vietnamese). [Ho Chi Minh, *Testament*, 10 May 1969, in *Testament of President Ho Chi Minh*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1999].

¹² On 15 October 2012, in Hanoi, General Secretary of the VCP Nguyen Phu Trong delivered an important speech at the Closing Ceremony of the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee, in which there were some conclusions of the Forth Central Committee Resolution regarding to limitations, cons and mistakes of some senior VCP's leaders including one Politburo member.

¹³ Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam: Backward Toward the Future, *Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue.2, April 1992, pp.177-189.

¹⁴ Brantly Womack, Vietnam in 1996: Reform Immobilism, *Asian Survey*, vol.37, no.1, A Survey of Asia in 1996: Part 1 (Jan 1997), pp.79-87.

In addition to this trend, some other scholars argued the opposite: political reform in Vietnam has always accompanied by the economic reform policies.¹⁵ It could be said in some certain times that political reform could not catch up with the economic reform speed. However, it has to admit the fact that political reform in Vietnam is a continuous process which has been oriented at a certain level based on VCP's analyses and evaluations on Vietnam's situation and the world context.¹⁶ According to these scholars, thus no one could say there exists a multiparty system with a Western-style democracy in Vietnam, but efforts of the VCP to renovate the political structure and mechanism could not be denied; and these changes, at certain perspectives, have contributed to Vietnam's economic, political and diplomatic achievements during the *Renovation*.¹⁷ Those scholars also pointed out some problems that the VCP had to tackle to maintain reform commitment.¹⁸ They also argued that, socio-economic developments have shown the fact that the current political "jacket" seems too tight and no longer suitable. Vietnam must obtain and implement new management mechanisms and institutions, new political organizations and power structures to meet the needs of socio-economic developments.¹⁹

¹⁵ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220. See also, Do Muoi, Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan, *Nhan Dan*, 2 thang 9 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Continue the Task of Doi Moi, Unite to Advance for the Victory of Socialism, for the Well Being and Happiness of the People, *People*, September 2, 1990.

¹⁶ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, pp.175-220. See also, Nguyen Co Thach, Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

¹⁷ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹⁸ Nguyen Co Thach, De Tao Ra Dong Luc Manh Me Cho Cong Nghiep Hoa, Hien Dai Hoa, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 10, thang 10 nam 1994, tr.15-18, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, In Order to Create Strong Motive Force for Industrialization and Modernization, *Communist Review*, vol.10, October 1994, pp.15-18].

¹⁹ Do Muoi, Phat Huy Thanh Tuu Cua Cong Cuoc Doi Moi, Tiep Tuc Dua Su Nghiep Cach Mang Nuoc Ta Vung Buoc Tien Len, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 1, thang 1 nam 1994, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Making Full Use of Achievements of the *Renovation* Course, Further Advance Our Country's Revolutionary Cause, *Communist Review*, vol.1, January 1994]; Vo Van Kiet, Nhung Doi Hoi Moi Cua Thoi Cuoc, *Quoc Te*, 13 thang 4 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, New Requirements of the Situation, *International Affairs*, 13 April 2005]. See also, Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin's analyses on this issue. In the words of Marxism-Leninism scientific socialist theory, the political-economic superstructure tended to be outdated and lagged behind the other radical elements in the process of social development. In order to ensure the stability and continuity of the whole society development, the political-economic superstructure must be adjusted and reorganized to fit the rapid development of socio-economic infrastructure.

The *Renovation* in Vietnam officially began in 1986. Then, there appeared the first seeds of a new foreign policy.²⁰ However, due to “era constraints,”²¹ the inability in cognition, and VCP’s major opinions of prioritizing economic reform in order to meet urgent socio-economic requirements, settle down domestic crises, and cope with direct threats to the survival of the socialist regime, political reform and foreign policy adjustment were considered but not on the top list of reform priorities.²² A series of foreign policies was formulated during 1986-1991,²³ with the breakthroughs in thinkings and practices.²⁴ But again, due to the “era constraints,” conservative resistances within the VCP, and hesitations and reluctances of reformers, those new foreign policy thinkings and diplomatic practices had not been effectively implemented. In Vietnam, at that time, some senior leaders still believed in the correctness of the practical Soviet Union-style socialist model,²⁵ and assumed that current socio-political-economic problems occurred due to ineffective management mechanisms, red-tape administrations, misunderstanding and mistakably applying Marxist-Leninist revolutionary doctrine,²⁶ imperialist devious plots and negative influences of Western capitalist consortiums, but not the socialism itself.²⁷ According to them, the economic reform was regarded as an adjustment and an adaptation

²⁰ Phan Doan Nam, *Mot Vai Suy Nghi Ve Doi Moi Tu Duy Doi Ngoai*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 2, thang 2 nam 1988, tr. 50-54, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Some Thoughts on the *Renovation* of Thinking on Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.2, January 1988, pp.50-54].

²¹ According to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, inability of doing and understanding caused by era features, historical characteristics is called “era constraint” which is an objective factor and goes beyond the human perception ability.

²² It was also implied fears of the VCP about its leadership survival and the stable existence of Vietnamese socialist regime. The VCP was confused about how to advance to socialism and carry out the *Renovation*. See Vice Premier Vo Van Kiet in his report to National Assembly in December 1988 expressed the overall confusion and uncertainty among the party’s top leaders. “In the past, the party used to make decisions on everything. Now, it is the party’s policy to merely set the guidelines. The rest is left to the National Assembly... I really feel very bewildered and do not know what to do.”

²³ In this Dissertation, we consider this period as the first stage of Vietnam’s *Renovation*. The other later stages began from 1991 with policies of the Seventh Party Congress. See also note no.8 for further discussions regarding to the identification of “*Renovation* period” and “post-Cold War era” in Vietnam.

²⁴ Nguyen Co Thach, *Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien*, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989].

²⁵ Pham Van Dong, *Theo Con Duong cua Cach Mang Thang Muoi, Tang Cuong Tinh Doan Ket va Su Hop Tac Viet-Xo, Nhan Dan*, 6 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Pham Van Dong, Follow the Path of the October Revolution and Strengthen the Spirit of Vietnamese-Soviet Solidarity and Cooperation, *People*, November 6, 1989].

²⁶ Nguyen Van Linh, *Hoc Tap De Nam Vung va Van Dung Dung Dan Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin*, *Nhan Dan*, 10 thang 10 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Study to Firmly Grasp and Correctly Utilize Marxism-Leninism, *People*, October 10, 1989].

²⁷ Le Duc Anh, *Nang Cao Canh Giac, Cung Co Quoc Phong va An Ninh cua Dat Nuoc*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 4, thang 4 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Le Duc Anh, Raise Vigilance, Reinforce National Defense and Security, *Communist Review*, vol.4, April 1988].

to requirements of newly emerged situations; and there were no doubt about the absolute superiority of Marxism-Leninism, the infallibility of the Party's leadership.²⁸ Therefore political reform was not that vital importance. Insisting political reform meant to negate the correctness of the Party's leadership and policies and could be seen as an erroneous viewpoint and a sign of deviating from the socialist ideology.²⁹ Those extreme fundamentalist and hard-line conservative stances used to dominate the VCP for a certain period of time. In addition, socio-economic depressions and political turmoils in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries,³⁰ accompanying with Gorbachev's radical political reforms in domestic policy as well as his sudden maneuvers in foreign strategy, had raised doubts and fears among the senior VCP's leaders about how to carry out Vietnamese *Renovation*. For such reasons, the first stage of Vietnamese *Renovation* mainly witnessed the emergence and application of new thinkings in economics field, but only theoretical debates about political reforms. There were a number of theoretical studies that struggled to redefine socialism, modify and shape a more suitable theoretical and practical socialist model for Vietnam.³¹ Nevertheless, they were theoretical approaches, and it took time to turn into reality, some of those thinkings and policies had been practically implemented and became the basis for VCP's national strategies and policies in *Renovation* course.

Doi Moi was associated with VCP's acknowledgement of the vital role of globalization and international economic integration to Vietnam's survival and development.³² To obtain consensus at its Sixth Party Congress, the VCP had to tackle issues related to ideology and

²⁸ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.108; Nguyen Trong Thu, *Suc Song cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Tap chi Cong san*, so.12, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trong Thu, *The Living Strength of Socialism, Communist Review*, no.12, 1991].

²⁹ Nguyen Van Linh, *Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc, Nhan Dan*, 15 thang 12 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, *Consolidate Peace, Raise Vigilance, Develop Comprehensive Strength to Defend the Fatherland, People*, December 15, 1989].

³⁰ Paul Kennedy, *The Soviet Union and Its "Contradictions,"* in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, New York, Random House Inc, 1987, pp.488-514.

³¹ See Hoang Chi Bao (1989), Le Xuan Luu (1994 and 2001), Nguyen Duc Binh (1994), Nguyen Co Thach (1989).

³² *Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 32-Bo Chinh tri, Cac Co Hoi va Kha Nang Cung Co va Phat Trien Kinh Te*, ngay 9 thang 7 nam 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 32, *New Opportunities and Possibilities to Consolidate and Develop the Economy*, 9 July 1986]; Vo Van Kiet, *Bao Cao truoc Quoc Hoi*, thang 12 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, *Report to the National Assembly*, December 1988].

development orientations, concerns about foreign interferences in Vietnam's internal affairs and VCP's leadership, and tackling negative impacts (in VCP's opinion) brought about by globalization apart from those benefits.³³ This trend to be pursued by the VCP at the following Congresses associated with commitments on further *Renovation*. It could be said that the VCP was forced to follow this trend while trying to limit negative impacts as well as make full use of favorable conditions brought out by globalization.³⁴ It was confirmed by the VCP at the Tenth Party Congress that "Economic globalization is an objective trend, attracting more and more nations;"³⁵ the VCP admitted that to obtain development, it was impossible for Vietnam to be isolated, self-isolated or stand outside the globalization process. The mission of Vietnam's new diplomacy was to ensure Vietnam's active and proactive integration into international economy, concurrently expand international cooperation in other fields.³⁶

However, under the control of the conservative trend, concerns about the intervention and impacts from the Western countries, the VCP still maintained certain suspicions and vigilances to globalization and considered it to be the product of capitalism and after all was aimed to serve for the benefits of capitalism.³⁷ The VCP analyzed that the integration of socialist countries in globalization, ideologically, was only the taking advantages of capitalism's development ways and methods to build up foundations and conditions for socialism. However, it was also assumed by the VCP that "this trend (globalization) was

³³ Vu Khoan, Chung Ta Khong Gia Nhap WTO Bang Moi Gia, *Viet Bao*, phien ban dien tu ngay 5 thang 11 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, We Do Not Join the WTO at Any Cost, *Viet Newspaper*, online edition, 5 November 2005]. <http://vietbao.vn/Kinh-te/Chung-ta-khong-gia-nhap-WTO-bang-moi-gia/55088343/88/>, accessed: December 19, 2011.

³⁴ Do Muoi, Mo Rong va Nang Cao Hon Nua Hieu Qua Hoat Dong Kinh Te Doi Ngoai, *Nhan Dan*, 14 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Expand and Raise Still Higher the Efficiency of External Economic Activities, *People*, November 14, 1989].

³⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu X*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, tr.64, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006, p.64].

³⁶ Nguyen Manh Cam, Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Gop Phan Xung Dang vao Su Nghiep Cach Mang Cua Dan Toc, *tap chi Cong san*, so 10, thang 8 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Vietnam's Diplomacy Worthy Contribution to the Nation's Revolution Cause, *Communist Review*, vol.10, August 1995].

³⁷ Tran Ba Khoa, Canh Giac Voi Am Muu Dien Bien Hoa Binh Cua Cac The Luc Thu Dich, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 1, thang 1 nam 1993, (Vietnamese). [Tran Ba Khoa, Vigilant Over the Devious Aim of Peaceful Evolution of Hostile Forces, *Communist Review*, vol.1, January 1993].

being controlled by several developed countries and transnational capital economic corporations, which was composed of contradictions, both positive and negative, cooperation and struggle.”³⁸ Regarding diplomatic affairs, Vietnam therefore, according to the VCP, had to bring its internal strength into full play, improve international cooperation effectiveness, ensure independence and sovereignty and socialist orientations, as well as protect nation-state benefits and national security. Pham Binh Minh, Minister of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that, “This is a very important issue of foreign policy orientations in the conditions that the globalization process is happening vigorously.”³⁹

2. Problem statements

There emerged many questions regarding to Vietnam’s diplomacy strategy and foreign policy decision-making process in the post-Cold War era, such as: Will Vietnam be able to bring its policies more into line with its national capabilities, social-economic reality, and the changing regional and international order? Can Vietnam achieve a more balanced relationship with China, a more friendly relationships with the United States, the Western countries and especially with ASEAN? What is the real strategic intention of Vietnam’s decision to normalize its relation with China in 1991? With Vietnam’s early-to-mid 1990s diplomatic maneuvers towards rapprochements with ASEAN and the United States, will Vietnam be ready to share greater responsibilities for pursuing common regional and global interests instead of its fundamental ultimate socialist goals? What if Vietnam fails to adapt to the post-Cold War era? What if Vietnam’s conservative faction takes advantage and dominates Vietnam’s politics to confront a more ideologically isolationist diplomacy and moves its diplomatic strategy in a more independent, fundamental socialist direction? They are all important issues that guide most of Vietnamese studies and lead to Dissertation’s problem statements as follows:

³⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu X*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, tr.64, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006, p.64].

³⁹ Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.47, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.47].

Vietnamese Renovation: Adjustment to the new global context

As mentioned above, Vietnamese *Renovation* has begun in 1986 with confusions in models and policies of how to advance to socialism in the new context. Vietnam did not fully follow the Soviet model as the VCP only mentioned *Doi Moi-Renovation*, not *Cai To-Restructuring/Reorganizing*.⁴⁰ Vietnam also did not advocate the Soviet's slogan of *Ngay Thang-Straightforwardness*;⁴¹ as it worried about negative consequences to social and political stability. Vietnam's *Renovation* in the early stage mainly took place in the economic sector, along with the efforts in examining and reexamining, defining and redefining of new thinkings and theories. Vietnamese ideologists and social-economic scholars worked intensively to defend socialism and Vietnam's socialist choice.⁴² They also tried to explain difficulties and falls of some practical socialist models theoretically. Gorbachev's radical policies and his rejection of some fundamentals of socialism made Vietnamese leaders worried. In the late 1980s, Gorbachev delivered series of speeches, some of them caused great shocks to Vietnamese leaders.⁴³ They were not only political but also cultural, economic and, the most important, ideological shock. At that time, there were some evidences that Vietnamese leaders were very dissatisfied and disappointed when Gorbachev, in his speech, had destroyed the foundation of their

⁴⁰ The Vietnamese term of the Soviet Union's *Perestroika*. See also Elliott, "with respect to reform, the Vietnamese were insisted on using the term *Doi Moi*, or *Renovation*, rather than a more direct translation of the Soviet term *Perestroika*, which is more accurate translated as 'restructuring' and, in the eyes of Vietnamese, had the implication of a more thoroughgoing reform, involving not only the economic system, but the political system as well, which the Vietnamese leadership emphatically rejected." David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.84.

⁴¹ The Vietnamese term of the Soviet Union's *Glasnost*.

⁴² Nguyen Duc Binh, *Khong Co Chuyen Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin Sup Do hay Loi Thoi*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 11, thang 11 nam 1994, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, *Marxism-Leninism Did Not Collapse Nor Become Obsolete*, *Communist Review*, vol.11, November 1994]; Hoang Chi Bao, *Chu Nghia Xa Hoi Trong Boi Canh Chinh Tri Cua Doi Moi*, *Nhan Dan*, 24 thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Hoang Chi Bao, *Socialism in the Political Context of Doi Moi*, *People*, August 24, 1989].

⁴³ Gorbachev's Address to the United Nations, December 1988, "Today, we have entered an era when progress will be based on the interest of all mankind. Consciousness of this requires that world policy, too, should be determined by the priority of the values of all mankind. The history of the past centuries and millennia has been a history of almost ubiquitous wars, and sometimes desperate battles, leading to mutual destruction... However, parallel with the process of wars, hostility, and alienation of people and countries, another process, just as objectively conditioned, was in motion and gaining force: The process of the emergence of a mutually connected and integral world. Further world progress is now possible only through the search of for a consensus of all mankind, in movement toward a new world order... The formula of development 'at another's expense' is becoming outdated. In light of present realities, genuine progress by infringing upon the rights and liberties of man and peoples, or at the expense of nature, is impossible." The other speeches will be mentioned and analyzed in this dissertation later.

worldview. Due to the radical nature of those initiatives, it took a long time for Vietnam to adapt and adjust.⁴⁴

The Vietnamese leaders at that time did not support the too pragmatic perspective of China either,⁴⁵ partly because of the strained relations between the two countries, the Party's increasingly suspicion of China's intentions; and Vietnam did neither have opportunities to study and acquire those theoretical perspectives directly nor material abilities to apply them.⁴⁶ Reformist perspectives of some Eastern European socialist countries, especially of the German Democratic Republic,⁴⁷ which used to support by some Vietnamese leaders initially, had lost its advantage as those countries were all in crisis and their Communist Parties were about to lost leadership roles and collapse. Vietnam drove its attention to successful development models of East Asian countries, especially the Southeast Asians.⁴⁸ They all apply the open policy of economic development on the basis of strictly political control and social stability while maintaining the Asian values. That means Vietnam still could solve its economic problems, integrate itself into the development trend of the area, while avoiding hefty political concessions as the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries had been suffered. This choice seemed to have transformed Vietnam from a purely fundamentalist communist country into a hybrid authoritarian communism with capitalism approach. Once again, we can see the flexibility

⁴⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.73.

⁴⁵ Regarding Deng Xiaoping's famous statement "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, a long as it catches mice," Vietnamese Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh recalled "It is not hard to see that this ideology emerged from the economic difficulties and pressures... How ever, at that time the number of people with this outlook was only a minority and it didn't forcefully express itself, and its impact was not great." Tong Bi thu Nguyen Van Linh va Cuoc Dau Tranh Chong Bieu Hien Huu Khuynh trong Cong Cuoc Doi Moi, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.86 (2005), (Vietnamese). [Party Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh and the Struggle Against Rightist Manifestation in *Doi Moi*, *Communist Review*, no. 86 (2005)].

⁴⁶ Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)*," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

⁴⁷ In the Autumn of 1989, General Secretary of the VCP, Nguyen Van Linh travelled to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and met Erich Honecker. Some scholars argued in that visit, Vietnamese leaders sought assistances and experiences from the GDR for Vietnam's *Renovation* process. It seemed the GDR had the model that Vietnam was looking for: a strict political control during the transition process, and a model of socialist economic transformation.

⁴⁸ Vu Khoan, Chau A-Thai Binh Duong: Mot Huong Lon Trong Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Nha Nuoc Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 6, thang 6 nam 1993, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Asia-Pacific: A Major Direction in Our Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.6, June 1993]; Dinh Nho Liem, Viet Nam Trong Xu The Chung cua Chau A-Thai Binh Duong, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.3, thang 3 nam 1991, (Vietnamese). [Dinh Nho Liem, Vietnam in the common trend of the Asia-Pacific, *Communist Review*, no.3, March 1992].

of the strategic motto “invariables respond to variables”⁴⁹ of Ho Chi Minh which had been actively applied by the VCP.

The majority of the Vietnamese leaders in the early stages of *Renovation* and even today has grown up and been trained in wars; some has studied in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European socialist countries. They have harsh experiences with colonialism and capitalism. They are deeply influenced by Marxism-Leninism, particularly Lenin’s analyses on society development process that stated imperialism is the supreme development stage of capitalism; imperialist countries despite a certain regression and concession after the World War 2 remain the nature of man-exploitation by man, and as a result antagonistic contradictions with the socialist countries always exist.⁵⁰ It is not easy to change that ideological perspective which has been deep-rooted for ages. The new generation leader is still under formation process and it could perhaps take a decade to completely replace the old one. Although the new points of view have been accepted to some extent in Vietnam, but obviously been constrained by the historical limitations.

These above events showed that the early stages of *Doi Moi* were a groping and confusion period when the VCP took the trial and error approach.⁵¹ With the priority of maintaining the stability, the VCP tried to choose the most appropriate model for the conditions and situation of Vietnam. The model must help to ensure economic development, solve social crisis, but not adversely affect political stability.⁵² The VCP also did not have to sacrifice too much on its strategic objectives as well as its leadership role. Even at the very difficult time of the late 1980s and the following decade, the VCP had never given up their assertion of the ultimate

⁴⁹ Other version of Ho Chi Minh’s strategic guideline, “From an unchanging stance, respond to ten thousand changes.”

⁵⁰ Nguyen Duc Binh, Tiep Tuc Mot Cach Kien Dinh va Sang Tao Con Duong Xa Hoi Chu Nghia, *Tap chi Cong San*, phan 2, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Resolute and creativity continuing along the socialist path, *Communist Review*, part 2, 2006].

⁵¹ Vo Van Kiet answered a Vietnamese journalist after the Seventh National Party Congress, “We have the advantage of the fact that the Seventh Party Congress had laid down a policy line for *Doi Moi*, and we don’t have to learn on the job as after the Sixth Party Congress. That means the road to take is clear even though it might not be the road to bliss, but we have enough confidence in it to move straight down this road.” Vo Van Kiet, Phong Van boi *Tuoi Tre*, Mot Gio voi Tan Chu Tich Hoi Dong Bo Truong Vo Van Kiet, thang 6 nam 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Interview by *Youth Newspaper*, An Hour with the New Premier Vo Van Kiet, June 1991].

⁵² Do Muoi, Thoi Cuoc Hien Nay va Nhiem Vu Cua Chung Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 8, thang 8 nam 1992, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, The Current Situation and Our Tasks, *Communist Review*, vol.8, August 1992].

superiority of socialism as a development model.⁵³ However, they later had to admit that there never existed a sole successful practical socialist model; and each country, with its own conditions and starting point needed to choose their own path towards socialism based on the fundamental theory of Marxism-Leninism.⁵⁴

It is definitely true that the pressure from the internal crisis and the international context has forced the VCP to carry out initial steps to change, and then to explicitly committed to a comprehensive reform. Besides that the roles of the VCP, its individual leaders and scientists, those who had been involved in the debate within the Party's inner-power cycle about relationship between ideology and reality,⁵⁵ the nature of socialism, the orthodox views of socialist theory and how to apply and concretize that doctrine into the Vietnamese context were inner dynamics of *Renovation*. Both external requirement and internal pressure were crucial to the speed and scope of *Renovation* in general as well as to the planning process and deployment of the new foreign policy of Vietnam.⁵⁶ These factors hold a decisive role to start the *Renovation*, plan and implement the new economic policy, shape the new foreign policy in the early years of the first stage of *Renovation* (1986-1989). But these factors had also slowed down the speed, limited the scope of *Renovation* in the next years (1989-1991) of the first stage, when complex transformations of the world context and disturbances in socialist system raised concerns within the VCP on the correctness, as well

⁵³ In September 1989, Vietnamese Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh addressed to large number of Vietnamese scholars and elites that Marxism-Leninism was a total ideology and it would continue to be Vietnam's guide into the post-Cold War era. He asserted that "There has never been a scientific and revolutionary theory like Marxism-Leninism. It is a 'comprehensive and logically tight theory which gives people a total world view' and a theory that not only aim at 'understanding the world but also changing it'... Capitalism will certainly be replaced by socialism, because that is the law of human history, which no one can deny." Nguyen Van Linh, Phat Bieu tai Truong Dang Nguyen Ai Quoc, Ha Noi, thang 9 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at Nguyen Ai Quoc Party Institute, Hanoi, September 1989].

⁵⁴ Vietnamese Premier Vo Van Kiet once stated that "in that general environment of change, the relations of each of the remaining socialist country are determined by their own policies." Vo Van Kiet, Hanoi, 1996. See also, Nguyen Phu Trong, Mot So Van De Ve Con Duong Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi o Nuoc Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.1, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Phu Trong, Some Questions Concerning the Path toward Socialism in Our Country, *Communist Review*, no.1, 2001].

⁵⁵ In this Dissertation, Ideology is mainly used in the sense of political connotations and means Communist Ideology. The author also acknowledges that the concept of ideology might have a broader meaning regarding to "the general sense of philosophy, political and moral convictions." Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, p.101. But it is not in the scope and objectives of this study.

⁵⁶ Alexander L. Vuving, The Two-Headed Grand Strategy: Vietnamese Foreign Policy since *Doi Moi*, paper of the conference, *Vietnam Update 2004: Strategic and Foreign Relations*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 25-26 November 2004.

as how to conduct Vietnam's *Renovation* course. These restrictions and constraints had only been removed after the Seventh Party Congress. Vietnam entered the second phase of *Renovation*, a period of breakthrough steps not only in theoretical fields, but also on practical operations of politics, economy, foreign relations and security.⁵⁷

I agree with some scholars' notions that said Vietnam's policy in the later stages has been a continuation and development of the breakthroughs and successes of the 1990s period.⁵⁸ I also thought that the most difficult issues of foreign policy in theory and practice had been recognized in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some of them even had been tackled and that achievements had laid a strong foundation for Vietnam's foreign strategy for the following decades. Now Vietnamese diplomacy needs to find a new approach, a new breakthrough to be able to really assert its role in the country's *Renovation* cause.

The interplay of Ideology and Reality: Dilemma of Vietnam's diplomatic alignment in the new strategic context

In accordance with adjustments and changes in Vietnam's national strategy, new foreign policy directions had also been formulated and gradually implemented. They were all tasked to tackle diplomatic obstacles and resolve isolated situation of Vietnamese foreign relations in the late 1980s. However, as analyses above, fears of being controlled and dominated by Western capitalist world and fears of deviating from the socialist ideology-the foundation of Vietnamese socialist regime's survival-the VCP reluctantly implemented radical reform policies. At some certain times, it even returned to the Cold War conservative policy. Regarding to political reform policy and its corollary-foreign

⁵⁷ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and, Raymond Feddema, eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.405-424; Hong Ha, Tinh Hinh The Gioi va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Chung Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 12 nam 1992, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, The World Situation and Our Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, Dec 1992].

⁵⁸ Nguyen Manh Cam, Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Gop Phan Xung Dang vao Su Nghiep Cach Mang Cua Dan Toc, *tap chi Cong san*, so 10, thang 8 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Vietnam's Diplomacy Worthy Contribution to the Nation's Revolution Cause, *Communist Review*, vol.10, August 1995]; Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.70-71, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, pp.70-71]; and, David W.P. Elliott, Dilemma of Reform in Vietnam in William S. Turley, and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

policy adjustment, the VCP tended to focus on political stability and foreign policy continuity. Diplomatic adjustments were allowed but not too radical. New foreign policy directions were formulated and implemented but they must remained within the permitted political boundary and followed the Party's grand strategic framework of *Renovation*. Thus, despite some breakthroughs in theoretical perspectives, Vietnamese diplomacy in the early stage of *Renovation* still lagged behind economic reform, and did not comprehensively meet the external expectations and internal requirements.

The prolonged economic crisis in the 1980s could be considered as an internal shock to push the VCP to initially conduct an economic reform. In the field of politics, foreign affairs and security, Vietnam might need a stronger shock to be able to get rid of the outdated-fundamentalist socialism viewpoints and perceptions which started from and adhered closely to the Cold War. Looking back at the late 1980s with the socio-economic and ideological standstills, although there had been a series of speeches and important resolutions of the VCP on economic and especially foreign relations in 1988 and 1989, the outlines of a new approach to Vietnam's new diplomacy seemed still vague. Vietnam still had to go a long way and overcome various ideological obstacles to shape a truly new worldview as the basis for coherent conceptions. The collapse of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe in 1989, the China's socio-political turmoil in 1989, and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, acted as external shocks. Those events forced the VCP to reconsider its longtime-believed worldview and shape a new one based on new perceptions about national sovereignty, economic development and security interdependence. The significant transformation of the international context and world order as well as domestic situation in the early 1990s had pushed the VCP to a decisive moment of making definitive decisions and comprehensive commitments towards *Renovation*.

The year of 1989 was an important transitional year with many significant changes in ideological stances and policy viewpoints in Vietnam. The country experienced the hardest

time since it gained independence from France and reunited the whole country after the Vietnam War as the socio-economic crisis reached its peak, together with the outside ideological and political influences. At that moment, someone even talked about the survival of the Vietnamese socialist regime and the leadership of the VCP.⁵⁹ But the late 1980s also witnessed initial adjustments and changes in Vietnam national strategy in order to adapt itself to the rapid changing situations, while maintaining to some extent perspectives of conservative ideology which played a role as a control force to guarantee the socio-political stability and ensure that the economic reform and diplomatic redirections did not go too far and beyond the Party's control. Perhaps this caution approach explained why Vietnam could not have a rapid development and integration like China, and why Vietnam could reduce even avoid complicated social and political upheavals.

Reformist-Conservative debates: Seeds of Vietnam's paradigm shift in foreign policy

At the end of 1989, General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh had delivered an important speech, entitled *Consolidate Peace, Raise Vigilance, Develop Comprehensive Strength to Defend the Fatherland*, with mostly hard-line language. Regarding to the domestic policy, he called for continuing to adhere to socialism under party leadership, aware of the devious conspiracies of the capitalism and its utmost form of imperialism. He also noticed the biased ideological tendencies inside the VCP and other Communist parties. Linh named them the deviation from the core basis of socialism. Besides that Cold War voices, the article also brought new perspectives, the seeds for new foreign policy directions and a comprehensive security strategy of Vietnam in the new stage of national development. Regarding to foreign affairs, he wrote "unite and closely cooperate with the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, while resolutely and patiently removing the obstacles for a

⁵⁹ Nguyen Van Linh, *Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc*, *Nhan Dan*, 15 thang 12 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, *Consolidate Peace, Raise Vigilance, Develop Comprehensive Strength to Defend the Fatherland*, *People*, December 15, 1989]; Nguyen Trong Thu, *Suc Song cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.12, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trong Thu, *The Living Strength of Socialism*, *Communist Review*, no.12, 1991]; and, Brantly Womack, *Reform in Vietnam Backwards Towards the Future*, in *The Crisis of Marxism-Leninism, Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue:2, pp.177-189, April 1992.

friendly relationship with China, and broadening all aspects of relations with all nations in the world, including those with different political system in order to increase the number of friends and decrease the number of enemies, while actively engaging in the life of international system.”⁶⁰ These basic viewpoints, which were later developed more specifically at the Seventh Party Congress, including: perceptions of openness diplomacy, diversifying foreign relations regardless of political system, gradually abandoning the “two worlds,” “two camps” view of the international system; actively participating and accommodating in international community and affairs on the basis of complying with the specific characteristics, principles and rules of international system, recognizing and accepting the pluralist nature and diversity of actors in international relations.⁶¹ The VCP also defined new perspectives on comprehensive security which gradually reduced the role of military, confirmed the importance of economic power in Vietnam’s national strategy for the post-Cold War era.⁶² Vietnam's foreign relations strategy had been rebuilt based on these points of view, the views of openness, diversification, multilateralization of diplomacy⁶³ while still preserving a cautious and vigilant attitude.⁶⁴ It can be said, the language and objectives of Vietnam’s diplomatic strategy at that time were the combination of reflections of the old Cold War alignment and rhetoric and seeds of the new

⁶⁰ Nguyen Van Linh, Cung Co Hoa Binh, De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc, *Nhan Dan*, 15 thang 12 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Consolidate Peace, Raise Vigilance, Develop Comprehensive Strength to Defend the Fatherland, *People*, December 15, 1989].

⁶¹ It is a basically differences from the Vietnam’s Cold War perceptions of international system and order of which socialist countries isolated themselves in their own system, and consistently confirm the absolutely superiority of the system. The socialist system was also considered as the perfect replacement for the post World War 2 capitalist dominant international system.

⁶² Nguyen Van Linh, *ibid.*, 1989, “*Building the economy* is the central task of national construction. Economic construction is an urgent requirement of the life of the people, a requirement for national development and catching up with the developed countries of the world, and also a *requirement of national defense and security*. Economic difficulties, the backwardness of the country, the constraints on the people who are in a state of backwardness and poverty, weaken the political and military potential... of national defense, and puts the country in danger of being insecure. Economic crisis can lead to social and political crisis, and lead to an internal collapse.” See also, Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and, Raymond Feddema, eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.405-424.

⁶³ Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989]; Phan Doan Nam, Mot Vai Suy Nghi Ve Doi Moi Tu Duy Doi Ngoai, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 2, thang 2 nam 1988, tr.50-54, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Some Thoughts on the *Renovation* of Thinking on Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.2, January 1988, pp.50-54].

⁶⁴ Nguyen Van Linh, *ibid.*, 1989, “Vigilance and resolve to smash the aggressive hostile plots, while at the same time firmly seeking ways to resolve disputes between nations through negotiations.”

comprehensive development strategy. It was the main characteristic of the old Vietnamese diplomacy in the transition period to an all new post-Cold War diplomacy.

The Seventh Party Congress⁶⁵ of the Communist Party of Vietnam took place in an extreme difficult context both inside and outside the country. Vietnam could not solve the roots of its social crisis when the old social and economic management structure still existed, and a quite number of party members maintained the old way of thinking and doing. New stances, approaches and management mechanism had not really been put into effect. In the mean time, negative effects of liberal notions began to emerge in the society and cast doubts about the correctness of the *Renovation*. Failures of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries, harsh situations in China had been used as evidences for a conclusion then stated that how easily change could spin out of control and destabilize the society. There were voices demanding reform policy revision with the hard language of the Cold War.⁶⁶ When it was preparing for the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP had been suffered series of severe shocks, the complicated political turmoils in the Soviet Union made the strategic reform plan of Vietnam to change basically. The Party had to reanalyze the situation to determine its own path to advance to socialism,⁶⁷ without the ideological and material support from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. After the that turning-point Congress, the VCP had defined a new direction for Vietnam,⁶⁸ even though according to some analysts, it was unlikely that it would indispensably lead to success, but at least the VCP already knew

⁶⁵ Held in Hanoi, 24-27 June 1991.

⁶⁶ Duong Thong, Mot Nhiem Vu Quan Trong Trong Cuoc Dau Tranh Chong “Dien Bien Hoa Binh,” *Tap chi Cong san*, so 12, thang 12 nam 1993, tr.23-25, (Vietnamese). [Duong Thong, An Important Task in the Struggle Against “Peaceful Evolution,” *Communist Review*, vol.12, December 1993, pp.23-25].

⁶⁷ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

⁶⁸ Nguyen Van Linh, Phat Bieu Be Mac Dai hoi Dang toan quoc lan thu 7, Ha Noi, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Closing Speech at the Seventh Party Congress, Hanoi, 1991]. See also, Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on “*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*,” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

where to go, what to do and got the answer to the demands of its peoples.⁶⁹ The VCP recognized impacts of the changing world situation and effects of the end of the Cold War brought not only risks but also opportunities for Vietnam to change; and in fact, Vietnam did not miss “the train” this time.⁷⁰ It could be said that the end of the Cold War and its corollary consequence, the end of global ideological confrontation made a “ripe” opportunity for Viet Nam to reform.⁷¹ The strategies for the post-Cold War, which were officially presented at the Seventh Party Congress and the other followings, have proved this assertion.

Vietnam’s foreign policy: Changing paradigm in a changing world

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 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.”⁷² 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 Dissertation.

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 Dissertation, I also argue that

⁶⁹ David Elliott’s assessments on the VCP’s Seventh Party Congress. See, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁷⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

⁷¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *ibid.*, 1991; and, Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s Security Challenges: Hanoi’s New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122.

⁷² Charles F. Hermann, Changing course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue:1, 1990, p.3.

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, I 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, I also aim to make comment on the impact of these changes to the political-socio-economic situation of Vietnam. The study will focus on *Doi Moi* period from 1986⁷³ up to now. 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. I 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 VCP and Government of Vietnam. These analyses could lead us to a conclusion that: due to the influence of these factors, Vietnam has gradually changed its foreign policy basis from ideological considerations to a foreign policy guidelines that focus on national interest and pragmatic, realism diplomacy.⁷⁴

⁷³ 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. See, Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol. 18, no.3, 2012.

⁷⁴ 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 redefined 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. See, Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012.

3. Objectives of the study

With such awarenesses when choosing the research questions for analyzing Vietnam's foreign policy after the Cold War (1986-2011),⁷⁵ the scope of the study has firstly been focused upon the first two stages of *Renovation* (the period of 1986-1991; and 1991-2001). These two stages have marked by significant and strong movements in Vietnam's foreign policy, from changing to renouncing (to a certain extent) the previously ideological dominated foreign relations perspectives of the socialist system.⁷⁶ When studying the Vietnamese foreign policy in these two stages, one can see not only progresses but also setbacks, fears and reluctances among Vietnamese leaders, which reflected intensive struggles between ideology and reality of what is the true nature of Vietnam's *Renovation* and how to advance to socialism by using the so-called socialist-oriented-market economy model. This problem was later termed the prolonged policy dilemma of Vietnamese politics. This was also the time when the interaction between internal politics and international politics reached its peak in Vietnam. Vietnam's foreign policy in later stage of *Renovation* (2001-2011) will also be analyzed to draw a comprehensive picture of Vietnam's diplomacy in the post-Cold War era and towards the future.

Vietnam's post-Cold War political dilemma: The interplay of ideology and reality in formulating and implementing foreign policy; and Vietnam's approach to foreign relations: National interest versus ideological aspect of diplomatic alignment and direction

As mentioned above, the basis and core changes of Vietnam's foreign policy after the Cold War had essentially taken place in the first two stages of *Renovation* (1986-1991 and 1991-2001). In order to tackle these first two research objectives, following issues will be analyze and assess. (1) The nature of relationship between ideology and reality or in other

⁷⁵ See note no.8 and no.71 for author's discussion and statement regarding to the identification of "Renovation period" and "post-Cold War era" in Vietnam.

⁷⁶ Officially, the VCP never renounced socialist orientations in its documents. The applications of policy and roadmap are always interpreted by the VCP as tactical concessions or redefinition of fundamental concepts and principles of Marxism-Leninism in order to make them to be suitable in the new context. At the same time, in its specific policies, the VCP also accepted new notions, thinkings, and to some extend new theoretical foundation. That move reflected a significant redirection in comparison with the pre-*Renovation* period.

word the interplay of ideological foundation and national interest realpolitik calculation in formulating and implementing foreign policy. This is the so-called Vietnam's post-Cold War politics dilemma.⁷⁷ Analyses this dilemma will answer the theoretical and practical questions of the foundation on which the VCP to form its foreign policy. (2) Vietnam's approach to foreign relations, which are the factors that influenced the policy making decisions, choosing partners and implementing concrete steps of Vietnamese foreign affairs. (3) The concept of comprehensive security-Vietnam's new approach to new foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification.

In its new approach to global and regional strategic issues, Vietnam must find out the answers in the context when its old socialist system has collapsed, its worldview has been cast doubts. Vietnam was forced to face a new and unfamiliar world dominated by national interests, realist political viewpoints and neoliberalism. A world where the familiar bipolar structure had been demolished, and there has not been any definite answer for a new structure and order. Although in 1990s, it seemed that the unipolar structure scenario with the United States supreme leadership had been assumed by some Vietnamese leaders;⁷⁸ but no matter unipolar or multipolar world order, in order to survival in this definitely capitalist dominant world it seems that the socialist Vietnam has a few strategic choices. Perhaps, this problem has been reflected through both Vietnam's reluctant approaches and its two-facet policy. In one hand, Vietnam has consistently committed to the socialist orientation, on the other hand it has carried out the normalization of diplomatic relations with former foes, multilateralized and diversified strategic choices in an uncertain world order just after the Cold War. We will discuss these issues later in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

⁷⁷ David W. P. Elliott, Dilemmas of Reform in Vietnam in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993; Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dilemma of Change, Frank Frost, Foreign Affairs Group, Parliament of Australia, 6 May 1991; David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁷⁸ Vo Van Kiet, Nhung Doi Hoi Moi Cua Thoi Cuoc, *Quoc Te*, 13 thang 4 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, New Requirements of the Situation, *International Affairs*, 13 April 2005]; Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri Quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1998].

Vietnam's balanced foreign policy in the post-Cold War era

To give a complete and comprehensive picture of Vietnamese diplomacy after the Cold War, I also conducted the evaluation and analysis of Vietnamese diplomatic strategic directions and guidelines in the later period of *Renovation* (2001-2011). Basically, this is a continuation and development of fundamental perspectives and ideas which had been developed in the first two stages of *Renovation*. They are the strategic directions for the development of Vietnamese diplomacy in the twenty-first century with both opportunities and challenges. This third research objective will be achieved by analyzing the following contents: (1) Vietnam's definition and determination of friends and enemies, allies and partners in its national strategy and foreign policy. (2) International cooperation issues, and Vietnam's assessments on the world order and regional context, including: assimilation or integration; national independence and international integration; partner and the partnership framework in Vietnam's new diplomatic strategy. (3) The omni-directional balanced foreign policy or strategic independence diplomacy in the post-Cold War era and towards the new century. These issues will be presented in details in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 of the Dissertation.

Determining which theoretical background has a key role in shaping and implementing Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War is necessary and significant to study and analyze nature of the policy, motives of policy decision-making process and policy's implementation knowhow. It could be said that, before *Doi Moi*, Vietnamese applied the Marxism-Leninism as the official main stream of thought in Vietnamese nationalist environment. That approach had help to create a unique Vietnamese socialism which was some what different from its two big brothers. The mixture of Marxism-Leninism and Vietnamese nationalism had heavily influenced on Vietnam's policy making process. However, world transformations, ideological shifts and changes, developments of urgent national requirements, and pragmatism approaches towards international relations of a

number of countries have affected Vietnam strongly. Among the top leaders of Vietnam, especially who worked in the foreign affairs sector, the Western origin ideological trends gradually found their places. The Vietnamese diplomatic leaders started to use concepts and approaches of realism, realpolitik policy calculations and orientations, even the pragmatic viewpoint in foreign policy decision-making process. However, the debate within the party on the basis of national grand strategy, and the interplay of ideology and reality has shown that the implementation of the new theoretical approach was not easy at all, and could even be denied. This problem will also be analyzed in Chapter 5 and 6 of the Dissertation, especially with analyses on Vietnam's policy for the Cambodia conflict, the normalization of relations with China, rapprochements with ASEAN and the United States.

4. Structure of the Dissertation

To work out the answers for these questions, besides the Introduction and Conclusions, the Dissertation consists of seven Chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Theoretical foundation

Chapter 2: Literature reviews: Vietnam in the post-Cold War era

Chapter 3: Foreign policy formulating and restructuring: Vietnamese mechanism and principle

Chapter 4: Vietnamese foreign policy of *Renovation*: International politics and internal politics

Chapter 5: Ideology-Reality dilemma: Vietnamese foreign policy in the first stage of *Renovation* (1986-1991)

Chapter 6: National interest aspect of diplomatic alignment: Realpolitik foundation of Vietnamese foreign policy in the second stage of *Renovation* (1991-2001)

Chapter 7: Vietnam's Omni-directional diplomacy: Foreign policy of strategic independence (2001-2011)

5. Dissertation's analytical framework and research methodology

Dissertation's analytical framework

According to Douglas T. Stuart's theoretical argument in his writing on *Foreign-Policy Decision-Making*, the study of foreign policy decision-making process was "at the hinge" of domestic politics and international relations.⁷⁹ Thus it was ideally suited for research that engaged all three of Kenneth Waltz's levels of analysis.⁸⁰ Therefore, to examine Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, I will use the analytical framework which basically bases on the theoretical foundation and standpoint of realism and neorealism and follow Waltz's three levels of analysis with approaches of assessing Vietnam's political behaviors and policy choices by considering this nation as an independent socio-political-economic entity with rational will and always pursuing its supreme interests.⁸¹ Vietnam's political behaviors and diplomatic maneuvers should not be analyzed only in its isolated self-referential system but in a complex global and regional context with interdependent-converging interests, even fierce confrontations and disputes. With the emergence of political-economic trends that are under the influences of neoliberalism, this study also intends to use some neoliberalism and constructivism arguments and analyses to explain the policy choice of a certain nation such as Vietnam in the globalization era.⁸² The study has also used ideas of Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism and its political economy approach which, I believe, is applicable in analyzing Vietnam's socio-political-economic context.⁸³

⁷⁹ Douglas T. Stuart's analyses in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds., *Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.577.

⁸⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: a Theoretical Analysis*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1954/1959. In this book, Waltz used the term "image" instead of "level" with some explanations in Introduction section. But in his later theoretical works, *Theory of International Politics*, Columbia University, Waveland Press Inc., 1979, Waltz turned back to the term "level."

⁸¹ Vietnam's supreme interests are a complex interest system including nation-state interests and ruling party-regime's interests. See, Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122. This concept will be further analyzed in Chapter 6 of this Dissertation.

⁸² Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007; and, M. S. Shivakumar, Political Parties, Development Policies and Pragmatism in a Changing World: Lesson from Vietnam, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.31, no.50, 14 December 1996, pp.3255-3264.

⁸³ 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 see the long-term goal of the VCP is to build a socialist Vietnam, therefore, we cannot analyze the dynamics of Vietnam policy, if the analysis is not based on Marxism-Leninism. See, Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012.

Comparative study of foreign policy's theoretical arguments in Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley. Jr, and James N. Rosenau edited book, namely, *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*,⁸⁴ also have some influences on this study as they propose a comprehensive approach to carry out the analysis of foreign policy and foreign policy decision-making process. There are also some valuable theoretical points such as: Foreign policy as an interactive process,⁸⁵ Cognitive processing and optima choice in foreign policy decision making,⁸⁶ Foreign policy decision-making-the collective process,⁸⁷ and the Duo-level of domestic and international influences on foreign policy and foreign policy making process.⁸⁸ To carry out a political and diplomatic study on Vietnam, a country with unique multilevel, multi-facet socio-political-economic features and being affected by several multidirectional impacts, it is of vital importance to apply a comprehensive theoretical approach and synthesized analytical framework. Therefore, Georg Sørensen's methodological arguments regarding to multilevel, multidimensional approach when carrying out analysis on behaviors and policy of certain nation in international relations context,⁸⁹ should be considered as an appropriate approach for this study.

Vietnam's foreign policy is considered as a complex combination of the foreign policy itself and the foreign policy making process, and as mentioned above, the multilevel, multidimensional approach on foreign-policy decision-making process are needed to carry out analyses. First of all, the specific analysis of the change and adjustment process of national strategy and foreign policy-the decision-making process, will be done basing on theoretical viewpoints from Rosenau,⁹⁰ Holsti,⁹¹

⁸⁴ Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley. Jr, and James N. Rosenau, eds., *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, Boston, Allen&Unwin, 1987.

⁸⁵ Charles F. Hermann, et al., eds., 1987, pp.161-202.

⁸⁶ Charles F. Hermann, et al., eds., 1987, pp.203-220.

⁸⁷ Charles F. Hermann, et al., eds., 1987, pp.247-338.

⁸⁸ Charles F. Hermann, et al., eds., 1987, pp.339-474.

⁸⁹ Georg Sørensen, and Robert Jackson, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p.229.

⁹⁰ James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Political Adaptation: Essays on the Analysis of World Politics*, New York, Nichols Publishing, 1981.

⁹¹ Kal J. Hosti, ed. *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, London, George Allen and Unwill, 1982.

Goldmann,⁹² and especially the theoretical model of Hermann⁹³ on the change, stability and reorientation of foreign policy. The approach of bureaucratic politics analysis of the role of individual leader and internal politics will also be used to clarify some of the analyses in Hermann's model. Secondly, in an attempt to analyze Vietnam's foreign policy paradigm, including diplomatic orientations, and maneuvers, this study will use Brantly Womack's Asymmetry theory as this theory could help us to dig deep into the "black box"⁹⁴ of foreign policy decision-making process and to understand as well as explain not only content of the policy but also reasons behind that policy choice, tactical and strategic calculations of each diplomatic maneuver.⁹⁵ This theory will also provide the theoretical direction to analyze the asymmetry approach of Vietnam's balanced diplomacy.

All of these above theoretical issues will be discussed further in Chapter 1: Theoretical foundation.

Research methodology

The study is conducted based on the research methodology of the social and political sciences. The qualitative analysis is used to analyze the political data, policy directions, opinions and practical diplomatic maneuvers of the VCP and Vietnamese Government in *Renovation* period. The extrapolation analysis is also used because the study used the realist approach as the foundation for analyzing and predicting the developments of Vietnam's foreign policy. As mentioned above, with the application of Marxist-Leninist historical materialism approach to assess and analyze situation of Vietnam, utilization of methodology of dialectical materialism is necessary to conduct this study. Dialectical

⁹² Kjell Goldmann, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988.

⁹³ Charles F. Hermann, Changing course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue:1, 1990.

⁹⁴ Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr, and, James N. Rosenau, eds., *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, Boston, Allen&Unwin, 1987, p.203.

⁹⁵ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

method allows the author to understand and be able to assess the behaviors and maneuvers of the Party and State's leaders in the process of planning and implementing policy, because they themselves always use this dialectical method on the basis of materialism. To examine the bureaucratic politics interactions and VCP's leadership influences in Vietnamese politics and on foreign policy decision-making process, the author plans to use and analyze data related to Vietnam's leadership structures, intra-party power-organizational mechanism and assessments about VCP's individual leaders. Based on the above mentioned methods and models, the author intends to develop specific assessments of the development trends of Vietnam's *Renovation* foreign policy in a new world order without the Cold War.

Primary data source used in this study is basically archives of the Vietnam Communist Party and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam that related to the diplomacy, political orientation and economic strategy during the *Renovation* period. I also use archived materials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding to specific diplomatic maneuvers and negotiations of Vietnam. This primary source also includes articles, speeches, manuscripts, monographs, memoirs of Vietnamese leaders, policy-makers who were in charge or directly related to the planning and implementing process of foreign policies. Regarding secondary source, academic studies, books, articles of Vietnamese and foreign researchers, news from Vietnam and foreign agencies have been used as reference sources, data or evidences for evaluations and analyses of this study.

Author's analytical standpoint

Another theoretical and methodological question of this study is the attitude of the author when assessing specific policies and the process of policy making in Vietnam or in other words, the viewpoint of the author. A scientific research must be objective at first and reflect the true nature of the object, phenomenon or event as well as provide accurate analyses of the past or even future evolutions of such object, phenomenon or event.

However, regarding to political researches, it is not easy to maintain an attitude of absolute objectivity. By defining the focus of this study to be the interplay of ideology and reality in Vietnamese diplomacy, the author has tried to apply a neutral approach between inside and outside, with the desire to provide an accurate view, a true evaluation about the Vietnam's foreign policy decision-making and implementing process in the *Renovation* period, or in other words, its foreign policy reshaping process after the Cold War. We can imagine that the author would like to build a bridge between two different points of view, two different approaches of analysis about Vietnam's foreign policy. However, it is not an easy approach and the author hope to some extend accomplish the objectives of this study. In the future study, more concrete analyses on this theoretical approach should be carried out to develop an effective theoretical tool for some specific case studies of policy changes and adjustment such as the socialist-Vietnamese study case.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

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.”¹ To some extent, foreign policy is the continuation of domestic policy, formulated based on the country’s economic, political, and social structures.² 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. 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 analyzed by appropriate theoretical models and tools. This Chapter is intended to review applicable theories and accumulate theoretical tools to solve problem statements and tackle research objectives. With its unique characteristics, reviewing and assessing foundations of Vietnam’s foreign policy making process are also theoretically necessary.

1.1. Theoretical foundation: General reviews***1.1.1. Foreign policy adjusting and restructuring theories***

Adjustment and change in foreign relations policy have always been the research objective of national policies of political science. Rosenau wrote, “...the political organism

¹ Bernard C. Cohen, and Scott A. Harris. *Foreign Policy*, in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson Polsky, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, vol.6: *Policies and Policy-Making*. Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley, 1975, p.385.

² See analyses regarding to this assumption in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp.168-169.

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.”³

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.”⁴ 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

³ James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Political Adaptation: Essays on the Analysis of World Politics*, New York, Nichols Publishing, 1981, pp.1-2.

⁴ Kal J. Hosti, ed., *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, London, George Allen and Unwill, 1982, pp.4-7.

of paying attention on “adjustment” or “change,” he focused on the concept of “stabilizers,”⁵ “the process of détente”⁶ 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.”⁷ Goldman studied the pressures that forced a country to change its policies, and on the contrary, to continue with existing policies.⁸ 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.”⁹

Charles F. Hermann’s studies were presented in the article titled *Changing Course: When Government Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy*. According to Hermann, foreign policy change is indispensable, and it has always been happening.¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ 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?”¹² 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

⁵ Kjell Goldman, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p.6.

⁶ Kjell Goldman, *ibid.*, 1988, pp.26-69.

⁷ Kjell Goldman, *ibid.*, 1988, p.3.

⁸ Kjell Goldman, *ibid.*, 1988, pp.3-4.

⁹ Kjell Goldman, *ibid.*, 1988, p.5.

¹⁰ Charles F. Hermann, *Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy*, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue.1, 1990, p.3.

¹¹ Charles F. Hermann, *ibid.*, 1990, p.4.

¹² Charles F. Hermann, *ibid.*, 1990, p.5.

most extreme form of foreign policy change involves the redirection of the actor's entire orientation toward world affairs."¹³ 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"¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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."¹⁶

Vietnamese scholars have gained certain achievements in theoretical studies of foreign policy restructuring. Typically, they are researches conducted by Trinh Muu,¹⁷ Duong Xuan Ngoc,¹⁸ Vu Duong Huan,¹⁹ Nguyen Khac Hung,²⁰ and Nguyen Vu Tung,²¹ Nguyen Xuan Son.²² In their studies, they emphasized the reason of the change or restructuring, including change in both domestic and international political and socio-economic

¹³ Charles F. Hermann, Changing course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue.1, 1990, p.5.

¹⁴ Charles F. Hermann, *ibid.*, 1990, p.5.

¹⁵ Charles F. Hermann, *ibid.*, 1990, p.6.

¹⁶ Charles F. Hermann, *ibid.*, 1990, pp.10-11.

¹⁷ Trinh Muu, va Nguyen Hoang Giap, *Quan He Quoc Te va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Hien Nay*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Ly luan chinh tri, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Trinh Muu, and Nguyen Hoang Giap, *International Relations and Vietnamese Foreign Policy Today*, Hanoi, Political Theory Publishing House, 2008].

¹⁸ Duong Xuan Ngoc, va Luu Van An, *Giao trinh quan he quoc te*. Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Duong Xuan Ngoc and Luu Van An, *International Relations Handbook*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2008].

¹⁹ Vu Duong Huan, Nhan to lam thay doi va xu the phat trien cuc dien the gioi hien nay, *Tap chi Nghien cuu quoc te*, So. 75, Ha Noi, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Vu Duong Huan, Factoring in Changes and Current World Situation, *International Studies*, vol.75, Hanoi, 2008].

²⁰ Nguyen Khac Hung, va Hoang Khac Nam, *Quan he quoc te-Nhung khia canh ly thuyet va van de*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Khac Hung and Hoang Khac Nam, *International Relations-Theoretical Aspects and Issues*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006].

²¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007; Nguyen Vu Tung, Testing the Institutional Approach Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.51-70.

²² Nguyen Xuan Son, va Nguyen Van Du, *Quan He cua Viet Nam voi Cac Nuoc Lon Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Xuan Son, and Nguyen Van Du, *Diplomatic Relations of Vietnam with Power Countries in the first two decades of the 21st Century*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006].

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. Some famous Vietnamese diplomatic officials cum international relations specialists, such as: Nguyen Co Thach, Vu Khoan, Nguyen Manh Cam, Pham Binh Minh also have carried out studies regarding the process of changing and restructuring Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.²³ They have pointed out some theoretical points of foreign policy foundations, requirement for policy change and adjustment, factor affecting making and changing policy process. In their significant studies, they have also analyzed practical datas regarding Vietnam's foreign affairs directions, and diplomatic maneuvers to reach some valuable conclusions of Vietnam's diplomatic situation over the time. Recently,

²³ Nguyen Manh Cam, Phat bieu Tong ket Hoi Thao Ky Niem 50 Nam Ngoai Giao Viet Nam, *Tap chi Nghien cuu Quoc te*, So dac biet, so.7, thang 9 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Closing Speech at a Seminar on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam Diplomacy, *International Studies*, Special issue, no.7, September 1995]; and, Vu Khoan, Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995]; Nguyen Co Thach, Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007]; Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts about Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam conducted several studies²⁴ and academic conferences²⁵ on the adjustments and restructuring of Vietnam's diplomacy in the *Renovation* period, as well as future directions that Vietnam's policy should follow. They are both theoretically and practically valuable for this research.

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 Vietnamese political scientists will be used to analyze empirical datas.

1.1.2. Asymmetry theory and asymmetric politics of foreign policy

This study focus is on Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War, and as stated before in Introduction section, the analytical framework of multilevel, multidimensional approach will be used. Regarding to the nature of international relations in international level and state level, there are some distinctive features which dominated state-to-state relations and state-to-international community relations. Some of those features have originated from political nature of the state, state's power structure as well as role of ruling regime in internal politics context. But in higher level of analysis, bilateral relations with other foreign countries also has it own important role in the process of foreign policy

²⁴ Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

²⁵ Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World Situation and the Opportunity for our Country*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

decision making. In other word, foreign policy of a certain country is not a product of a unique isolated process which happens inside each certain country regardless of the other actors of international relations. No matter how small or big country, its foreign policy should consider not only national requirement and ability but also others' as well as its relative balance of power status regarding such those countries. Asymmetry theory points out one distinctive nature of international relations both bilateral and multilateral is asymmetric. According to Brantly Womack, "in contrast to multipolar theories, a theory of asymmetry acknowledge that a disparity of capacity and power between states create real differences of perception and relative interest."²⁶ Asymmetry has been the most important structural factor in bilateral relationship of some certain nations. In order to develop his theory, Womack proposed some important concepts, including symmetry and asymmetry; asymmetric attention, politics of inattention and overattention; misperception, systemic and structural misperception; autonomy and deference in asymmetric relation,²⁷ hostile asymmetry, mature asymmetry; stable status of asymmetric states' relationships and world order,²⁸ stalemate and normalcy.²⁹

In his significant works of asymmetry theory, Womack at first devised some persistent fundamental arguments and assumptions which later become the basis of further theoretical developments and practical applications. The first two major points of theory's basic ideas are:³⁰ (i) contrary to multipolarity theory, the disparities in capacities between states can create systemic differences in interests and fundamental differences of perspective between

²⁶ Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: The Cases of China, Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 26(3), September 2003.

²⁷ Womack, "By 'deference' I do not mean that the weaker state obeys the stronger, but that the weaker state acts in accordance with the reality of the disparity between them. On the other side, the weaker state needs to be confident that the stronger state respects its autonomy. In normal, peaceful relationship, autonomy and deference can coexist, but if misperceptions sour the relationship, then B will view A's demands for deference as threat to its autonomy, and A will view B's statement attempts to protect itself as threats to real distribution of power. But whether at peace or at war, the asymmetric relations of A to B and of B to A are different." Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004, p.361. This analysis could be applied to study asymmetric Vietnamese-Sino relationships.

²⁸ Womack, "the current order of nations in the world-as asymmetric as their capabilities may be-is in reality quite stable." Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004, p.361.

²⁹ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.85.

³⁰ Brantly Womack, *ibid.*, May 2004, pp.359-360.

the more powerful and the less powerful. The differences of perspective produce structural misperceptions of the other's intentions, and can lead to a vicious circle of misunderstandings that can culminate in conflict. (ii) contrary to unipolarity theory, and in general contrary to Western theories of realism and neorealism, more powerful countries usually cannot impose their will on less powerful countries. Stronger powers have opportunities and responsibilities for leadership in these matrices, but if they dominate the international order for the sake of their narrow interests, they will put at risk their long-term prominence. Regarding to this study, the main application of asymmetry theory should be analyses and arguments on asymmetric relations between states.

Womack noted that, the bilateral relations has been embedded in a structure of persistent asymmetry throughout recorded history. In any relationship between countries that differ greatly in population, economy and military, the opportunities and risks of the relationship will be different for each side. After analyzing several cases of asymmetric relationship, Womack reached initial statements that, "The effects of asymmetry are more acute for neighboring states because closeness increases the importance of asymmetry by increasing the general importance of relationship. This is true even for the most peaceful asymmetric relations"³¹; and "A great disparity, especially between neighboring states, always means that the weaker side will be more attentive to the relationship than vice versa because proportionally it is more exposed to its risks and opportunities. It is easy for misunderstandings to arise because the relationship means different to each side."³² These arguments have a vital importance influence on this study as Vietnam-China, Vietnam-United States bilateral relationships always are main concerns of Vietnam's foreign policy. Vietnam-China relationship has gone through a long harsh fluctuating history. Neighbor relation, communist ideology, and national interest have tighten both states and made their bilateral relationships to become one of the most complex asymmetric relation. Womack once argued,

³¹ Brantly Womack, Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004, p.360.

³² Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.2.

“In their three thousand years of interaction, China and Vietnam have been through a full range of relationships. Twenty-five years ago they were one another's worst enemy; fifty years ago they were the closest of comrades. Five hundred years ago they each saw themselves as Confucian empires; fifteen hundred years ago Vietnam was a part of China. Throughout all these fluctuations the one constant has been that China is the larger power and Vietnam the smaller. China has rarely been able to dominate Vietnam, and yet the relationship is shaped by its asymmetry.”³³ This historical analysis led to one of Womack’s important assessments for asymmetry relationship “The disparity in capacity in an asymmetric relationship does not lead inevitably to the stronger side dominating the weaker side.”³⁴

Womack finally has reached an important conclusion for managing asymmetry that, “if misperceptions can lead to a vicious circle and yet war is unlikely to resolve the conflict, then asymmetric bilateral relationships should be managed in order to maximize mutual benefit.”³⁵ He then has proposed two management techniques, (i) minimizing potentially hot issue; (ii) controlling the escalation of misperception. He even went further with implicit implication of a balancing solution of joining other states in a regional organization or allying with a third party for the weaker party in that asymmetric relation.³⁶ This implication does have some vital important influences on Vietnam’s foreign policy choice.

This Dissertation intends to test Brantly Womack’s theory of asymmetry as a framework for analyzing Vietnam’s bilateral relations. As the basic formulation of asymmetry theory has been in term of bilateral relations, Womack’s theory provides an appropriately useful approach and framework for analyzing Vietnam’s bilateral relationship, especially its asymmetric relations with the United States and with China. Using this approach, we could have a closer look at the decision making process as well as examine several foreign policy

³³ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.i.

³⁴ Brantly Womack, *ibid.*, 2006, pp.1-2.

³⁵ Brantly Womack, Asymmetry Theory and China’s Concept of Multipolarity, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004, p.362.

³⁶ Brantly Womack, *ibid.*, 2006, pp.77-91. For balancing, allying, bandwagoning policy, see more in, Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

choices of the VCP at each certain time. To some extent, the logic behind each VCP's policy choice could also be explained by using either balance of power or balance of threat principle but with asymmetry theory's concepts and explanations system, we could combined both of the above approach and reach a more comprehensive analysis.

More over, often a regional complex of relationships becomes the most important international reality, especially for the smaller countries, because the greatest contact-and the most acute potential threats-come from neighbors.³⁷ Therefore, an extension of asymmetry theory from individual relations to structures of relations could provide an overall image of regional relations and world order as "a matrix of countries of various capacities."³⁸ Within world order and Southeast Asia regional relationship, Vietnam could be considered, to a certain extent, an intermediate power that has some relations in which it is the vulnerable, anxious party (Vietnam-China, Vietnam-the United States relationships) and others in which it has nothing to fear and not much to gain. So that, some realist and even Marxist-Leninist fundamental theoretical concepts of "balancing," "deference," "enmeshment,"³⁹ "national interest gain,"⁴⁰ "solidarity," "balance of force; assemblages of force and interdependence"⁴¹ will be used in order to work out a comprehensive analysis on Vietnam's *Renovation* foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. The above analyses and assumptions of asymmetry theory for the broader context-regional and global international realities-regarding asymmetric status and disparities in capacities

³⁷ Brantly Womack, Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004, p.362.

³⁸ According to Womack, this world order is "relatively stable overall but one that is composed of individual relations of relative strength and relative vulnerability that can create tensions and misunderstandings." Brantly Womack, *ibid.*, May 2004, p.362.

³⁹ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824; and, Alexander L. Vuving, The Two-Headed Grand Strategy: Vietnamese Foreign Policy since *Doi Moi*, paper of the conference, *Vietnam Update 2004: Strategic and Foreign Relations*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 25-26 November 2004.

⁴⁰ Robert Powell, Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory, *The American Political Science Review*, vol.85, no.4, Dec 1991, pp.1303-1320; Duncan Snidal, Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation, *The American Political Science Review*, vol.85, no.3, Sep 1991, pp.701-726.

⁴¹ As Vietnamese internationalist scholars and senior officials tend to apply these socialist concepts and approach in their analyses, it is necessary to use them to fully understand Vietnamese policy trends and political movements. See, Nguyen Co Thach, *Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien*, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), tháng 8 năm 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989]; and Vo Van Kiet, Dong Gop Y Kien vao Bao cao Tong ket Ly luan va Thuc tien 20 nam Doi Moi, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Suggestions to the Concluding Report on Theory and Practice of 20 years of *Renovation*, 2005].

of small countries provide an applicable and appropriate framework for analyzing not only Vietnam's bilateral diplomacy but also its overall foreign policy in the post-Cold War and towards the new strategic context of international relations reality.

1.2. Foundations of Vietnam's foreign policy making and restructuring process:

Theoretical reviews

1.2.1. Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism: Vietnamese politics' fundamental theoretical foundation

When studying Vietnamese politics, we cannot ignore the influence of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Marxist philosophy is essentially a revolutionary reality. Therefore, it requires a defined attitude of the researcher; and by this way, the doctrine itself determined an ideological standpoint for this person, of course, based on its viewpoints. Facing Marxism, we face not only a theory but also the people who has chosen this theory and devoted themselves to implement Marxist development framework by revolutionary struggle. We are in the history, so we are the insiders. We cannot be separated from the history or stand outside to have an absolute objectivity when studying Marxism and its practical applications. The study case of Vietnam's foreign policy adjustment and reorientation after the Cold War is not an exception. The researcher, in an ongoing historical progress of Marxism and the practical communist movement with its revolutionary features and definitive stance, is forced to choose a definitive attitude. The questions for a scientific study about policy of a certain nation which is deeply influenced by Marxism-Leninism are: What is the attitude of this study? Which stance it will follow? And if the research cannot held an objectivity in choosing attitude, should it objectively perceive Marxism and its policy making applications in a specific case study of Vietnam's diplomacy in the post-Cold War?

As mentioned above, the study of politics always requires the researcher to have a clear choice of political standpoint. If not do so, the study is just a descriptive research, or a historical or political story. The author of this study wants to avoid this weaknesses. Neutral approach does not mean that the thought is also neutral. In an effort to define

research theoretical framework, the author has determined that the theoretical analysis of this study is based on the theoretical perspective of realism and methodological approach of Marxism-Leninism. The author does not intend to hide the viewpoints that, in order to study Vietnam politics effectively, it is extremely not relevant to be divorced from the communist stance, and Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, the analysis and recognition of the author is influenced by the realist approach, dialectical materialism methodology and even some revolutionary views of communism. In a certain analytical perspective, it can be considered as a limitation of the Dissertation.

As of 1986, Marxism-Leninism has had over 50 years of influencing in Vietnam, of which this theory has been used in building practical socialist regime and formulating Vietnam's national strategy for almost 30 years. Therefore, one cannot study the politics of Vietnam without looking at the basic elements of Marxism-Leninism and its influence in Vietnam. Regarding to Marxism-Leninism and its influence on the modern politics of Vietnam, as well as the effects of this theory to the methodology of this dissertation, there are a number of issues that need to be clarified as follows:

According to its founders and some scientists, Marxist philosophy is not just a pure system of knowledge to explain the world, but mainly to change it.⁴² That means Marxism in particular and every theories in general should always have a practical purpose. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx said "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."⁴³ Having practical purposes does not mean dismissing theoretical arguments, the dismissed things are those purely theories without action, theories without real life. According to Marx, the reality must be the reality of revolution which aims to replace the status quo with an ideal which we have to advance by every means. However, the practical application of Marxist theory on building socialism in

⁴² Karl Marx, va Friedrich Engels, *Tuyen Ngon Dang Cong San*, trong Karl Marx, va Friedrich Engels, *Toan Tap (1842-1844)*, tap 4, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works (1842-1844)*, vol.4, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol.21, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995.

some countries including Vietnam has to tackle many difficulties that could lead to the crisis and collapse. Some of the reasons that the VCP found out and had to recognize later were misconceptions and misperceptions about Marxist theory of revolution, dogmatic and impractical applications of the doctrine, lacks of flexibility and creativeness from revolution practices. Those are also the issues that the Dissertation would like to discuss when studying Vietnam's foreign policy after the Cold War.

Regarding to development theory, Marx and his followers have some explanations. Marxist philosophy divides the world not only on the perception facet but also its society one. According to Marx and his famous Russian successor Lenin, it is an indispensable characteristic of the world itself.⁴⁴ One cannot solve this completely and comprehensively because the nature of the unification also consists of seeds of division and it is eternally repeated spiral of development. It is the so-called Marxist natural and social development law.⁴⁵ Thus, Marxist philosophy advocates revolution and calls for revolutionary efforts to unite that divided world by eliminating the contradicted forces which caused that divided status. By doing this, the newly united world advances to a higher level in the development spiral and that makes our world move forward. Therefore, the communist perceives Marxism not only a merely theoretical system but also a revolutionary movement.⁴⁶

Criticism, one of the characteristics of Marxism is thoroughly critical, critical to the end of its revolutionary aim. In this work *Contribute to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, Marx wrote, "The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material

⁴⁴ Hoc vien Chinh tri Quoc gia Ho Chi Minh, Vien Quan he Quoc te, *Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te* (Chuong trinh cao cap ly luan chinh tri), Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Ly luan chinh tri, 2004, (Vietnamese). [Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, Institution of International Relation, *Text Book of International Relations* (for Advanced Political Theoretical Program), Hanoi, Political Theoretical Publishing House, 2004].

⁴⁵ Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Chapter VIII. Dialectic. Negation of the Negation, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006.

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, va Friedrich Engels, *Tuyen Ngon Dang Cong San*, trong Karl Marx, va Friedrich Engels, *Toan Tap (1842-1844)*, tap 4, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works (1842-1844)*, vol.4, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

force as soon as it has gripped the *Masses*.⁴⁷ Combined with the dialectical materialist methodology,⁴⁸ criticism outlined the development law of things, phenomena, as well as the indispensability of criticism in the process of conceiving and transforming the society. Marxism has its root in reality and always looks forward to change that reality. Reality is both the source and aim of Marxism. At a certain angle, we can say the spirit of Marxism to some extent is the revisionism with reference as a permanent requirement to examine theory with reality. But in practice, Marxist theory-accidentally or intentionally-sometimes has been turned into dogmatic and mechanic applications, and an authority that bans all criticism. The peremptoriness in ideology, the machinery in applying and the dogmatic interpretation had turned Marxism into a sort of *gray theory*,⁴⁹ not as its original flexible and creative nature. With theoretical justifications and revisionist accusations, many who claimed to be the followers of Marx and Lenin had transformed the revolutionary and creativeness communist ideology into dogmatic, imperfect practical models which were sometimes against principles of socio-political-economic development. The situation in Vietnam before the *Renovation* also experienced such voluntarist manifestations, with dogmatic perceptions to subjectively deploy borrowed socialist models from the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries without taking into account the specific characteristics of Vietnam.⁵⁰ In the *Renovation* process, the VCP had carried out many moves to renovate their thinkings, to change the leadership-style. However, to get change is not always easy and fast. To analyze changes and adjustments of Vietnamese diplomacy in the post-Cold War, it is also worth in terms of theoretical and practical implications to look from a critical point of view.

⁴⁷ Karl Marx, va Friedrich Engels, *Gop Phan Phe Phan Triet Hoc Phap Quyen He-Ghen*, trong Karl Marx, va Friedrich Engels, *Toan Tap (1842-1844)*, tap 1, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Contribute to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, in Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works (1842-1844)*, vol.1, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁴⁸ Friedrich Engels, *Bien Chung cua Tu Nhien*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1971, (Vietnamese). [Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1971].

⁴⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Chap hanh Trung uong, Ban Chi Dao Tong Ket Ly Luan, *Bao Cao Tong Ket Mot So Van De Ly Luan-Thuc Tien qua 20 nam Doi Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, The Central Committee, The Steering Committee on Theoretical Issue Synthesizing, *Summary Report on Several Theoretical-Practical Issues over 20 years of Doi Moi*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005].

⁵⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong Linh Xay Dung Dat Nuoc Trong Thoi Ky Qua Do Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

1.2.2. Vietnam's foreign policy making and restructuring process: Multilevel, multidimensional approach

Internal politics and international politics: Duo-level approach towards Vietnam's foreign policy making and restructuring process

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 Constitution 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 this Article 4.⁵¹

In Vietnam, we can see that Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism and thoughts 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 Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's ideology⁵² 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,

⁵¹ 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 Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's thought, is the force leading the State and society. All Party organizations operate within the framework of the Constitution and the law."

⁵² Ho Chi Minh's ideology (thoughts) 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 ideology again plays an important part in the theoretical foundation of the VCP.

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 countries⁵³ led by the Soviet Union. For a time, Vietnam has been based its security on the Soviet Union⁵⁴ against the threats (according to the Party and Government of Vietnam) 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 Marxist-Leninist 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,⁵⁵ and it seemed to be the only option that was appropriate under the circumstance.⁵⁶ But keeping this policy for too long without any adjustment in such a fast changing international environment has created obstacles for Vietnam⁵⁷ and resulted in a long time isolation from the entire world. In addition, Vietnam's ideological-led involvement in

⁵³ Vietnam joined the Socialist Economic Community (COMECON) in June 1978.

⁵⁴ Vietnam signed the 25 year Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the Soviet Union in November 1978.

⁵⁵ Vietnam's Unification War (also considered as Second Indochina War) ended in 1975.

⁵⁶ Kjell Goldmann, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p.4, "Problem of adaptation."

⁵⁷ Kjell Goldmann, *ibid.*, 1988, p.4, "Problem of learning."

international affairs had created negative impacts on international prestige, diplomatic relations and national resources. The alien-based and foreign-relied dependent foreign policy (before 1986) was 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.⁵⁸ These factors that had ever played an important role in keeping stability and maintaining the current policy had gradually decreased.⁵⁹ Since 1986, with the dialectic materialism approach 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.

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 Party 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

⁵⁸ Charles F. Hermann, Changing course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue.1, 1990, pp.11-13, "Primary change agents."

⁵⁹ Kjell Goldmann, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p.26-69.

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-Renovation* 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.⁶⁰ 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 *Perestroika* of the Soviet Union, the *Reform* 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.

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

⁶⁰ Mark Manyin, *Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally*, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York: M.E.Sharpe, 2005; and Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

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.⁶¹ 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 Duan⁶² was on holiday in the Soviet Union, Nguyen Van Linh⁶³ 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 documents for the Tenth Plenum of Central Committee⁶⁴ and the Sixth Party Congress (1986)⁶⁵ that initiated the strong and synchronous reform in Vietnam. It must be emphasized that the change in leadership had 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 time⁶⁶ had led to indispensable changes in the perception of leaders as well as the leadership structure in Vietnam.⁶⁷ And in turn, the changes of individual leaders have brought in significant changes in Vietnam’s national policy.

⁶¹ The social-political situations in Vietnam during preparation period of the Sixth and Seventh Party 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.

⁶² 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.

⁶³ 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*.

⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ Hold in Hanoi, December 1986, it was the important Congress that marked the turning point in leading ideologies of the VCP.

⁶⁶ 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.

⁶⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on “*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*,” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008; and David Koh, The Politics of a Divided Party and Parkinson’s State in Vietnam, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.23, no.3, 2001, pp.533-51.

“It’s the economy, stupid”-Bill Clinton’s slogan in his 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.⁶⁸

Realism: Theoretical approach for Vietnam’s foreign policy in the new strategic context

Vietnam also maintains 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

⁶⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

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 its 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, it is called the East Sea) have increased the tensions and raised not new but urgent problems for the Government of Vietnam. Although the term "China Threat" is not mentioned much nowadays, but for Vietnam, the threat of Chinese power is inevitable.⁶⁹ 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

⁶⁹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, in Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1992.

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.⁷⁰ Also, the approach to multilateralism, multilateral mechanisms and institutions is also an appropriate way for Vietnam.⁷¹

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.⁷² 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.⁷³ To some extent, 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 researchers⁷⁴ 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,

⁷⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008; and Nguyen Xuan Son and Nguyen Van Du, *Quan he cua Viet Nam voi cac nuoc lon trong hai thap nien dau the ky 21*. Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Xuan Son and Nguyen Van Du, *Diplomatic Relations of Vietnam with Power Countries in the first two decades of the 21st Century*. Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006, pp.185-205].

⁷¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007, p.483.

⁷² Nguyen Vu Tung, *ibid.*, 2007, p.483.

⁷³ Eero Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations, 1977-1993*, New York, St. Martin Press, 1997, p.30.

⁷⁴ Sheldon W. Simon, International Theory and Southeast Asian Security, *The Pacific Review* 8, vol.1, 1995.

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,⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ 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 United States 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.⁷⁷ In other words, Vietnam's foreign policy has shown a certain compromise and acceptance in order to reach the ultimate

⁷⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ 8*, Hà Nội, Nhà xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1996, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, *Eighth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996].

⁷⁶ Nguyen Vu Tung, Testing the Institutional Approach Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.51-70.

⁷⁷ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007, p.485; Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and, Raymond Feddema, eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.405-424.

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.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEWS: VIETNAM IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA**2.1. Vietnamese studies in the post-Cold War era: General reviews**

In its long and harsh history of existence and development, Vietnam has been considered as one of global strategic geopolitical clashed point with the existence and confrontation of geopolitical and economic strategic interests as well as ideological calculations from both sides. During the Vietnam War, themes of Vietnamese studies mostly related to issues that caused or originated from the War. Scholars from both sides emphasized on participations and strategic intentions of the two global superpowers who either directly or indirectly involved in that War. The Vietnam War could also be considered as the tactically scaled clash between the two systems. The noun of Vietnam at that time seemed to adhere to war, national liberation struggle, anti-imperialism, nation reunification, and the pursuit of socialism. In 1976, one year after the collapse of South Vietnam, Vietnam has been officially unified. The new nation named it the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and asserted its will to follow the flag of socialism. Once again, Vietnam proudly considered itself as an outpost of socialism in the heart of Southeast Asia. During that time, the Cold War-fundamentalist ideological thinkings heavily dominated Vietnam's national strategy and diplomacy. Vietnamese studies in that period¹ mainly focused on diplomatic directions which were influenced by Vietnam's socialist thinkings and the Soviet Union's diplomatic paradigm. Vietnamese-Soviet strategic alliance was also on the focus of some scholars as it revealed Vietnam's strategic choice of going along with the Soviet Union to confront China's increased influence in Indochina peninsular. It was also the realpolitik calculation of Vietnam to secure a strategic survival zone for Vietnam.²

¹ As previous discussion in note no.8, this period could include two stages, (i) the *Pre-Renovation* stage: from the end of the Vietnam War prior to Vietnam's *Renovation* (1975-1986); and, (ii) the *Cold War-Renovation* stage: from Vietnam's *Renovation* up to the end of the Cold-War (1986-1991).

² Alexander L. Vuving, *The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam*, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment* (RICGOV)," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

Vietnam's military intervention in Cambodia, Vietnam-China border War, tensions in Vietnam-America relations, Vietnam-ASEAN relations and Vietnam's diplomatic obstacles and isolation, domestic socio-economic crisis were also hot issues.³

Radical changes in China in 1978, later in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in early 1980s had dramatic impacts on Vietnam. Together with internal "bottom-up" pressures, those "top-down" influences from its socialist brothers led to the decision of *Renovation* in Vietnam in 1986. This was also the turning point in Vietnamese studies' orientations.

The Cold War ended in 1991, whereas its remnant the Vietnamese socialist regime has still existed but in an all new hostile strategic environment dominated by capitalist countries.⁴ There emerged many questions regarding to the nature of Vietnamese society, Vietnam's socialist regime, the Party's legitimacy, Vietnam's strategic orientations and diplomatic paradigm. Those issues had been on the study frameworks of many scholars. In addition, with history of confronting against powers, struggling for national liberation and ideological confrontations, as well as its post-Cold War ideology-reality paradox present, in certain extent, Vietnam deserves to be a special study theme of contemporary international relations and political sciences. In the present political-diplomatic context of Southeast Asia, with its important geographic and political strategic position, Vietnam has a certain influence to the stability and development of the region and therefore, brings about new study topics for concerned scholars. Besides general comprehensive studies about Vietnam in the *Renovation* period of David W. P. Elliott,⁵ Eero Palmujoki,⁶ Carlyle A. Thayer,⁷ and Nguyen Co Thach,⁸

³ Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Dilemma of Change, Frank Frost, Foreign Affairs Group, Parliament of Australia, 6 May 1991.

⁴ VCP's analyses in its official documents regarding the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the socialist system, and the strategic hostile aims of the imperialism. See, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6, 7, 8, 9*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *National Congress Official Documents VI, VII, VIII, IX*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House].

⁵ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁶ Eero Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations, 1975-93*, London, Macmillan, 1997.

⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999.

⁸ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị Quốc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House].

several specialized studies have also been carried out in most of Vietnam's socio-political-economic fields. Results of those studies have been officially publicized in Vietnam in the National Conferences on Vietnamese studies,⁹ and in almost relevant academic journals of international relations studies and international political sciences.

With study theme of Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era focusing on the ideology-reality dilemma in Vietnam's foreign policy decision-making process, this dissertation mainly reviews the studies related to Vietnam's foreign policy, diplomatic activities, foreign relations in the post-Cold War strategic sphere in the context of Vietnam's *Renovation*. With this scope, the dissertation has concluded some reviews of recent significant Vietnamese studies as follows:

2.1.1. About the studies' theme and focus

The seismic shakes in the socialist system, the globally strategic restructure after the Cold War, the adjustments in strategic interest orientation of powers, the changes in national strategies and foreign policies of key countries in East Asia, as well as, internal transformations of Southeast Asia all have dramatic impacts on Vietnam and this country's national strategical orientation. In the mid-1980s, there were evidences of the end of the Cold War, and also end of the global ideological confrontation, Vietnam made some initial moves to change its worldview of and assessments about the global strategic structure and regional security context. Based on those changed assessments and viewpoints, Vietnam tried to adjust its national strategy to cope with international movements and internal requirements. Assessing and analyzing those changes and adjustments of Vietnam have been considered as study focuses by scholars. They come to the task of analyzing Vietnam's diplomacy strategy and foreign policy directions with different perspectives on how to conduct study and to evaluate Vietnam's diplomatic paradigm and its future developments. Through all the analyses, run certain common themes. The most

⁹ The most recent conference is the Fourth International Conference on Vietnamese Studies "*Vietnam on the Road to Integration and Sustainable Development*," Hanoi, November 2012.

conspicuous is an emphasis on Vietnam's omni-directional strategy¹⁰ in dealing with foreign policy issues in the post-Cold War era.

In the studies of Japan's foreign policy, some scholars argue that Japan has pursued a low-risk strategy throughout the postwar years and "for Japan's foreign policy decision makers the challenge of foreign policy has been to cope effectively with situations created by other countries."¹¹ The question is, for Vietnam, also an East Asian country with Cold War remnants, in the relationship between external factors and internal political factors which factor would play the dominant role? Whether Vietnam would act like Japan to formulate a national strategy to coping with changes, with situations created by other countries or Vietnam has its own way, and pursuing its own national strategic interests and the influences of other countries even of the powers just act as subordinate factor. At this point, it is necessary to make clear that scholars seem to lean toward the trend which argued Vietnam is a vital example of the reciprocal interplay between the two factors of international politics and internal politics. The domestic socio-economic factor leads to requirement of reorienting the policy, while the external factor influences the decision-making process as well as the process of executing the newly established policy. They come to the conclusion that, strategic balance between national goal and status of Vietnam regionally and globally in its relations with powers would decisively dominate Vietnam's policy orientation and strategic attitude. We could examine these viewpoints in series of academic works published by David W. P. Elliott,¹² William S. Turley,¹³ Tran Quang Co,¹⁴

¹⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999; Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008; Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1998]; Vu Khoan, Security, Development and Their Roles in Foreign Affairs, in International Relations Institute, *Vietnamese Foreign Policy*, Hanoi, Global Publishing House, 2007].

¹¹ Gerald L. Curtis, ed., *Japan's foreign policy after the Cold War: Coping with change*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1993, p. xv.

¹² David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹³ William S. Turley, Party, State, and People: Political Structure and Economic Prospects, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

¹⁴ Tran Quang Co, Chang Duong Phia Truoc, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.194-195, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The Way Ahead*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.194-195].

and Phan Doan Nam.¹⁵ At this point, regarding to the importance of those findings, a comparative study of viewpoints and approaches between international and Vietnamese scholars also should be carried out.

A recent theme that has been on the focus now is the importance of the United States and its coming back strategy, the relationship and struggles among powers with Vietnamese foreign policy. R. J. Ellings analyzed that, Southeast Asia is strategically important to the United States.¹⁶ The United States has myriad political interests in Southeast Asia as well. In the post-Cold War era, international relations among Asian states are moving from a bilateral framework toward a multilateral one. Economic and political-security components of international relations in Asia are not yet deeply integrated, but instead operate on different, yet parallel, tracks.¹⁷ However, influences of the United States have not been a constant factor. Right after the Cold War, it seemed that the influence of the United States in political-security field gradually declined as the United States intended to withdraw out of Southeast Asia, and as relations among Southeast Asian countries are no longer exclusively brokered through unilateral ties with the United States. Instead, the formation of political-economic and even security groups such as ASEAN Region Forum has been important venues for security discussions. The objective of building and consolidating regional group is to promote transparency on strategic issues to build trust and to distance members from United States strategies that are not fully compatible with Asian political developments, and to serve as a regional bloc to counter China.¹⁸ All of the above movements have their dramatic impacts on Vietnam's diplomacy strategy and foreign policy orientations. Regarding to specific foreign policies of Vietnam such as, Vietnam-America bilateral

¹⁵ Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation*, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006].

¹⁶ Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asia Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1996. Three reasons: it is an increasingly significant market and supplier for the United States economy; it will likely be an area of intense competition, both economic and political, between great powers such as China and Japan, and therefore a potential arena for global instability; and it is a strategic transit area for supplies of Middle Eastern oil and the nexus of other U.S. interests in the Indian Ocean and its littoral states.

¹⁷ Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *ibid.*, 1996, p.6.

¹⁸ Sheldon W. Simon and Richard J. Ellings, A Postscript on U.S. Policy, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asia Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

relations, Vietnam's strategic viewpoints and attitudes on role and influences of the United States in Southeast Asia, scholars have tried to work out the issue of whether Vietnam would consider a strategic calculation of bandwagoning with the off-region power such as the United States to establish a strategic balance with China.¹⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer found out that, for Vietnam, the South China Sea conflict demonstrated clearly how much more difficult managing the balance among its relationship with powers had become in the complex and fluid post-Cold War international and regional environment.²⁰

Vietnamese-Sino relationship has also been on the focus of many scholars.²¹ There are several reasons, including: This is a special relationship which has been dominated by both ideological factor and realpolitik calculation, pragmatic national strategy.²² Moreover, with increasing pressure from China in accordance with its increasingly political-economic power, Vietnam has to execute strategic diplomacy maneuvers to secure its strategic independence and stable development. This context could lead to breakthrough diplomatic maneuvers and foreign policy transformations which are very essential for international political analyses. Some international and even Vietnamese scholars devise hypotheses of: China's increasing pressure, concerns about the West's devious aim of "peaceful evolution," seem to force Vietnam lean towards regionalism and multilateralization foreign policy. Those scholars have tried to prove this approach would be the most appropriate choice for Vietnam, ASEAN and its regionalism diplomacy approach would be a model for Vietnam to deploy its new diplomacy strategy platform of omni-direction,

¹⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Relations with China and the United States, in Phan Quang Minh, ed., *The Role of Vietnam in the Asia-Pacific*, Hanoi, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam, 2011; Alexander L. Vuving, Grand Strategic Fit and Power Shift: Explaining Turning Points in China-Vietnam Relations.

²⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, The Tyranny of Geography: Vietnamese Strategies to Constrain China in the South China Sea, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.33, no.3, 2011, pp.348-369; Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122.

²¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam and Rising China: The Structural Dynamics of Mature Asymmetry, in Daljit Singh, ed., *Southeast Asian Affairs 2010*. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010, pp.392-409; Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

²² Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994.

multilateralization and diversification on the basis of partner, partnership concepts and partnership framework.²³

With the impression of Vietnam as a one-party communist country in which the party holds absolute supreme power over the whole society, and decides national strategy and policy on the basis of ideological calculations and party's sustainable leadership, most of international scholars assumed that Vietnam's diplomacy and foreign policy decision-making process have not yet been transparent, but still a black box under the ultimate control of the communist party. Therefore, the issue of policy decision-making mechanism and principle have been on the focused of Vietnamese studies. The studies of Thayer, Manyin, Elliott and Womack could be considered as some significant works on this issue. Vietnamese scholars also carry out related works, but their study mainly focus on explaining Party's policies and guidelines regarding to the operation of policy decision-making mechanism. They also work out some setbacks and errors of past and current principles and mechanism in order to make some academic proposal for the Party. Reviewing foreign studies related to this issue also the task of Vietnamese scholars as they try to provide extended viewpoints and theoretical approach for the Party. The works of Nguyen Co Thach, Tran Quang Co, Vu Khoan, Phan Doan Nam and Pham Binh Minh could be considered as the most valuable studies on this issue.

Vietnam's internal politics and its influence on Vietnam's diplomacy and foreign policy decision-making process also attract many scholars. Carlyle A. Thayer has carried out several significant works on VCP's legitimacy, Vietnamese political power structure, and power transition.²⁴ Other analysts, using the bureaucratic politics approach, have paid their

²³ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007; Nguyen Vu Tung, Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framwork in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011]; Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts on Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011.

²⁴ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy of Vietnam's One Party-State: Challenges and Responses, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2009, 28(4), pp.47-70; Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam and the Challenge of Political Civil Society, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 31(1), April 2009, pp.1-27; Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Dissent and Political Reform in Vietnam, 1997-2002, in Claudia Derichs and Thomas Heberer, eds. *The Power of Ideas: Intellectual Input and Political Change in East and Southeast Asia*, NIAS Studies in Asian Topics No. 36, Copenhagen S, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2006, pp.115-132.

attentions on VCP's apparatuses, relations among Party's internal organizations and power structure, also relationship between Party's powerful organizations and Government's agencies.²⁵ Some of the focus on factions, factions establishment and factions struggle inside the VCP. They also try to identify the role of Party's leaders in each policy move of the VCP. David Koh,²⁶ Thai Quang Trung,²⁷ David W. P. Elliott,²⁸ Zachary Abuza,²⁹ and Carlyle A. Thayer³⁰ are the most significant scholars in this study trend. In some further extended studies regarding to this trend, some scholars try to analyze the relationship between Party's leadership and Vietnam's diplomacy by focusing on historical aspect of the establishment and development of the VCP and its leadership over the society. They have found out that, the VCP's legitimacy and leadership role have originated from the anti-imperialism struggle for nation independence and reunification.³¹ Armed with advanced theoretical foundation of socialism and nationalism, the VCP has gained the power to lead and had ability to use such power during the long and harsh contemporary history of Vietnam. These scholars argued that the establishment foundation of the VCP's legitimacy has been the nationalism, patriotism at first.³² Socialism and commitments to build socialism in Vietnam has helped established the second foundation for VCP's leadership.³³ In Vietnam, the VCP has interpreted this issue into the language of strategic tasks of Vietnamese revolution. They are nation-state independence and socialism. As they reached this point, these scholars argued that only by accomplishing these two-strategic

²⁵ M. S. Shivakumar, Political Parties, Development Policies and Pragmatism in a Changing World: Lessons from Vietnam, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vo.31, no.50, 14 Dec 1996, pp.3255-3264.

²⁶ David Koh, The Politics of a Divided Party and Parkinson's State in Vietnam, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.23, no.3, 2001, pp.533-551.

²⁷ Thai Quang Trung, Collective Leadership and Factionalism. An Essay on Ho Chi Minh's Legacy, *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 59, no.3, Autumn 1986, pp.530-531.

²⁸ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

²⁹ Zachary Abuza, The Lessons of Le Kha Phieu: Changing Rules in Vietnamese Politics, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.24, no.1, April 2002.

³⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, The Regularization of Politics Revisited: Continuity and Change on the Vietnam Communist Party's Central Committee, 1976-1996, Paper to Panel on *Vietnamese Politics in Transition: New Conceptions and Inter-Disciplinary Approaches*, Part 2-Session 146, 49th Annual Meeting Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 13-16, 1997.

³¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp. 423-444.

³² Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

³³ Carlyle A. Thayer, *ibid.*, 2010, pp.423-444.

tasks or at least proving its ability to accomplish these tasks, has the VCP ensued the foundations for its legitimacy and maintained its unchallenged leadership role.³⁴

Going on the *Renovation* course, with new developments of the situation, there emerged contradictions, even paradox, as some scholars' argument, regarding directly to the implementation of *Renovation* policy and VCP's leadership role. They named it the Ideology-Reality dilemma of Vietnam politics. In other words, it is the contradiction between VCP's application of realist approach, its partly using capitalist mode and relations of production for building socialist infrastructure and relations of production in one hand; and concurrently on the other hand, consistently maintaining socialist superstructure in accordance with consolidating VCP's leadership and socialist regime on the foundation of backward development condition with outdated infrastructure.³⁵ In foreign affairs field, this contradiction has been revealed by the hesitation and confusion in determining the foundation of Vietnam's foreign policy is whether ideology or reality, or in other words, socialism or realpolitik calculation of national interest. David W. P. Elliott has paid lots of attention upon this issue and reached certain results in his studies of Vietnamese *Renovation* in general and Vietnamese diplomacy in particular.³⁶ Nevertheless, there has been almost no studies that aim to analyze and explain impacts of these contradictions and dilemma on Vietnam's diplomacy in the very first important stages of *Renovation*; and basing on these outcomes to point out features of Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy as well as the process in which Vietnam's diplomacy has overcame itself and ideological constraints to fulfill its strategic tasks of helping Vietnam integrating into international community and creating favorable conditions for the development of Vietnam. These issues would later be analyzed and explained in this dissertation.

³⁴ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Two Strategic Tasks: Building Socialism and Defending the Fatherland, in Pushpa Thambipillai, ed., *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Aldershot, Gower Publishing Company, 1983, pp.299-324.

³⁵ David W.P. Elliott, Dilemma of Reform in Vietnam in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993; William S. Turley, Party, State, and People: Political Structure and Economic Prospects, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

³⁶ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

The next study trend focuses on political and security issues. It tries to work out the answers for the questions of how Vietnam has sought to provide for its security in the post-Cold War era with out any true alliance; and how thinking about security concept and strategy are evolving in Vietnam and surrounding regions in the strange and harsh post-Cold War strategic environment; and how Vietnam tackles its strategic development goals as it is still in critical economic condition with communist regime and socialist orientation.³⁷

Vietnamese scholars' studies have been focused mainly on serving the process of formulating party's strategies and state's policies, determining strategic orientation for Vietnam's diplomacy in the new strategic period.³⁸ Studies on the history of Vietnam's diplomacy in the period of pre-*Renovation* and *Renovation* have also been carried out in large scale. There have been some professionally specified studies with significant results on the formation of Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy strategy.³⁹ These studies have pointed out mistakes, misdirections, initial achievements at the early stage of *Renovation* and also strategic setbacks, and errors in diplomatic reality during 1989-1991.⁴⁰ Internal debates within Party and Vietnam foreign affairs agency on the foundation of Vietnam's

³⁷ Nguyen Vu Tung, *Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies*, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122; William S. Turley, *Vietnam Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus*, in Richard J. Elling and Sheldon W. Simon, eds, *Southeast Asia Security in the New Millennium*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1996; Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnamese Perspectives on International Security: Three Revolutionary Currents," in Donald H. McMillen, ed., *Asian Perspectives on International Security*. London, Macmillan Press, 1984, pp. 57-76.

³⁸ Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, *Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy*, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011]; Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House]; Nguyen Dy Nien, *The Gioi Dang Thay Doi, Con Chung Ta*, trong Bo Ngoai Giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, *The World Changing: How About Us?*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

³⁹ Vu Khoan, *Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam*, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, *The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995]; Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation*, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006].

⁴⁰ Nguyen Co Thach, *Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta*, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings*, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

diplomacy strategy, and foreign policy directions have also been studied in these studies. In later stages, the main study trend of Vietnamese scholars has been on the subject of finding new theoretical approach for the Party in the process of formulating new diplomacy for Vietnam.⁴¹

2.1.2. About theoretical approach and research methodology

In the process of carrying out Vietnamese studies, neorealism and neoliberalism theoretical approaches have been used widely as many scholars argue that despite some limitations these approaches are still applicable to analyze certain country's strategy and describe its policy behaviors.⁴² Some scholars have maintained neoconservatism and rightism approaches.⁴³ Regarding to Vietnam's foreign policy and foreign policy decision-making process, international scholars have paid much attention on the role of individuals, groups, factions on the basis of bureaucratic politics models; the others have concentrated their efforts on constructivism, institutionalism approach to build analytical framework for the specific case study of Vietnam.⁴⁴ Regionalism and multilateralism approaches have also been used in some Thayer's and Womack's works.⁴⁵

Realist scholars have also used the Balance of power theory⁴⁶ and its later variant, the Balance of threat⁴⁷ to analyze Vietnam's diplomatic maneuvers, especially its manners in tackling the so-called strategic foreign policy confusion of Vietnam bilateral and triangular relations with China and the United States respectively in the very first years of

⁴¹ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

⁴² Christopher Layne, Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise, *International Security*, vol.17, no.4, Spring 1993.

⁴³ Thai Quang Trung, Collective Leadership and Factionalism. An Essay on Ho Chi Minh's Legacy, *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 59, no.3, Autumn 1986, pp.530-531; David Koh, The Politics of a Divided Party and Parkinson's State in Vietnam, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.23, no.3, 2001, pp.533-551.

⁴⁴ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007; Nguyen Vu Tung, Testing the Institutional Approach Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.51-70.

⁴⁵ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Regional Integration: The Costs and Benefits of Multilateralism, paper to conference on Vietnam's Integration into the World and State Sovereignty, Paris, 25 October 2004.

⁴⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: a Theoretical Analysis*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1954/1959.

⁴⁷ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

Renovation.⁴⁸ In later stages of *Renovation*, especially from the late 1990s up to now, balancing and enmeshment seems to be the most suitable choice for its diplomacy as Vietnam and other actors in Southeast Asia have experienced some newly emerged benefit contradictions related to both China and the United States.⁴⁹ Some Vietnamese scholars and even senior officials of Vietnam's foreign affairs agency have gradually applied realist fundamental assumptions, viewpoints and logics to evaluate the global and regional strategic context, try to locate Vietnam in this new world order and base on these assessments to propose a new formation and orientations for Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy.⁵⁰ It can be said that, with characteristics of Vietnam's politics, in addition to this country's geopolitics features, the applications of realism and neorealism approaches have some certain theoretical values to analyze Vietnam's diplomacy strategy, diplomatic maneuvers and political attitudes.

Some scholars have implemented general approach to maintain the comprehensive and multidirectional viewpoints on Vietnam such as articles of David W. P. Elliott, William S. Turley, Alexander L. Vuving, and Carlyle A. Thayer. Scholars such as Elliott, Thayer, and Turley have maintained close nexuses with Vietnamese academic circle, therefore, they could get in touch with up to date and accurate informations related to social-political movements of Vietnam. To some certain extend, these scholars understand the Vietnamese's approach and thinkings mode. With this approach, in accordance with the using of descriptive methodology in historical studies of Vietnam's diplomatic activities and foreign policies, these scholars could reach some significant results.

⁴⁸ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

⁴⁹ Nguyen Co Thach, Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007]; Dinh Nho Liem, Vietnam Trong Xu The Chung Cua Chau A-Thai Binh Duong, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.3, thang 3 nam 1991, (Vietnamese). [Dinh Nho Liem, Vietnam in the common trend of the Asia-Pacific, *Communist review*, no.3, March 1992]; Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no. 6 (November/December 2006), pp. 805-824.

⁵⁰ Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989]; Phan Doan Nam, Ket Hop Suc Manh Dan Toc voi Suc Manh Thoi Dai trong Giai Doan Cach Mang Moi, *Tap chi Cong San*, so.5, 1987, tr.53-57, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Combine the Strengths of the Nation and the Epoch in the Revolution's New Period, *Communist Review*, no.5, 1987, pp.53-57].

Other studies successfully deployed prescriptive methodology and resulted in deep analyses on specific study topic, or study of certain policy and diplomatic maneuvers of Vietnam, for example, Thayer's *The Structure of Vietnam-China Relations, 1991-2008*,⁵¹ Vuving's analyses on *Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways*,⁵² Womack's *Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: The Cases of China, Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s*,⁵³ Vasavakul's *Vietnam's one-Party Rule and Socialist Democracy?*⁵⁴ Some scholars have tried to apply the methodology and theoretical approach of Western theories of bureaucratic politics model, neoliberalism, institutionalism in their studies on Vietnam's internal politics, VCP's intra-party leadership structure and power management distribution. This approach resulted in several valuable studies.⁵⁵ However, lack of primary data and credibility source, also the complex of Vietnam's politics and close circle of power have led to difficulties even obstacles in applying these theoretical approaches and limitations of studies' results.

Most of scholars have not proposed or developed any specific theoretical model for Vietnam's case. They have mainly based on general theoretical models of international political science; and have them modified to fit in Vietnam's socio-political context. There are some reasons which could explain this trend. First of all, Vietnam has not gained high priority in global political structure and has no longer been on the focus of international community as it was in the Cold War period. Secondly, to some extent, Vietnam's case seems to be similar to China in its regime structure, macro policy orientation, social structure. Therefore, there have been a stream which assumes Chinese studies would

⁵¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *The Structure of Vietnam-China Relations, 1991-2008*, paper for the Third International Conference on Vietnamese Studies, Hanoi, 4-7 December 2008; Brantly Womack, *Modernization and the Sino-Vietnamese Model*, *International Journal of China Studies*, vol.2, no.2, August/September 2011, pp.157-175.

⁵² Alexander L. Vuving, *Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways*, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

⁵³ Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: The Cases of China, Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 26(3), September 2003.

⁵⁴ Thaveeporn Vasavakul, *Vietnam's one-Party Rule and Socialist Democracy?*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.36, no.37, 15-21 Sep 2001, pp.3518-3524.

⁵⁵ Adam Fforde, *Contemporary Vietnam: Political Opportunities, Conservative Formal Politics, and Patterns of Radical Change*, *Asian Politics & Policy*, vol.3, no.2, 2011, pp.165-184; Russell Heng Hiang KHNG, *Leadership in Vietnam: Pressures for Reform and Their Limits*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.15, no.1, June 1993, pp.98-110; Lewis M. Stern, *The Vietnamese Communist Party in 1986: Party Reform Initiatives, the Scramble towards Economic Revitalization, and the Road to the Sixth National Congress*, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1987, pp.345-363.

provided appropriate theoretical approach for Vietnam's case.⁵⁶ Generally, this theoretical approach could provide some initial advantages for study processes but in long term, according to other scholars, using the same theoretical approach to carry out Vietnamese studies on the hypothesis of similarity between China and Vietnam could lead to inaccurate assessments and analyses.⁵⁷ They argued that, in accordance with the development, differences between the two countries will increase while the similarities will be smaller. It could also be said that, Vietnam and China now, basically, base on realist and pragmatic foundation to formulate national strategy which would lead to the look-liked centrifugal trend as each countries focuses on its own strategic goals of national interests. These scholars reached their conclusions that, it is necessary to develop an appropriate theoretical model for Vietnamese studies' case.⁵⁸

Acknowledging this issue, and basing on his own fundamental study in Vietnam's socio-historical and political features, and the interrelationship between Vietnam and China and with other countries in Southeast Asia, Brantly Womack has proposed an independent theoretical model and he named it, the Asymmetry Theory.⁵⁹ This theoretical model has been designed for a bigger purpose of providing theoretical tools to analyze global and regional power structures, relationships among nations, especially the bilateral and triangle relations. As some above statements, this Womack's model has been built on the process of surveying pairs of bilateral relation and analyzing influences of the asymmetry in each pair on the process of shaping and formulating national strategy and foreign policy. However, there is a significant unexpected outcome as Womack applied his model on Vietnamese-Sino relationship. With the special features of Vietnam and China, and of Vietnamese-Sino relationship, Womack's asymmetric model seems to be exclusively designed for studying

⁵⁶ Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam Backwards Towards the Future, in *The Crisis of Marxism-Leninism, Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue.2, pp.177-189, April 1992.

⁵⁷ Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

⁵⁸ Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

⁵⁹ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Vietnam-China relation. Brantly Womack, him self, has reached significant study results in his book namely, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*,⁶⁰ and several articles related to Vietnamese and Chinese studies.⁶¹ They could be not only academic results but also practical policy implications for Vietnam and prove the appropriate study model, and therefor, in certain extend, this dissertation has applied Womack's theoretical approach to process study's planned objectives as stated earlier in the Chapter 1.

Regarding to Vietnamese scholars' theoretical approach, basically, there are two main streams, accordingly: (i) A majority Vietnamese scholars have still been using fundamentalist Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism methodology with models and theoretical approaches which based on Marx's analyses on the essence of international relations, role and position of nation in international order, international obligations and missions of proletarian class and the state of such class; especially Lenin's arguments on state and revolution, structure of international relations in the period of imperialism domination. This trend has mainly been used by scholars who belong to VCP's key academic and theoretical institutes. Some scholars in social sciences institutes and universities have also maintained such orthodoxy and fundamental viewpoints.⁶² (ii) Some other Vietnamese specialists, on one hand, have publicly announced their theoretical basis of Marxism and Leninism, but on the other hand, they tactically and flexibly deployed several theoretical systems such as: Ho Chi Minh's nationalism approach, realism and neorealism.⁶³ In some specific studies, some of them have tested and advocated certain ideas of liberalism, neoliberalism and constructivism to analyze Vietnam's regionalism,

⁶⁰ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁶¹ Brantly Womack, Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004; and, Brantly Womack, Asymmetry and systemic misperception: the cases of China, Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 26(3), September 2003.

⁶² Nguyen Lan Anh, *Chien luoc dien bien hoa binh cua de quoc My va cac the luc phan dong quoc te chong chu nghia xa hoi va chong Viet Nam xa hoi chu nghia*, Ha Noi, Tong cuc 2, Bo Quoc phong, 1993, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Lan Anh, *Peaceful Evolution Strategy of the United States Imperialism and Hostile Forces against Socialism and Socialist Vietnam*, Hanoi, Second General Directorate, Department of Defense, 1993].

⁶³ Phan Doan Nam, Ket Hop Suc Manh Dan Toc voi Suc Manh Thoi Dai trong Giai Doan Cach Mang Moi, *Tap chi Cong San*, so.5, 1987, tr.53-57, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Combine the Strengths of the Nation and the Epoch in the Revolution's New Period, *Communist Review*, no.5, 1987, pp.53-57].

multilateralism moves. Most of scholars of this trend have gained their academic backgrounds in the West and former Soviet Union (mostly in 1980s), therefore they have held relatively radical reformist viewpoints on diplomacy, national strategy and advocated further radical reforms on Vietnam's foreign policy directions.

2.2. Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era-Coping with change: Reviews of significant works

In the 1980s, the challenge to Vietnamese foreign policy posed by the combination of critical economic stagnation, the international isolation and ideological crises and social chaos in the socialist system. The old foreign policy paradigms of the past were no longer adequate to serve Vietnamese national interests in the new emerging world order. There raised questions among Vietnamese officials and scholars about diplomacy strategy for the new era.

In the late 1980s, in accordance with catastrophic events in socialist system, some foreign scholars and even Vietnamese researchers assumed it was pessimistic that Vietnam's national strategy in general and diplomacy in particular would be able to break out of fundamental ideological orientation, traditional pattern and formulate a new policy direction despite these changes in world politics and internal socio-economy stagnancy. Vietnam was on the verge of collapse. But the main stream argued Vietnam already had been moving toward and formulating a new national strategy and diplomacy based on a new basis consideration. Vietnam had shifted towards multidirectional diplomatic paradigm and advocated roles and capabilities of international and regional mechanisms and institutions for tackling its diplomatic missions while continued to emphasize the vital importance of maintaining nation's supreme rights and interests.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House]; Claire Sutherland, Reconciling Nation and Region: Vietnamese Nation Building and ASEAN Regionalism, *Political Studies*, vol.57 2009, pp.316–336.

In his significant analyses on the new foundation of Vietnamese diplomacy,⁶⁵ Nguyen Dinh Quy argued that, new thinkings and viewpoints about national interests, relation between national interest and regime consideration, and how to executing national interest have allowed Vietnam's diplomacy to "expand the boundary," and "lift the limitations" of fundamentalist ideology and deploy radical reformist maneuvers towards a multidirectional and diversified diplomacy. Vietnam has developed national strategy of coexistence and abandoned the old "two worlds" view. As a result, Vietnam has accepted the nature and inevitable existence of different political systems and institutions which used to be considered as hostile forces and threats to the survival of Vietnam. Vietnam's new perspective about "friends" and "foes," "partner" and "object of struggle" have even created more maneuvering room for Vietnam's diplomacy. Quy's arguments has also received consensus of some Vietnamese and foreign scholars.

Several studies about Vietnam's diplomacy have raised questions of why Vietnam had done so or in other words, have focused on intention, dynamic, principle, guideline thought, and concepts which were hidden behind the scene of Vietnam's national interest-oriented diplomatic maneuvers. These issues had been thoroughly analyzed by David W. P. Elliott and Carlyle A. Thayer in their book and articles, respectively, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*,⁶⁶ *Dilemmas of Reform in Vietnam*,⁶⁷ *Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy*,⁶⁸ *Vietnam's Regional Integration: The Costs and Benefits of Multilateralism*.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

⁶⁶ David W. P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁶⁷ David W. P. Elliott, *Dilemmas of Reform in Vietnam* in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

⁶⁸ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy*, paper presented to Workshop on "Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

⁶⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Vietnam's Regional Integration: The Costs and Benefits of Multilateralism*, Paper to conference on *Vietnam's Integration into the World and State Sovereignty Issue*, Paris France, 25 October 2004.

Accordingly, there is nothing inscrutable about Vietnamese pre-*Renovation* diplomacy strategy and even some post-Cold War foreign policy and diplomatic maneuvers. It is the result of heavily ideological imposed diplomacy and politicized foreign policy decision-making processes. The book of Elliott is a comprehensive historical chronicle of Vietnam's *Renovation*. With his thorough knowledge about Vietnam's politics, socio-economic situation and valuable internal sources of information, Elliott's analyses maintain an objective attitude and could reach significant conclusions about trends and features of Vietnam's diplomacy of *Renovation* period. Elliott also examined particular Vietnam's diplomatic maneuvers in order to work out the reasons behind each specific move. By using his nexus with Vietnamese academic circle, Elliott could get in touch with internal political movements and trends within VCP's power structure. Therefore, his analyses reach certain significant results. Carlyle A. Thayer is a specialist about Vietnam. He maintains a wide range of Vietnamese studies' theme. His paper of *Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy*, is a thorough observation and analysis about Vietnam's *Renovation* national strategy. Thayer also points out some distinctive features of Vietnam's diplomacy in the first stages of *Renovation* and later in the post-Cold War era. He also discovers and analyses some steps back of Vietnam's diplomacy as the VCP feared of regime survival facing several incidents in China, Eastern European socialist countries and the Soviet Union. Vietnamese-Sino relations is also on the focus of Thayer's study theme. The articles of *Vietnam Coping with China*,⁷⁰ and, *Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest*,⁷¹ have gained significant results and provided valuable analyses not only relationship between the twos, neighboring countries, former enemies and brothers. He points out the most important feature of Vietnam-China relations: the interplay of Ideology and National Interest. It is also the distinctive feature of Vietnam's diplomacy. According to Thayer, (also Elliott, Womack, Vuving and even some Vietnamese

⁷⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Vietnam Coping with China*, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1994.

⁷¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest*, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994.

officials), for Vietnamese diplomacy, it seems the most difficult relationships have been with country nearest to it. With its giant neighboring, China, Vietnam has been unable to manage a more balanced, symmetric relations. It has to suffer not only the so-called “the tyranny of its geography,” but also “the interplay of ideology.”⁷² Only in the twentieth century did Vietnam have possible opportunities to counter-balance Chinese influence and pressures by the maintenance of an “over-the-horizon” alliance with the Soviet Union.⁷³ However, in the post-Cold War era, without ideological and material supports from the Soviet Union, the question of whether who (nation) or what (institution) will become Vietnam’s next strategic alliance choice is still in the focus of not only the VCP but all scholars in the field of Vietnamese studies. Maybe the most appropriate answers for Vietnam will lay on the diplomacy paradigm of combining balancing and enmeshment⁷⁴ or in other word, an omni-directional foreign policy.⁷⁵

William S. Turley contributed several significant works on Vietnamese studies, one of those is the article titled, *Vietnamese security in domestic and regional focus: The political-Economic Nexus*.⁷⁶ In this article, Turley presented his ideas about Vietnam’s strategic position in the East Asia context in the post-Cold War era. According to his analyses, Turley supposed that, while enjoying advantages brought by its favorable strategic geographic position, Vietnam has also borne number of risks. Neighboring to China, Vietnam has been the most vulnerable among ASEAN countries and has also faced off with the most extreme strategic challenge. Vietnam has to struggle against China in order to maintain its existence sphere, to preserve national identity and national interest while avoiding to provoke Chinese nationalism. A détente policy with China should not cause concern and fear among ASEAN.

⁷² Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994; Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Coping with China, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1994.

⁷³ Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project “*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)*,” German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

⁷⁴ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

⁷⁵ Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011.

⁷⁶ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

Vietnam should emphasize relations with ASEAN and off-region powers such as the United States, Russia and Japan in order to maintain the strategic power balance, but in the condition that these relations must be designed “with out antagonizing China.”⁷⁷ Turley argued that, to manage relation with China, “Hanoi has few practical options, neither balancing nor bandwagoning. The option of relying upon a distant superpower bring risk: any power with global interests is certain to treat Vietnam as less important than China in its own larger strategy. Finding the middle way with the Middle Kingdom is Vietnam’s central strategic conundrum. Hanoi’s clear preference is to avoid strong commitment to any option, balancing China as best it can through a *tout azimuths* foreign policy.”⁷⁸ He emphasized, “Vietnamese capitulation to China would expose all of Southeast Asia to increased Chinese pressure, while Sino-Vietnamese conflict could suck in or split ASEAN. Either extreme in Vietnam’s orientation would lead to request from within the region for American involvement, fuel the regional arms race, and add to the factors encouraging Japan to rearm. Although the risks to Vietnam of veering toward either extreme keep it on a moderate course, a day could come when the United States might want to collaborate with Vietnam in the tacit ‘containment’ of China. In the sea as in Cambodia, American interests should tilt Washington toward Hanoi.”⁷⁹ According to Turley’s analyses, “the end of the Cold War not only improved the prospects of regional stability and growth, but also brought out complications that Hanoi will find difficult do manage.” And accordingly, “the more enduring and unfamiliar challenge for the current generation of leaders is to exact maximum benefit from a merger with the world market economy with out becoming overly dependent on any one power with it.”⁸⁰ Turley also analyzed previous perceptions which had been used to shaped Vietnam’s grand strategy in Indochina peninsular in order to tackle its strategical geographic weakness-the doctrine of “security interdependence.”⁸¹ He argued that, in the context of the post-Cold War era, the

⁷⁷ William S. Turley, *Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus*, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, p.176

⁷⁸ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.180.

⁷⁹ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, pp.212-213.

⁸⁰ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.176.

⁸¹ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.176.

fluctuations of power and balance of power globally and regionally, in accordance with increasingly internal requirements of *Renovation* had forced Hanoi to change its strategic national orientation with doctrine of “comprehensive security” based on economic strength, military capability appropriate for defense, and “expanding international cooperation.”⁸² Leaders and top think-tanks of Vietnam had shifted from the old fundamental perspective of “the international system was still distinctly hierarchy, with the USSR and China after the United States being ‘indispensable’ to shaping the new world order; Japan and Europe were unable to exert ‘decisive influence’ on either regional or global politics;” to the new, reformist viewpoints of a “diverse and multipolar direction” of change in global power that would check American aspiration to construct a unipolar world; China could emerge as the only ‘indispensable factor’ and this imbalance might force Japan to reconsider its continued restraint from exercising ‘decisive influence’ in Asia.”⁸³ Those dramatic changes in the global strategic context, according to Turley, caused the “international system to become more fluid, presenting opportunities for Vietnam’s new strategy to score ‘initial and positive results.’ That emerging structure, fraught with uncertainty, very quality provided Vietnam a chance to break out of regional and international isolation that it could not afford to miss.”⁸⁴ Starting from realist background, Turley also maintained attention to Vietnam’s economic issues, he supposed that socio-economic conditions had played one decisive role in accordance with political factors to force Vietnam carry out its own *Renovation* course. He also argued that “Vietnam adjusted quickly to post-Cold War economic realities because it literally had no choice;”⁸⁵ and “the reorientation and the broader implication of market-oriented reforms made keeping Vietnam’s economic door open a matter of survival.”⁸⁶ Regarding to ASEAN, Turley supposed that Hanoi had adjusted its perception and policy “from

⁸² William S. Turley, *Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus*, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.176-177.

⁸³ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, pp.178-179.

⁸⁴ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.179.

⁸⁵ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.211.

⁸⁶ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, pp.209-210.

confrontation to cooperation with ASEAN.”⁸⁷ Hanoi looked to ASEAN “for help in coping with Chinese pressure;”⁸⁸ and “balance expected heavy reliance for markets and finance on the West and Japan.”⁸⁹ Turley also discovered Hanoi’s fear of the absence of an effective security cooperation mechanism within AESAN; he analyzed that, “from Vietnam’s perspective, a continued inability of ASEAN to cooperate on security, and Chinese success in keeping the Association divided, would be serious limitation and could cause Hanoi to accept the tacit or indirect involvement of outside powers in the maintenance of regional stability.”⁹⁰ In the whole part three of his article, Turley presented his viewpoints about the *Renovation* process which has been carried out by Vietnam, especially his assessments about VCP’s political reform process. According to Turley, “a popular misconception about Vietnam is that it has continued to reform economically while ceasing to reform politically;” and, Vietnam’s leaders, shocked by events abroad in 1989, concluded that circumstances left them no choice but to proceed with marketizing the economy while, in politics, emphasizing stability.”⁹¹ With these features, Turley analyzed that, “the present regime therefore is assured survival for the rest of the decade-and probably beyond, if it delivers steady economic growth, an equitable distribution of social welfare, and suitable professional opportunities for the intelligentsia; and, only a split within the VCP itself could present a serious challenge to the party’s dominance.”⁹²

Vietnamese diplomatic specialists and senior officials have carried out several studies follow Government projects on diplomacy and foreign policy direction. Among them, there are some significant studies of some famous diplomatic senior officials and also distinguished authors such as, Nguyen Co Thach, Nguyen Manh Cam,⁹³ Nguyen Dy

⁸⁷ William S. Turley, *Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus*, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, p.183.

⁸⁸ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.187.

⁸⁹ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.184.

⁹⁰ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, pp.187-188.

⁹¹ William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.200.

⁹² William S. Turley, *ibid.*, 1996, p.204.

⁹³ Nguyen Manh Cam, *Phat bieu Tong ket Hoi Thao Ky Niem 50 Nam Ngoai Giao Viet Nam*, *Tap chi Nghien cuu Quoc te*, So dac biet, so.7, thang 9 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Closing Speech at a Seminar on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam Diplomacy, *International Studies*, Special issue, no.7, September 1995].

Nien,⁹⁴ Tran Quang Co,⁹⁵ Vu Khoan,⁹⁶ Pham Binh Minh, Phan Doan Nam. The most significant academic and policy contributions of these studies are analyses on Vietnam's reality, strategic context in the post-Cold War era, or in the words of Vietnamese academic approach, the "worldview." Those scholars cum officials authors have advocated a dramatic shift in Vietnam's diplomacy in accordance with requirements of Vietnam's reality and *Renovation* process. They have created the so-called radical reformist faction in Vietnamese diplomacy.

Phan Doan Nam, Tran Quang Co and their charismatic mentor Nguyen Co Thach have been among the pioneers of this trend. Nguyen Co Thach, with his radical-realist worldview, had proposed reformist shifts and radical maneuver of Vietnam's diplomacy. His viewpoint was somewhat closed to the realpolitik calculations which assumed that national strategy and diplomacy should be formulated and executed on the basis of nation interest. During the 1980s, Thach was one of the most ten-powerful men of Vietnam's politics. He was Politburo member, held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and later he also was a cum Vice Premier. Thach led the reformist faction and advocated new foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification from the beginning of *Renovation* in mid-1980s. In his article namely, *All for Peace, National Independence, and Development*,⁹⁷ Thach announced his viewpoint of supporting integration strategy in an interdependent world. He developed a policy implication on previous academic results of his secretary, Phan Doan Nam. In his articles, Nam argued about national independence

⁹⁴ Nguyen Dy Nien, *The Gioi Dang Thay Doi, Con Chung Ta*, trong Bo Ngoai Giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, *The World Changing, How About Us?*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁹⁵ Tran Quang Co, *The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong*, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁹⁶ Vu Khoan, *Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam*, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, *The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁹⁷ Nguyen Co Thach, *Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien*, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), tháng 8 năm 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *All for Peace, National Independence and Development*, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989].

and develop an idea that independence must cope with interdependence because “it is this interdependence that renders international relations equitable.”⁹⁸ The Nguyen Co Thach’s later policy development of this viewpoint could also be understood as an announcement and call for the formulation and execution of new policy to integrate Vietnam’s economy into the Western-dominated international system. In Thach’s later book entitled,⁹⁹ *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, he reviewed the world order and described international political structures mostly in term of realpolitik viewpoints in combination with his fundamental Marxist methodology, and using several terms of balance of power, national interest, interdependence trend. It could be said that initial efforts of Thach and his followers had established new approach for Vietnamese diplomacy. Despite Thach’s failure to gain support from other Politburo members for his radical policy, his ideas have been maintained in the core of Vietnam’s *Renovation* foreign policy and later formulated and executed in the form of the omni-directional foreign policy with new concepts of friend not foe, partner, partnership and partnership framework.

Another point that should be mentioned in Vietnamese studies is Vietnamese tends to maintain skepticism about foreign intentions and fears of being dominated and controlled by the outsiders. As a socialist country, Vietnam always considers the complex of the outside world, anarchy feature of international system. They keep vigilant eyes on what so-called hostile attitudes, abuse aims and double-facet policy of powers. Fear of being controlled and regime survival on the context of chaos in socialist system, even earlier reformist figures of the VCP shifted their viewpoints. Nguyen Van Linh, the one-reformer, who used to be considered the founder of Vietnam’s *Renovation*, at that difficult time also stepped back to fundamental viewpoints and reaffirmed the Leninist “two camps, four

⁹⁸ Phan Doan Nam, *Ket Hop Suc Manh Dan Toc voi Suc Manh Thoi Dai trong Giai Doan Cach Mang Moi*, *Tap chi Cong San*, so.5, 1987, tr.53-57, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Combine the Strengths of the Nation and the Epoch in the Revolution’s New Period*, *Communist Review*, no.5, 1987, pp.53–57].

⁹⁹ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House].

contradictions” theory and called for “preserve political, economic, and social stability, above all political stability.”¹⁰⁰ Those above trends and factors have been combined to form a Vietnamese style of coping and vague, or a two-headed strategy.¹⁰¹

Some scholars look at the issue of political leadership in the conduct of Vietnamese foreign policy. Different from the Japanese policy making’s process with “the image of a ‘leaderless’ process. Bureaucratic dominance, consensus building, the absence of charismatic leaders, and constitutional structure limiting the prime minister’s authority and autonomy are widely regarded as producing a system marked by the absence of strong political leaders.”¹⁰² In Vietnam, with the domination of Marxism-Leninism, leadership and state structure has been established and maintained following Leninist proletarian-dictatorship model. The Party holds decisively domination role in the process of policy decision-making and implementing. The bureaucracies are in charge of administrative functions, and hold subordinate role of “consulting, promulgating and implementing decided policies.”¹⁰³ Those scholars also found out that, Vietnam has not deployed the political leadership model with a charismatic leader who could hold supreme position in the Party and centralize all the power. The VCP always advocates unity and solidarity within the Party members and leaders and struggles to execute consensus leadership principle; even through, sometime in VCP’s history this principle also was violated at certain level.¹⁰⁴

Regarding to security issues, Nguyen Vu Tung’s articles review Vietnam’s security policy and its shifting in the post-Cold War era and also observes challenges towards

¹⁰⁰ Nguyen Van Linh, Phat bieu Be mac Hoi nghi 7 cua Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 9 nam 1989, tr.5-12, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at the Closure of the 7th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, Communist review, September 1989, pp.5–12; and, Hoi nghi lan thu tam Ban chap hanh Trung uong Dang Cong san Viet Nam (Khoa VI), *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 4 nam 1990, tr.1-4, (Vietnamese). [The Eighth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of the Vietnam Communist Party, April 1990, pp.1–4].

¹⁰¹ Alexander L. Vuving, The Two-Headed Grand Strategy: Vietnamese Foreign Policy since *Doi Moi*, paper of the conference, *Vietnam Update 2004: Strategic and Foreign Relations*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 25-26 November 2004.

¹⁰² Gerald L. Curtis, ed., *Japan’s foreign policy after the Cold War: Coping with change*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1993, p.xviii.

¹⁰³ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Carlyle A. Thayer, One-Party Rule and the Challenge of Political Civil Society in Vietnam, paper to Seminar of the Like-Minded Donor Countries, Hanoi, 3 December 2008.

Vietnam's national strategy which are believed emerged from the changes of strategic environment surrounding Vietnam.¹⁰⁵ While Vietnam's diplomacy strategy is sometimes confused with a "responsive" foreign policy directions,¹⁰⁶ Tung sees nothing responsive about Vietnam's approach to security affairs. According to Tung, Hanoi has followed a clear and consistent foreign-security policy directions throughout the *Renovation* period also known the post-Cold War era with the two main patterns: advocating economic growth, social stability; and maintaining national security by reducing military forces, avoiding assertive policy, pursuing strategic independence on the basis of regional cooperation and international integration.¹⁰⁷ He analyzed new "security concept" which, according to him, has been carefully developed and applied by Hanoi in the "Context of *Doi Moi*." Some analyses of above mentioned articles of Vuving, and Turley have reached similar conclusions. Womack even has gone further by applying asymmetric diplomacy model to analyze Vietnam's foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification on the basis of pursuing strategic independence status in order to create a counter-balance-status against the inevitable asymmetry in Vietnam-China relations.¹⁰⁸ They all argues that the strategic reformist basis of early *Renovation* stages and new thinkings in mid-1990s have been reaffirmed by the VCP and continued to be the foundation of Vietnamese foreign policy in accordance with dramatic changes in the international situation.

In his significant memoirs¹⁰⁹ on Vietnamese-Sino relations, Tran Quang Co explores the historical, ideological, and realpolitik foundations of this relationship. He also identifies and appraises the attitudes and factors most instrumental in molding Vietnamese decision

¹⁰⁵ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122.

¹⁰⁶ Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam Backwards Towards the Future, in *The Crisis of Marxism-Leninism, Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue.2, pp.177-189, April 1992.

¹⁰⁷ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's New Concept of Security in the Context of *Doi Moi*, in Kurt W. Radtke and, Raymond Feddema, eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.405-424.

¹⁰⁸ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

makers' viewpoints, choices, and policies toward. He pays particular attention to the long history of mutual distrust and rivalry that continue to shape the relationship. Co agrees with his mentor Nguyen Co Thach to argue that such Chinese expansionist policy and realpolitik pragmatism strategy is the inevitable nature of China and will constrain Vietnamese perceptions and policy choice if the VCP still adheres to ideological foundation in its relation with China. Co suggested that the VCP should not follow a self-limited foreign policy by leaning toward China, but toward other major actors in the region, and toward the Asian region as a whole, and even with Vietnam's former enemy, the United States. He and Thach named it the new foreign policy of multilateralization. He also argues that Vietnam's major future challenge will be to devise workable instruments, strategies for overcoming these old ideologically perceptual obstacles, and framing the multilateral structures for political and economic cooperation in the Southeast Asia region might be the most appropriate strategic choice for Vietnam.¹¹⁰

As changing in the whole international context, Vietnam's position in the world and Asian region has also changed. It can no longer commit to the Cold War-styled national strategy. Vietnam will seek out new ways to play a more assertive role in regional and international affairs. One more point that could be concluded through several analyses is that, requirements for change in Vietnam have been formed not only from the collapse of socialist system and China's 1989 incident, but transformation within the Party and Vietnamese society. They are the vital important requirements for the existence of the state, the survival of communist regime and the stability of Vietnamese society. For some scholars such as, Vasavakul,¹¹¹ and Koh,¹¹² VCP's acceptance to change is just a way to avoid certain failure, to delay inevitable collapse and a prolonging the existence of a no

¹¹⁰ Tran Quang Co, *The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong*, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995. (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

¹¹¹ Thaveeporn Vasavakul, *Vietnam's one-Party Rule and Socialist Democracy?*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.36, no.37, 15-21 Sep 2001, pp.3518-3524.

¹¹² David Koh, *The Politics of a Divided Party and Parkinson's State in Vietnam*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.23, no.3, 2001, pp.533-551.

longer regime. But for others, VCP's adjustments and changes prove Party's capacity to control situation, reorient policy; and ability of responding and coping with domestic changes as well as international transformations. They also concludes that, by adjusting and renovating itself, the VCP proves its ability to lead Vietnam's society at least at present time while there hardly emerges any political force which could achieve ability and assemble enough resources to counter, if not replace the VCP.¹¹³

Paradoxically, the end of the Cold War had not eliminated Vietnam's basic ideological diplomatic foundation of the Cold War era. Instead, some conservative leaders had redoubled their efforts to hold fast to that strategy-of continued ideological alliance with China. They emphasized the "devious aims" of the imperialism of eliminating Vietnamese socialism. They feared that the VCP would be no longer able to maintain its legitimacy and leadership if Vietnam's *Renovation* was proceeded too radically. "Deviating from socialist orientation" had been the most common phrase of the VCP's conservative leaders at that time. Such above perceptions and evaluations of one part of the VCP had led to intense debates within the Party and inevitably had dramatic impacts on diplomacy strategy of Vietnam in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These interesting analyses could be found on Tran Quang Co, Nguyen Co Thach, Elliott, and Thayer's significant mentioned-above works.

Vietnamese diplomacy at the multilateral level provides the focus for studies by Pham Binh Minh,¹¹⁴ Nguyen Vu Tung,¹¹⁵ Nguyen Xuan Son.¹¹⁶ Their conclusions describe Vietnam's pursuit of a more activist role in the regionalism and multilateralism trends. Vietnam has also paid great effort on searching for a larger international and regional

¹¹³ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp.423-444.

¹¹⁴ Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts about Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

¹¹⁵ Nguyen Vu Tung, Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

¹¹⁶ Nguyen Xuan Son, va Nguyen Van Du, *Quan He cua Viet Nam voi Cac Nuoc Lon Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2006, tr.185, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Xuan Son, and Nguyen Van Du, *Diplomatic Relations of Vietnam with Power Countries in the first two decades of the 21st Century*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006, p.185].

political-security role to be commensurate with its economic reform's achievements and requirements which have coincided with the passing of the Cold War and newly emerged regional conflicts. These scholars argued that the integration of Vietnam into multilateral institutions and its using of multilateral mechanism have helped Vietnam diversified its diplomacy and relations. Concurrently, Vietnam could utilize multilateral commitments and ties to tackle and minimize disadvantages and threats brought by bilateral relationships, especially in its territorial disputes with China as well as constrain negative impacts that could emerge as the United States reveals its wills to come back Southeast Asia. This policy approach seems to be of vital essence for Vietnam while it has been always under dramatic pressures in its bilateral relations with powers in and off-region. Proactively participating into multilateral institutions and mechanisms, and expanding integrating fields even to what used to be considered sensitive issues such as democracy, human right seems to help reduce challenges and pressures upon Vietnam's national strategy.

Studies of Vietnamese international relations scholars have been popular since Vietnam entered *Renovation* course. Those most significant studies have been comprised in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam held-conference of *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity* in 1995; and the edited book of Pham Binh Minh, Vietnamese Foreign Minister, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*.¹¹⁷

The 1995-conference witnesses several significant studies regarding Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy, the new practical and theoretical foundations of Vietnam's foreign policy of Phan Doan Nam, Tran Quang Co, Vu Khoan, Nguyen Manh Cam, Nguyen Dy Nien. Those studies also reached conclusions that new directions of Vietnam's diplomacy have been originated from the VCP's breakthrough of *New Thinking* in the very first year of *Doi Moi*; and, there has been a continuation of *Renovation* efforts in diplomatic field in order to break isolated status, to locate and shape a new position for Vietnam in the context

¹¹⁷ Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

of a post-Cold War World. Those studies also pointed out errors and limitations of the VCP in the process of formulating and implementing new foreign policy direction; and concluded that the VCP should dramatically shift its strategic thinking in order to maintain leadership and ensure the ability to formulate an appropriate diplomacy in the new strategic stage.¹¹⁸ Some other studies paid attention on the theoretical aspect of foreign policy decision-making process, and intended to provide reason and foundation which allow the VCP to pursue a new strategic diplomatic framework as well as to explain to the majority of party member and people about the unity between strategic foundation shift and ultimate goal of building the Vietnamese socialist regime.¹¹⁹

In his recent book titled *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Pham Binh Minh, Minister of Foreign Affairs played the editor role as well as contributed some important essays which represents official viewpoints and theoretical approach of the Ministry and also the VCP about Vietnam's diplomatic directions toward 2020. Main theme of this book has been fundamental issues regarding to Vietnamese diplomatic basis and foundation; some essays had also analyzed diplomatic orientations and policy prior to *Renovation* period and carried out comparative studies with Vietnam's contemporary *Renovation* diplomacy. Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on foreign affairs had been reiterated and carefully analyzed in order to prove its significantly important role in Vietnam's *Renovation* foreign policy (Nguyen Ngoc Truong). Pham Binh Minh and some other scholars focused on the process of shaping new foreign policy.¹²⁰ According to them, Vietnam's foreign affairs maintains some distinctive features which could be considered as

¹¹⁸ Tran Quang Co, Cuc Dien The Gioi va Van Nuoc, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, The World Situation and the Opportunity for our Country, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

¹¹⁹ Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phát triển và Ảnh hưởng trong Quan hệ quốc tế, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995]; Phan Doan Nam, Mot Vai Suy Nghi Ve Doi Moi Tu Duy Doi Ngoai, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 2, tháng 2 năm 1988, tr.50-54, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Some Thoughts on the *Renovation* of Thinking on Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.2, January 1988, pp.50-54].

¹²⁰ Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chủ biên., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts about Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

“the school of Vietnamese diplomacy” (Vu Duong Huan). Regarding international economic issue and international integration and cooperation, Dang Dinh Quy, Nguyen Vu Tung had contributed some remarkable works. The two Vietnamese leading international scholars analyzed Vietnam’s multilateralization and diversification foreign policy, Vietnam’s diplomatic maneuvers and policy toward multilateral organizations and structures, especially ASEAN, ARF, APEC.¹²¹ The weak point of this significant book has been the absence of security studies about challenges and threats which Vietnam has been facing off as well as diplomatic strategy formulated to tackle them. May be, the editor of this book supposed that the main theme should confine within tasks of analyzing and establishing theoretical foundation for the process of formulating new diplomatic strategy toward 2020; the studies of and tackling specific issues such as security have been left for other academic project. In fact, several scholars who had contributed in this book are specialist in security field and have carried out some significant works regarding to Vietnam’s security strategy in the context of post-Cold War World, such as Nguyen Vu Tung, Vu Duong Huan, Dang Dinh Quy, Nguyen Hung Son. Their works have been analyzed above and used in this Dissertation as valuable analyses and data sources.

¹²¹ Dang Dinh Quy, va Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc Lap Tu Chu va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Self-Reliance and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011]; Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011]; Nguyen Vu Tung, Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

CHAPTER 3

**FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATING AND RESTRUCTURING: VIETNAMESE MECHANISM
AND PRINCIPLE**

3.1. Vietnam's policy making mechanism: The asymmetric triangle

3.1.1. The asymmetric power triangle: The Vietnam Communist Party, National Assembly and Government-Primary policy making mechanism in Vietnam

Some researchers assessed that the *Doi Moi-Renovation* in Vietnam in the late 1980s was mainly the renovation and adjustment in policy of economic, economic management mechanisms, diplomacy and foreign policy orientation.¹ Politics lagged behind economic reforms.² 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.³ 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

¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on “*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*,” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

² Brantly Womack, Political Reform and Political Change in Communist Countries: Implications for Vietnam, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

³ See more analyses in Carlyle A. Thayer, One Party Rule and the Challenge of Political Civil Society in Vietnam, *Presentation to Seminar on the Like-Minded Donor Countries*, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Hanoi, 3 December 2008.

full members, 25 alternative members and the Politburo with 14 members.⁴ Since 1986, the mechanism of leadership of the VCP is collective leadership, important decisions are formed in the Politburo and Central Committee through a consensus.⁵ This change generated when many consequences came from the old mechanism as the General Secretary⁶ had too much power, and the decisions of an individual, at any angle, may have bigger mistakes.⁷

The Party Congress, held every 5 years, is responsible for deciding high position of the Party and also of the Government. At 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 at the Party 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.⁸ In the policy making process, the Party still plays the dominant role, but different from the past, it has

⁴ In Vietnamese Communist Party's Eleventh Central Committee and Politburo. After, the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee May 2013, the VCP elected two more Politburo members and increase this number to 16 members in total.

⁵ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.117.

⁶ Le Duan's leadership was an example of this mechanism. Despite being a charismatic leader with a talented theoretical and practical ability, his absolute power led to several mistakes in post-war period, especially in economic and foreign policies which later were recognized and assessed by the Sixth Party Congress as subjective voluntarism. Le Duan hold the highest post in the Vietnam Communist Party leadership structure for 26 years (1960-1986).

⁷ See also analyses in William S. Turley, Party, State, and People: Political Structure and Economic Prospects, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

⁸ David W.P. Elliott, Dilemmas of Reform in Vietnam, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

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.⁹ 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 *Renovation* 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.¹⁰

3.1.2. Vietnam Communist Party and Vietnam's foreign policy-making process

Referring to external relations, this usually means state's external relations. However, with a special political structure, Vietnam's external relations showed special features implemented by a group of special actors, as evaluated by Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh "the Party's external relations, the State's diplomacy and people's external relations; external politics and external economy."¹¹ External relation activities in Vietnam has been decided to be under the Party's unified leadership, and the State (Government) is responsible for the management and deployment of external relation activities, which means diplomatic strategic orientations, directions and foreign policy were planned by the VCP; State's organization structures in foreign affairs section are responsible for practical implementation. With such practice, every study in Vietnam's external relations all returned to the issues related to VCP's diplomatic viewpoints. Strategic orientations have been worked out at the Party Congresses and Central

⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *The Regularization of Politics Revisited: Continuity and Change on the Vietnam Communist Party's Central Committee, 1976-1996*, Paper to Panel on *Vietnamese Politics in Transition: New Conceptions and Inter-Disciplinary Approaches*, Part 2-Session 146, 49th Annual Meeting Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 13-16, 1997.

¹⁰ Mark Manyin, *Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally*, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wienczek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005.

¹¹ Pham Binh Minh, *chu bien, Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.47, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.47].

Committee Plenums. More specific policies would be worked out at the highest power level, which is the Politburo and later would be submitted to and approved at the Central Committee Plenums. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs implements its functions of specification, concretization and deployment those policies on external relation practice.

However, it is not true that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and external relation agencies do not have important voices in policy planning activities. Officially, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been defined as “the Government’s agency which implements the State’s management function on external relations.”¹² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is considered to be a crucial agency, which took major responsibility in planning and implementing Vietnam’s external relation activities. Regarding the former, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes part in as a consultancy agency, which provided information and data, and prepares for specific policy outlines. Moreover, the deployment of major strategic diplomatic orientations depends largely on the capacity or viewpoints and subjective trends of this Ministry.

Regarding the power apparatus within the Party, Minister of Foreign Affairs is considered to be an important position with considerable status and voice over foreign policy formulating process. However, how high is this power depends upon the ability and influences of each Minister, as well as trends (or faction) pursues by that person. In VCP’s history, there were powerful Ministers of Foreign Affairs who took important positions in the Party and played decisive roles in forming Vietnam’s external relation policies.¹³ Nonetheless, according to several analysts, the domination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sometime, or of the Minister of this Ministry was indeed the certain domination of factions within the VCP of which Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a section. Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the *Renovation* period was often regarded as the pioneer

¹² Decree No. 15/2008/NĐ-CP, *Regulating Functions, Missions, Rights and Organization Structures of Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Hanoi, February 4, 2008. See also, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, National Assembly, *Law on Government’s Organization*, Hanoi, December 25, 2007.

¹³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. See also, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

section of the reformist trend with radical and pro-Western thoughts which were opposite of conservative trend, respectful of the stability, suspicious of negative impacts from the West by the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Public Security.¹⁴ The decrease in presence of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in VCP's highest power structures over the past few years, according to several scholars, has showed the decrease in influences of this Ministry in the decision-making process of Vietnam's diplomatic strategy. Despite Vietnam's breakthroughs in diplomacy over the beginning of the *Renovation* period, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its decrease in power in strategic policy planning structures, lacked necessary independence to further promote its radical reforms and policies; therefore, Vietnamese diplomacy seemed to lose motivation of the first stages of *Renovation*.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of *Renovation* period was Nguyen Co Thach, who was regarded by the Western diplomacy circles as pro-Soviet Union and anti-China and had rigid viewpoints in strategic issues, especially with China. With his charismatic characteristics and influence within the Party, Nguyen Co Thach made contributions to Vietnamese diplomacy's progress, implementing VCP's new diplomatic strategies, gradually breaking isolation and bringing Vietnam back to regional and international community. However, non-stop disputes within the internal VCP on *Renovation*, Vietnam's socio-economic difficulties during this process, together with negative impacts from the globalization and interventions by the Western countries, to some extent, brought about advantages to the conservative trend. Vietnam continued to be persistent with the *Renovation* course but at slower speed and limited levels and scope. The requirements for stability were put on the top. Nguyen Co Thach and several radical reformist leaders gradually lost their power influences. Voices and status of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in foreign policy planning process in the middle stages of *Renovation* (late

¹⁴ Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

1980s-early 1990s) gradually declined and left space for external relation structures which belonged to the Party Central Committee. During the following stages from mid-to-late 1990s up to present, although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gradually recovered its status and confirmed its role in accordance with the dominance of diplomacy of multilateralization and diversification, its influences within the Party have not reached the level at the beginning of the *Renovation* period.

It can be assumed that in the early stages of *Renovation*, Vietnam's diplomacy was under the direct and robust control of the Party, associated with the Party's external relation activities and therefore, under the control of China in foreign policies. VCP's identification of risks and threats from China, the clear clarification of the Party's leadership functions, and the State's management in diplomatic activities resulted in a relatively independence of Vietnam's diplomacy, and restrictions in China's direct influences through the Party's communication channels, which therefore contributed to the creation of a unique status of independence, reliability and confidence of Vietnam among ASEAN community and in the world, and gradually eliminated suspicions in China's influences and domination over Vietnam's diplomacy.¹⁵

3.1.3. Power transition, not generation transition in Vietnamese politics: An analysis of 1986-1991 period

Several scholars assumed that, in addition to disagreements at the highest leadership level, and together with the *Renovation*, Vietnam turned to the leader generation transition process which would take up to the following decade to finish. Others claimed that the generation transition did not really happen in Vietnam except only the leadership transition due to VCP's caution and slowness. By analyzing VCP's decision of choosing Do Muoi as

¹⁵ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. See also, Nguyen Manh Cam, *Tren Duong Trien Khai Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Theo Dinh Huong Moi*, trong *Doi Moi ve Doi Ngoai va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2009, tr. 65, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, *On the Way of Deploying External Relation Policies Following New Directions*, *Reform in External Relations and International Integration*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2009, p.65.]; Nguyen Co Thach, *Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta*, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings*, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

the Premier in 1988 rather than Vo Van Kiet, David Elliott argued that, “as a transition to a younger generation, but the failure to promote rising figure like Vo Van Kiet to the top position appeared to be both cause and symptom of the stalemate between reform and reaction that continued to characterize Vietnam in the aftermath of the Sixth Party Congress.”¹⁶ That the old leader generation continued to be in power or maintained their influence over the most powerful Party’s apparatuses was explained by the VCP as to ensure the continuation and succession of strategic directions and the social stability as well as to prevent or eliminate socialist deviation threats. Nevertheless, the presence of the old leader generations in Vietnam’s political power structure then to some extent may be seen as an obstacle to new thinkings, which as a result continued to hinder fundamental changes in political viewpoints and thinkings. Although the VCP was aware later that leadership transition and leader selection played an important role in the continuation of *Renovation*. New thinkings need new organizational mechanisms and leadership structures to come into life. The Party should develop and apply new principles which allow Party’s leaders and branches to have more powers in carrying out works of *Renovation* while still keep everything else in control. More powers for individual leaders also mean less control from the collective leadership apparatus. It was the leadership dilemma that the VCP struggled to tackle in the first stage of *Renovation*. In order to consolidate the absolute power of the Party while still make room for power transition maneuvers, new mechanisms were necessary to improve the effectiveness of Party’s organization work. In June, 1988 by making decision that each time the highest leadership positions within the Party were elected, at least one-third of the Central Committee member must also be replaced, did VCP show its determination, despite more or less hesitation, in finding an effective mechanism to rejuvenate the leadership.¹⁷

¹⁶ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.56.

¹⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, *The Regularization of Politics Revisited: Continuity and Change on the Vietnam Communist Party’s Central Committee, 1976-1996*, Paper to Panel on *Vietnamese Politics in Transition: New Conceptions and Inter-Disciplinary Approaches*, Part 2-Session 146, 49th Annual Meeting Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 13-16, 1997.

The hesitation and viewpoints of maintaining stability at first in leadership transition as well as shaping power structure within the VCP were also an element which to some extent hindered the reformist viewpoints. The old generation still maintained their influence¹⁸ whereas the new generation had not really been in power. New reformist supporters had not really played a dominant role whereas conservative elements were still considerably powerful and influential.¹⁹ A typical example was Le Duc Tho who left the Politburo and his Party power post officially in 1986 when he was 78 years old. He continued to play an important role within the Party through his position as an advisor of the Central Committee. Tho's continuous presence in Vietnam's political system, even after his retire, showed VCP's cautions in the *Renovation* and certain influence of conservative viewpoints. Several foreign scholars stated that, despite Le Duc Tho no longer taking a powerful position in the Politburo, by his longtime holding one of the most powerful post of VCP's leadership as head of the Party's personnel section, the Organization Department of the Party Secretariat, did he continue maintain considerable influence over the Party. Moreover, the leaving of Tho was assumed to be the trade-off for his younger brother Mai Chi Tho to be appointed to the Politburo and hold the powerful post of Minister of Interior. Through his younger brother, Le Duc Tho could still influence Vietnamese politics and the *Renovation* process until his death in 1990.

Several Vietnamese leaders and scholars expected that the leadership generation transition would really create a strong turning point for Vietnam's *Renovation* when the new leader generation, who were little affected by individual experiences in the building

¹⁸ After the Sixth National Congress, the VCP established a structure which was so-called the Advisory Council of the Party Central Committee. The first members included: Truong Chinh (1986-1988), Pham Van Dong (1986-1997), Le Huu Tho (1986-1990), who used to be Vietnam's highest leaders. Officially, Advisor was the post which was not presented in the Party's Charter and did not have real power officially and publicly but had considerable influence over VCP's policies. The existence of that "powerful" structure showed VCP's cautions in power transition process and in the early stage of implementing *Renovation* policy. That structure only existed at the VI, VII and VIII VCP's National Congress.

¹⁹ The old guards, who took part in the struggle for national independence and unity, were those who held supreme power in Vietnam for over 40 years of war and have still been respected thanks to their contributions to Vietnam. However, as evaluated by several Vietnamese scholars, despite their notable efforts, they were not equipped with handling of peace-time issues, nor did they thoroughly understood the issues faced by Vietnam. "Our leaders are patriotic and they belong to a class that would be respected by any nation in the world, but their way of thinking and their age has betrayed their patriotism." Quoted in Keith B. Richburg, Vietnam Tackles Its Economic Ills; Hanoi's Hopes for New Trade After Cambodia Pullout Fading, *Washington Post*, October 5, 1989.

process of “an outdated and borrowed form of socialism.”²⁰ The Vietnamese leader generation in 1980s was considered to be too old when the average age of members of the Party Central Committee and of the Politburo was 62 and 71 respectively.²¹ New faces were shown but not abundant and only held less important positions or only alternate members of the Central Party Committee. After the Sixth Party Congress, most of the old faces were maintained or reelected.²² The VCP’s power structure after the Sixth Party Congress and in the late 1980s showed Party’s traditional viewpoints which supported political stability, social control and ensured Party’s capability to control the *Renovation* pace, scope and scale. With careful and steady power transition not leadership generation transition, the VCP headed towards both new reformist strategic goals of economic development, crisis handling, state survival and old conservative goals of political stability, socialist directions and regime survival. One might call VCP’s choices to be a hybrid solution which was the combination of both directions. Furthermore, whether reformist or conservative nature, the ultimate goals were still the social stability, national development, VCP’s leadership survival and socialist direction adherence. The differences, if any were the ways to obtain those goals. Most of them expected that with dramatic changes in international context, and urgent requirements of internal development course, the Seventh Party Congress in 1991 would introduce significant changes in power transition within the VCP.²³

3.2. Fundamental principles and guideline for foreign policy making process

3.2.1. Fundamental principles

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

²⁰ Quoted in Steven Erlanger, Hanoi Chief Assails Obstacles to “*Renovation*,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1989.

²¹ See Carlyle A. Thayer, *The Regularization of Politics Revisited: Continuity and Change on the Vietnamese Communist Party’s Central Committee, 1976-1996*, paper to panel on *Vietnamese Politics in Transitions: New Concepts and Inter-Disciplinary*, 49th Annual Meeting Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 13-16, 1997.

²² The Sixth Politburo had 13 full members, 1 alternate member. Among them, there were 3 new promoted faces to replace 3 retired member who later became advisors of the Central Committee. For more analyses on the Sixth Central Committee members, see also, Carlyle A. Thayer, *ibid.*, 1997.

²³ Ha Xuan Truong predicted in his interview with foreign journalists after the Central Committee Sixth Plenum in March 1989, there would be likely major changes of the current Politburo (the VI Politburo) with some people in their 40’s moved into the Central Committee.

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" or "from an unchanging stance, respond to ten thousand changes."²⁴ 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."²⁵ 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, in its Political Report the VCP confirmed 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." 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. 13²⁶ 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 towards concept of an "interdependent world."²⁷ That mean, for VCP's foreign policy, idea of "confrontation"

²⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, thang 8 nam 2003, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, *On Protecting National Security in the New Context*, August 2003].

²⁵ Duong Xuan Ngoc, va Luu Van An, *Giao trinh quan he quoc te*. Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2008, tr. 295-305, (Vietnamese). [Duong Xuan Ngoc, and Luu Van An, *International Relations Handbook*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2008, p.295-305].

²⁶ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

²⁷ Gareth Porter, The Transformation of Vietnam's Worldview: From Two Camps to Interdependence, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.19, no.1, June 1990.

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 foreign affairs. 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 the *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 multilateralize economic relations with all countries and economic organizations.”²⁸ 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.”²⁹ 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 1988.³⁰ 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 multipolarity 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.”³¹ This is a dramatic change in VCP’s basis

²⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Bao Cao Chinh Tri, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Political Report, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

²⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *ibid.*, 1991.

³⁰ Mikhail Gorbachev, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, December 1988. In this 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.”

³¹ Vo Van Kiet, *Thu Gui Bo Chinh Tri Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, 9 thang 8 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Memorandum for Consideration by Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee Politburo, 9 August 1995].

thoughts and policy directions.³² 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. 2³³ 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.”³⁴ 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.”³⁵

³² Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on “*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*,” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

³³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet (mat) so 2-Bo Chinh tri, Ve Tang Cuong Quoc Phong Trong Giai Doan Cach Mang Moi*, 1987, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo’s secret Resolution No. 2 (which may be entitled), *On Strengthening National Defense in the New Revolutionary Stage*, 1987].

³⁴ Bui Dinh Nguyen, *Nhan Dan*, 10 thang 4 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Bui Dinh Nguyen, *People Daily*, 10 April 1989].

³⁵ Nguyen Dy Nien, Chinh Sach va Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai trong thoi ky Doi Moi, *Tap chi Cong san*, 17(140), thang 9, 2005, tr.31, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, Policies and Diplomatic Activities in the *Renovation* Era, *Communist Review*, vol.17(140), September, 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."³⁶ The VCP has continued to reconfirm the stances directing its foreign policy at recently Tenth (2006) and Eleventh Party Congress (2011).

Considering the above point of view, we can see that although the VCP insisted 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* policy and openness of the economy are also emphasized.³⁷ Foreign policy is tasked to create favorable international conditions for economic development;³⁸ 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 twos seem to be contradictory goals: maintaining communism ideological purity and promoting market economy.

3.2.2. Diplomatic guideline and foreign policy

During the leadership term of the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP still used the concept of "foreign policy"³⁹ and had not yet developed it into the broader concept of "diplomatic guideline" as used and requested by several scholars. That evidence showed

³⁶ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dai hoi Dang VIII*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1996, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Eighth National Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996].

³⁷ Mark Manyin, Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wienczek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005.

³⁸ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007, p.485.

³⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc giua nhiem ky khoa 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1994, tr.55, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh National Mid-term Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1994, p.55].

that Vietnam Communist Party at that time still maintained its theoretical perceptions associated with concepts of “domestic policy” or “internal affairs policy” and “external relations policy;” and there had not been many studies which clearly distinguished between fundamental long-term guiding issues (considered to be guideline orientations) and specific issues of short-term measures, tactical reactions and solutions (considered to be policies). According to several scholars and diplomatic officials, the above mentioned issue partly limited strategic vision and caused embarrassment to the VCP in planning and deploying long-term diplomatic policies. As Brantly Womack once assessed, it was associated with the features of Vietnam’s *Renovation* strategy-the response-style policy.⁴⁰

Since the Eighth Party Congress, the concept of “diplomatic guideline” has been used in VCP’s official documents. However, to the VCP then, the concept “diplomatic guideline” seemed to be the word-term to replace the concept of “foreign policy” regarding to long-term issues. Although all official documents of both the Eighth and Ninth Party Congress mentioned “diplomatic guidelines of independence, self-reliance, openness, multilateralization and diversification of international relations,”⁴¹ in fact the VCP was still embarrassed in tackling the relationship between the strategic orientation implications of “diplomatic guideline” and tactical reactions of “foreign policy,” which indeed caused obstacles in the process of shaping Vietnam’s new diplomatic strategy following initial achievements of national *Renovation* strategy. Not until the Tenth Party Congress, did the VCP definitively handled this issue by distinguishing and confirming that, “diplomatic guidelines of independence and self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development” and “foreign policies of openness, multilateralization and diversification of international

⁴⁰ Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam Backwards Towards the Future, in *The Crisis of Marxism-Leninism, Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue.2, pp.177-189, April 1992. Womack argued that, “The policies of Vietnam for the past fifteen years has been more a response to crisis rather than the execution of a political vision. Reform and international openness have become essential part of these effort at coping with crisis, but they have been strongly tethered to the need preserve order and to prevent larger crises.” *ibid.*, p.177.

⁴¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 8*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1996, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Eighth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996]. And, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 9*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Ninth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

relations.⁴² Vietnamese scholars and diplomatic officials highly appreciated this move and assumed that with the new awareness, one of the existed fundamental arguments in Vietnam's diplomatic strategy formation in the new period had been handled, which in turn would pave the way for carrying out specialized studies to the process of formulating Vietnam's new diplomatic strategy.

⁴² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 10*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, tr.12, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006, p.12].

CHAPTER 4

**VIETNAMESE FOREIGN POLICY OF RENOVATION: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND
INTERNAL POLITICS**

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.¹ 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. Theoretically, research must be carried out at the three levels, specifically: the level of the international system, the level of the state, and the level of the individual.² For Vietnam's case, in this Chapter, we carried out the research analysis mainly on two levels: the international system and changes of the world order after the Cold War; and the changes in foreign policies of Vietnam.

4.1. The end of the Cold War and its impacts on Vietnam's foreign policy

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

¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ban co lon*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, (Vietnamese), 1999. Original edition: *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*.

² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: a Theoretical Analysis*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1954/1959.

changes in the distribution of power.³ The world order is being rearranged.⁴ 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”;⁵ “unipolar moment”;⁶ “multipolar,” or “multipolar with one superpower,” and even “non-polar.”⁷ 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 benefits⁸ 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.⁹ 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;¹⁰ 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.

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

³ Dniel W. Drezner, The New New World Order, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.86, issue:2, 2007, pp.34-46; Nguyen Co Thach, Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta, trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings, in Vietnam’s External Relation Policies, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

⁴ Vo Van Kiet, Thu Gui Bo Chinh Tri Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 9 thang 8 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Memorandum for Consideration by Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee Politburo, 9 August 1995].

⁵ R. Cheney, Defense Strategy for the 1990s: The Regional Defense Strategy, Washington D.C.: Secretary of Defense, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/naarpr_Defense.pdf, 1993. Accessed: December 19, 2010.

⁶ Charles Krauthammer, The Unipolar Moment, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.70, issue:1, 1990/1991, pp.23-33.

⁷ Richard N. Haass, The Age of Nonpolarity, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.87, issue:3, 2008, pp.44-56.

⁸ Wang Jisi, China’s search for a Grand Strategy, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.90, issue:2, 2011, pp.68-79.

⁹ Nguyen Xuan Son, va Nguyen Van Du, *Quan He cua Viet Nam voi Cac Nuoc Lon Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Xuan Son, and Nguyen Van Du, *Diplomatic Relations of Vietnam with Power Countries in the first two decades of the 21st Century*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006]; Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi Quyet ve Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuất bản chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

¹⁰ Duong Xuan Ngoc, va Luu Van An, *Giao trinh quan he quoc te*. Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2008, tr.52, (Vietnamese). [Duong Xuan Ngoc, and Luu Van An, *International Relations Handbook*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2008, p.52].

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.¹¹

With the changes happened in the Soviet Union and the socialist system in the early 1980s, the Cold War was expected to end soon.¹² 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.¹³ Bi-polar confrontation-the world’s dominant situation for nearly 50 years after the end of the Second 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.¹⁴ This architecture seems unsuitable with the new

¹¹ According to socialist leaders and scholars, the United States and other capitalist countries developed and implemented a Grand Strategy to defeat socialist system which is called “Peaceful Evolution,” or “Peaceful Transformation.” See: George F. Kennan, The Source of Soviet Conduct, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.25, issue:4, 1947, pp.556-582, and, Nguyen Lan Anh, *Chien luoc dien bien hoa binh cua de quoc My va cac the luc phan dong quoc te chong chu nghia xa hoi va chong Viet Nam xa hoi chu nghia*, Ha Noi, Tong cuc 2, Bo Quoc phong, 1993, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Lan Anh, *Peaceful Evolution Strategy of the United States Imperialism and Hostile Forces against Socialism and Socialist Vietnam*, Hanoi, Second General Directorate, Department of Defense, 1993].

¹² 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, The Soviet Union and Its “Contradictions”, *The Raise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 1987, pp.488-514.

¹³ Nguyen Dy Nien, The Gioi Dang Thay Doi, Con Chung Ta, trong Bo Ngoai Giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, The World Changing: How About Us?, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995]; Pham Quang Minh, *Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Doi Moi cua Viet Nam (1986-2010)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản The Gioi, 2012, (Vietnamese). [Pham Quang Minh, *Vietnam’s New Renovation Foreign Policy (1986-2010)*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2012].

¹⁴ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

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.¹⁵ National interest rules international relations.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ The opportunism and pragmatism can be seen in the modern international relations,¹⁹ 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 twenty-first century.²⁰

The post-Cold War era 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 era, 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

¹⁵ Hoc vien Chinh tri Quoc gia Ho Chi Minh, Vien Quan he Quoc te, Tap Bai Giang Quan He Quoc Te (Chuong trinh cao cap ly luan chinh tri), Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Ly luan chinh tri, 2004, (Vietnamese). [Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, Institution of International Relation, Text Book of International Relations (for Advanced Political Theoretical Program), Hanoi, Political Theoretical Publishing House, 2004].

¹⁶ Vu Duong Huan, Nhan to lam thay doi va xu the phat trien cuc dien the gioi hien nay, *Tap chi Nghien cuu quoc te*, so. 75, Ha Noi, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Vu Duong Huan, Factoring in Changes and Current World Situation, *International Studies*, vol.75, Hanoi, 2008].

¹⁷ Vu Duong Huan, *ibid.*, p.88.

¹⁸ Andrei Shleifer, and Daniel Treisman, Why Moscow Says No, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.90, issue:1, 2011, pp.122-138.

¹⁹ Vu Duong Huan, *ibid.*, p.89.

²⁰ Nguyen Trung, Cho dung cua Viet Nam trong thoi dai toan cau hoa, *Thoi dai moi*, vol.11, 2007, tr.21, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trung, Vietnam's Position in the Globalization Era, *New Era*, vol.11, 2007, p.21].

diplomatic movement of Hanoi towards other powers especially the United States 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.²¹

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.²² The American's unipolar moment of power and dominance immediately after the Cold War, has passed.²³ 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 United States."²⁴ The United States, although experiencing certain decline,²⁵ is still the world's leading superpower;²⁶ 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 United States 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 structure about the

²¹ Mark Manyin, Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005; see also, William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

²² Daniel W. Drezner, The New New World Order, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.86, issue:2, 2007, pp.34-46.

²³ Joseph S. Nye, The Future of American Power, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 89, issue: 6, 2010, pp.2-12.

²⁴ Nguyen Trung, Cho dung cua Viet Nam trong thoi dai toan cau hoa, *Thoi dai moi*, vol.11, 2007, tr.10, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trung, Vietnam's Position in the Globalization Era, *New Era*, vol.11, 2007, p.10].

²⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *ibid*.

²⁶ James Petras, Rising and declining economic powers: The Sino-U.S. conflict deepens, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol.41, no.1, Feb 2011, p.118. "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."

antagonistic contradiction between socialism and capitalism. Vietnam accused the United States of having plot and supporting hostile forces to destroy its socialist institution.²⁷ Despite some dramatic changes in global and domestic context, Vietnam is still highly sensitive to foreign “interferences” which the VCP—especially its conservative faction,²⁸ considers as the “Peaceful evolution” strategy of the United States and Western capitalist countries. On the other side, the United States 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.²⁹ What it would do? Who would be its friend? What would happen with its socialist institution and mechanism? Many 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

²⁷ Nguyen Van Linh, *Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc*, *Nhan Dan*, 15 tháng 12 năm 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Consolidate Peace, Raise Vigilance, Develop Comprehensive Strength to Defend the Fatherland, *People*, December 15, 1989].

²⁸ Nguyen Lan Anh, *Chien luoc dien bien hoa binh cua de quoc My va cac the luc phan dong quoc te chong chu nghia xa hoi va chong Viet Nam xa hoi chu nghia*, Ha Noi, Tong cuc 2, Bo Quoc phong, 1993, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Lan Anh, *Peaceful Evolution Strategy of the United States Imperialism and Hostile Forces against Socialism and Socialist Vietnam*, Hanoi, Second General Directorate, Department of Defense, 1993].

²⁹ Do Muoi, *Thoi Cuoc Hien Nay va Nhiem Vu Cua Chung Ta*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 8, tháng 8 năm 1992, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, The Current Situation and Our Tasks, *Communist Review*, vol.8, August 1992]; Nguyen Duc Binh, *Doi Dieu Suy Ngam Ve Van Menh Chu Nghia Xa Hoi*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 3, tháng 7 năm 2000, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Some Thoughts On the Destiny of Socialism, *Communist Review*, vol.3, July 2000].

axis between major countries has moved from the United States-Soviet relations to the United States-Sino,³⁰ thus, the center of the world has gradually shifted from Europe to Asia Pacific.³¹ 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.³² And the trend of enhancing collective security interests coexisting with national benefits also has occurred.³³ 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.³⁴ 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 grand chessboard between major countries.³⁵ 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.³⁶

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

³⁰ The United States-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 United States This context leads to the modification of the United States-China's relation.

³¹ Thong tan Viet Nam, *The gioi dang o nguong cua thay doi*, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam News Agency, *The World on the Threshold of Change*, 2008].

³² Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York, Simon&Schuster, 1994, pp.23-24.

³³ Dato' Sri Najb Razak, *Keynote Address in The 10th IISS Asia Security Summit, The Shangri-La Dialogue*, Singapore June 3, 2011, <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2011/speeches/keynote-address/dato-sri-najib-tun-razak/>, accessed: June 7, 2011.

³⁴ Sheldon W. Simon, International Theory and Southeast Asian Security, *The Pacific Review* 8, vol.1, 1995, p.6.

³⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ban co lon*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, (Vietnamese), 1999. Original edition: *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, pp.38-66.

³⁶ Nguyen Trung, Cho dung cua Viet Nam trong thoi dai toan cau hoa, *Thoi dai moi*, vol.11, 2007, tr.3, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trung, Vietnam's Position in the Globalization Era, *New Era*, vol.11, 2007, p.3].

has then formulated its national strategy of *Doi Moi-Renovation* for the new global and regional context. With the new approach and perception, the VCP could implement some radical economic policies and even some political reforms which quickly brought about positive effects that could improve the social-economic condition of Vietnam. As a result, the end of the Cold War had influenced on Vietnam's perceptions and foreign policy in both negative and positive way.

In the post-Cold War world, Vietnam finds itself in a rather unique position.³⁷ It no longer had to strictly follow an externally imposed diplomatic paradigm which was dominated by ideological strictures and its socialist brothers' will. In the first time in its contemporary history, to a certain extent, Vietnam is free to determine its diplomatic framework.³⁸ Although, in reality, Vietnam's policy decisions are still influenced by geopolitics, geoeconomics factors and the asymmetry of regional and global power order. Vietnam has to face with a harsh reality of the post-Cold War asymmetric world, a world order which tilts toward powerful states to serve their own national interest realpolitik calculations. Disparity in nation power, constraining by ever-present geopolitical reality, Vietnam might not choose to continue its 1970-1980 confrontation strategy with major powers. Neither accepting dependence, bandwagoning by leaning to one side nor balancing was an applicable scenario and a wise choice.³⁹ It seems that, Vietnam would pursue a strategy which recognizes and accepts the variety and diversity of political institutions and national interests. Vietnam would accept the influences of regional and global powers on its national strategy to the extent that Vietnam's relative independence status is respected.

³⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Coping With China, *Southeast Asia Affairs*, 1994, p.351.

³⁸ Phan Doan Nam, Mot Vai Suy Nghi Ve Doi Moi Tu Duy Doi Ngoai, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 2, thang 2 nam 1988, tr. 50-54, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Some Thoughts on the Renovation of Thinking on Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.2, January 1988, pp.50-54]; Alexander L. Vuving, The Two-Headed Grand Strategy: Vietnamese Foreign Policy since *Doi Moi*, paper of the conference, *Vietnam Update 2004: Strategic and Foreign Relations*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 25-26 November 2004.

³⁹ Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989]; see also, William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

In the words of neorealism, it seems that Vietnam would follow a new paradigm of foreign policy which advocates absolute gains rather than relative gains.⁴⁰

After the Cold War, originating from geographic and historical characteristics of Vietnamese-Sino relationship, China continues to gain a high priority position in Vietnam's diplomacy. Neighboring with an increasingly powerful China, which always pursues a pragmatic national strategy with national interest in the top list, as Carlyle A. Thayer once argued, Vietnam suffers from the tyranny of its geography.⁴¹ In the history of bilateral relations, Vietnam used to be considered as a weaker side and a dependent partner. China was a stronger side and dominating partner.⁴² Therefore, on one hand, Vietnam had no way but to accept the harsh reality and to recognize, to some extent, the Chinese dominance in Vietnam and Southeast Asia; on the other hand, Vietnam struggled for its relative independence status, which was later developed as strategic independent strategy of *Renovation*. Alternate bouts of war and peace between the two neighboring and socialist comrade countries have proven this point. The new global strategic context could be seemed as an opportunity for Vietnam to implement its development strategy, redefine and affirm itself; and at the same time, to seek and build a new strategic position which is possible to counter Chinese pressure and ensure Vietnam's relative independent status.⁴³ Disparity in capacity, asymmetry in nation power, Vietnam's independence passion, as well as regional ambition of China might continue to dominate Vietnamese-Sino relationship in particular and Southeast Asia regional order context in general.

⁴⁰ See more analyses regarding to "The Problem of Balance Between Resources and Policy" in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp.162-163.

⁴¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Vietnam Coping With China*, *Southeast Asia Affairs*, 1994, p.351.

⁴² Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁴³ Nguyen Hong Thach, once quoted an analyses of a Vietnamese official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about Vietnam's diplomacy toward China, "Sino-Vietnam relations will be meshed within the much larger regional network of interlocking economic and politic interests. It is an arrangement whereby anybody wanting to violate Vietnam's sovereignty would be violating the interests of other countries as well. This is the idea strategic option for Vietnam. It is also the most practical." See, Nguyen Hong Thach, *Vietnam-China Ties: A New but Not Easy Era*, *Business Times*, Singapore, 31 December 1992.

4.2. Vietnam's foreign policy of Renovation: Changes and adjustments for survival and development

4.2.1. Historical background: Vietnam foreign policy before Doi Moi (1975-1985)

After the end of the war in 1975,⁴⁴ Vietnam concentrated all efforts on the country's building and reconstruction. Accordingly, Vietnam consistently committed to socialist ideology by carrying out socialist transformation in the South, economically and politically unifying the North and the South; pursuing goals of the first Five years master plan (1976-1980) after unification; and changing the nation's name from Democratic Republic of Vietnam to Socialist Republic of Vietnam.⁴⁵ Inspiring with triumphalism over Western powers after 1975, Vietnam determined its strategic goal of rapidly advancing to socialism without objectively considering Vietnam's reality, that goal later was assessed as ideological objective voluntarism and caused severe socio-political-economic crisis in Vietnam in the following years. 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 Southwest⁴⁶ and the North.⁴⁷ In addition, the VCP's mistakes in social and economic managements⁴⁸ and its mechanical application of the Soviet's socialist model to Vietnam exacerbated the situation.⁴⁹ 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

⁴⁴ The Second Indochina War or the Vietnam War (1954-1975).

⁴⁵ Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam, Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc, thang 12 nam 1976. [Vietnam Labour Party, National Party Congress, December 1976].

⁴⁶ The Vietnamese southwest border war was officially recognized from December 25, 1978 and lasted until 1989. See more at: http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/bng_vietnam/nr040810155433/#huxbZdli4MhV, accessed: February 6, 2011.

⁴⁷ Vietnam-China border war began on 19 February 1979, lasted for a month and caused both sides heavy casualties.

⁴⁸ 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.

⁴⁹ 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>

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.⁵⁰

Vietnam tried to fight against and break the policy of containment of the United States and the capitalist countries;⁵¹ 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,⁵² 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 1989.

4.2.2. Vietnamese foreign policy of Renovation: An overview

A brief chronicle

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

⁵⁰ Hoang Chi Bao, Chu Nghia Xa Hoi Trong Boi Canh Chinh Tri Cua Doi Moi, *Nhan Dan*, 24 thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Hoang Chi Bao, Socialism in the Political Context of Doi Moi, *People*, August 24, 1989]; Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam Backwards Towards the Future, in *The Crisis of Marxism-Leninism, Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue:2, pp.177-189, April 1992.

⁵¹ On April 30, 1975, the United States 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.

⁵² 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 United States and other Western countries to contain and put embargo on Vietnam; and considered ASEAN as a threat. Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007, p.486; and, Hoang Anh Tuan, Why Hasn't Vietnam Gained ASEAN Membership?, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.15, no.3, December 1993, pp.280-291.

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.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴ 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

⁵³ Vietnam tried to find solutions for Cambodian issue and promoted dialogue with other ASEAN countries; 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 United States 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. See, Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phat trien va Anh huong trong Quan he quoc te, trong Bo Ngoai giao Viet nam, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁵⁴ Tran Quang Co, The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

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 (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 2008-2009.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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,⁵⁷ 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

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ Nguyen Xuan Son, va Nguyen Van Du, *Quan He cua Viet Nam voi Cac Nuoc Lon Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Xuan Son, and Nguyen Van Du, *Diplomatic Relations of Vietnam with Power Countries in the first two decades of the 21st Century*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006]; and, Vu Khoan, Chau A-Thai Binh Duong: Mot Huong Lon Trong Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Nha Nuoc Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 6, thang 6 nam 1993, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Asia-Pacific: A Major Direction in Our Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.6, June 1993].

⁵⁷ Vu Khoan, Chung Ta Khong Gia Nhap WTO Bang Moi Gia, *Viet Bao*, phien ban dien tu ngay 5 thang 11 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, We Do Not Join the WTO at Any Cost, *Viet Newspaper*, online edition, 5 November 2005]. <http://vietbao.vn/Kinh-te/Chung-ta-khong-gia-nhap-WTO-bang-moi-gia/55088343/88/>, accessed: December 19, 2011; and, Nguyen Manh Cam, Gia Tri Lau Ben va Dinh Huong Nhat Quan, trong *Bo Ngoai Giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.223-230, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Long Lasting Value and Consistent Direction, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.223-230].

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”⁵⁸ has been determined by the VCP at the beginning of the *Renovation* era, and consistently reaffirmed throughout the later 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).⁵⁹ 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 600 million USD 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

⁵⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Hoi nghi lan thu tu, Ban chap hanh trung uong khoa 8*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Central Committee Forth Plenum Official Documents*, Eighth National Congress, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1998].

⁵⁹ World Bank data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS?page=2>

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 WTO⁶⁰ 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 at the Ninth Party Congress, which was considered to be the triumph of reformist trends in the Communist Party.⁶¹

The process of shaping new foreign policy towards independence, self-reliance, peaceful cooperation and development

Renovation in Vietnam's external relations officially started from the Sixth Party Congress Political Report⁶² and the Politburo Resolution No. 13,⁶³ which resulted in the formation of more relevant world evaluation viewpoint systems, contributing to increasingly effective external relation policies to serve for nation-state's interests in

⁶⁰ Vietnam became the 150th member of WTO on November 7, 2006, after 11 years of preparation including 7 years of negotiation.

⁶¹ Le Kha Phieu, Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh Soi Sang Con Duong Dang Ta va Nhan Dan Ta Tien Vao The Ky XXI, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 11, thang 6 nam 2000, (Vietnamese). [Le Kha Phieu, Ho Chi Minh Thoughts Delights Our Party's and Our People's Path Into the 21st Century, *Communist Review*, vol.11, June 2000]; and, Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Dissent and Political Reform in Vietnam, 1997-2002, in Claudia Derichs and Thomas Heberer, eds. *The Power of Ideas: Intellectual Input and Political Change in East and Southeast Asia*, NIAS Studies in Asian Topics no.36, Copenhagen S, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2006, pp.115-132.

⁶² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986].

⁶³ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyết số 13-Bộ Chính trị, Về Nhiệm vụ và Chính sách Đối Ngoại Trong Tình Hình Mới, ngày 20 tháng 5 năm 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation, 20 May 1988].

specific stages⁶⁴ of Vietnamese evolution. The 1991-Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism identified Vietnam's strategic orientation as "Equal and mutual-benefit cooperation with every country, regardless of different socio-political regimes on the basis of peaceful coexistence principles."⁶⁵ Following political platforms and policy directions of the VCP pave the way to promoting Vietnam's economic integration into regional and global economy.

Chaotic and complicated world situations together with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the fall of Eastern European socialist countries, and increasingly powerful economic globalization trend, on the basis of 1991-platform-defined strategic goals and orientations, right after the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP organized Third Plenum of the Central Committee⁶⁶ to concretize strategic foreign policy directions of Party's Political Report and 1991-Platform. That Plenum concluded with an important resolution, namely the *Third Plenum Resolution on External Missions*,⁶⁷ which exclusively focused on tackling problems and requirements of Vietnam's foreign affairs. That Central Committee resolution was designed to define missions of external relations, foreign policy guiding thoughts, and maxims in handling external affairs. By formulating and implementing that resolution, the VCP also worked out policies of opening, multilateralizing and diversifying Vietnam's diplomatic relations not only in economy, culture, science fields but also politics sector. The Resolution emphasized that Vietnam's diplomatic relations were not limited within state-state relations but also Party's and the masses' external relations, on the fundamental principles of peaceful development and cooperation. That Central Committee Third Plenum Resolution, with its fundamental long-term foreign policy directions,

⁶⁴ "the new context," in the words of the VCP in the Sixth Party Congress Political Report.

⁶⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

⁶⁶ Held in Hanoi, June 1992.

⁶⁷ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet Hoi nghi trung uong 3 khoa 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1992, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Central Committee Third Plenum Resolution*, Seventh National Congress, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1992].

marked the reemergence of VCP's *Renovation* diplomacy-the foreign policy directions of strategic independence, self-reliance and determination pursuing peace, cooperation and development.

The Central Committee Eighth Plenum Resolution,⁶⁸ raised new viewpoints on the “objects of struggle” and “partners” with new viewpoint on the flexibility in identifying subjects and fields of international cooperation in order to effectively serve nation-state's interests. This Resolution argued for a more sophisticated dialectical application of these concepts: “with the objects of struggle, we can find areas for cooperation; with the partners, there exist interests that are contradictory and different from those of ours. We should be aware of these, thus overcoming the two tendencies, namely lacking vigilance and showing rigidity in our perception, design, and implementation of specific policies.” Accordingly, the VCP persistently pursued external relation policies of strategic independence and self-determination, openness, multilateralization and diversification following the mottos of “More Friends, Less Foes,” “Cooperation and Struggle,” increasing partnership, avoiding conflicts, confrontations, being isolation and dependence; facilitating socio-economic development based on maintaining peaceful and stable environment.⁶⁹

The VCP convened its Tenth Party Congress in Hanoi in late April 2006. In its Political Report, the VCP specified that, Vietnam “must strive to unswervingly carry out a foreign policy of multilateral and diversified relationships while staying proactive in integrating

⁶⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi, thang 8 nam 2003, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, On Protecting National Security in the New Context, August 2003]. “Any force that plans and acts against the objectives we hold in the course of national construction and defense is the ‘object of struggle,’ and, anyone who respects our independence and sovereignty, establishes and expands friendly, equal, and mutually beneficial relations with Vietnam is our ‘partner’.”

⁶⁹ Hong Ha, Ve Doi Tac cua Ta, Tham luan tai toa dam khoa hoc *Khuon kho doi tac trong quan he doi ngoai cua Viet Nam: Thuc trang va trien vong*, Hoc vien Quan he quoc te, Ha Noi, 27 thang 12 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, Regarding Our Partners, Speech at the Scientific discussion on *Partnership Framework in Vietnam's Foreign Relations: Reality and Perspectives*, Diplomatic Academy, Hanoi, 27 December 2005]; Nguyen Vu Tung, Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framwork in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

into the world economic community and expanding international cooperation in other fields.”⁷⁰ Following the Party Congress just prior to the APEC Summit in November 2006, Vietnam’s diplomacy gained a major achievement as the Bush Administration officially decided to remove Vietnam from the list of “countries of particular concern” thus clearing the way for the granting of PNTR status (December 2006). The year of 2006 could be considered as a remarkable success milestone of Vietnam’s multi-years quest to become “a reliable friend with all countries.” In this year, Vietnam’s foreign policy reached three peaks: hosting the APEC summit, gaining membership in the WTO and unanimous nomination by the Asia bloc for non-permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council.⁷¹ In 2007, Vietnam was elected in majority by the United Nation General Assembly as a non-permanent member on the Security Council for a two-year period beginning in 2008.

Nonetheless, the *Doi Moi* course in external relations from thinking to reality still needed to be proceeded. That foreign affairs renovation was related to the development of both diplomatic theoretical perceptions and relationships between strategic diplomatic guidelines and specific foreign policies, as well as to the fundamental issues of foreign affairs directions.

4.2.3. 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 fours 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)

⁷⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 10*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006].

⁷¹ Former Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien’s assessment about Vietnam’s Renovation diplomatic achievements, *Vietnam Economy Review*, 14 November 2006; see also, Nguyen Dy Nien, *Chinh Sach va Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai trong thoi ky Doi Moi*, *Tap chi Cong san*, 17(140), tháng 9, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, *Policies and Diplomatic Activities in the Renovation Era*, *Communist Review*, vol.17(140), September, 2005].

officialdom and corruption.⁷² 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. 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"⁷³ 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 1990s⁷⁴-the beginning of the *Renovation* period.

On the basis of VCP's stance analysis and current as well as the future situation, the 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 within the VCP. The following issues may still be Vietnam's foreign policy directions in the coming time.

⁷² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi Quyet ve Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001]; see also, Do Muoi, *Thoi Cuoc Hien Nay va Nhiem Vu Cua Chung Ta*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 8, thang 8 nam 1992, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, *The Current Situation and Our Tasks*, *Communist Review*, vol.8, August 1992]; Nguyen Vu Tung, *Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies*, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122.

⁷³ "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).

⁷⁴ 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.

(i) *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 thoughts⁷⁵ 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,⁷⁶ as well as the rise of many emerging powers⁷⁷ 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;⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ This policy helps Vietnam fulfill pressing requirements of development and ensuring national security in the new

⁷⁵ Wang Jisi, China's search for a Grand Strategy, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.90, issue:2, 2011, pp.68-79.

⁷⁶ Charles Krauthammer, The Unipolar Moment, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.70, issue:1, 1990/1991, p.30; Vu Duong Huan, Nhan To Lam Thay Doi va Xu The Phat Trien Cuc Dien The Gioi Hien Nay, *Tap chi Nghien cuu quoc te*, so 75, Ha Noi, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Vu Duong Huan, Factoring in Changes and Current World Situation, *International Studies*, vol.75, Hanoi, 2008].

⁷⁷ Dniel W. Drezner, The New New World Order, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.86, issue:2, 2007, pp.34-46. 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." See also, Vo Van Kiet, Nhung Doi Hoi Moi Cua Thoi Cuoc, *Quoc Te*, 13 thang 4 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, New Requirements of the Situation, *International Affairs*, 13 April 2005].

⁷⁸ Dniel W. Drezner, *ibid.*, 2007.

⁷⁹ Nguyen Xuan Son, va Nguyen Van Du, *Quan He cua Viet Nam voi Cac Nuoc Lon Trong Hai Thap Nien Dau The Ky 21*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Xuan Son, and Nguyen Van Du, *Diplomatic Relations of Vietnam with Power Countries in the first two decades of the 21st Century*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006].

international context. After a long time focusing on Middle East and Central Asia, the United States tends toward Asia Pacific to find and to assert its inherent role.⁸⁰ Diplomatic activities of the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of Defense: Robert Gates (former) and Leon Panetta (former) 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 United States 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,⁸¹ 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

⁸⁰ Statement of President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall, Tokyo, the first stop on his first visit to Asia as President of the United States (14 December, 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>.

⁸¹ Nguyen Chi Vinh, Viet Nam khong chap nhan nen hoa binh le thuoc, (Vietnamese). <http://vnexpress.net/gl/xa-hoi/2011/01/3ba25239/>, accessed: 20 January, 2011. [Nguyen Chi Vinh, Vietnam Never Accept Dependent Peace, 2011].

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.⁸² 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.⁸³

In order to implement the above directions, we can say that Vietnam must develop tactful policies and maintain balanced relations between pairs: among the United States, Japan, China and Russia and three-country groups including the United States-Japan-China, the United States-Japan-Russia, especially the paired relations of the United States-China,⁸⁴ and the new movement in the United States-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

⁸² According to the VCP this is “integration” but not “assimilation” process. See, Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on “*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*,” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

⁸³ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007, p.496.

⁸⁴ Mark Manyin, Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005.

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 United States, as well as Vietnam’s exploitation of the United States’, Japan’s and Russia’s attention in solving disputes on the South China Sea (the East Sea) issue; its application of the United States pressure and ASEAN’s multilateral diplomatic forum (at ASEAN Summits 2010, 2011) to control China’s ambition have been specific proofs of this trend.⁸⁵

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.⁸⁶ 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.”⁸⁷ Ton Nu Thi Ninh, the then Deputy Head of the National Assembly’s External Relations Committee once said, everyone knows that we have to keep a fine balance neither leaning over toward the United States nor bowing to China.⁸⁸ Vietnam is pursuing a strategy of both internal and external balancing. 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.

⁸⁵ Vu Duong Ninh, Vietnam and ASEAN Relation in the 20th Century, *Southeast Asian Studies Review*, Hanoi, July 2000.

⁸⁶ Mark Manyin, Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005.

⁸⁷ Kim Ninh quoted by Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007, p.497.

⁸⁸ Quoted by Jan Perlez, U.S. Competes with China for Vietnam’s Allegiance, *International Herald Tribune*, 19 June 2006.

(ii) Diplomatic strategy building and deployment process is cooperation and struggle process in relations with powers

Cooperation 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.⁸⁹

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.⁹⁰ 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 United States, Japan and European countries over the past years.⁹¹ 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 cooperation, 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.

⁸⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

⁹⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi, thang 8 nam 2003, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, On Protecting National Security in the New Context, August 2003].

⁹¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *ibid.*, 2008

(iii) *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, multilateralization, diversification and international integration.⁹² However, multilateralization, 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 at 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."⁹³

Dependence on foreign economy is indispensable because Vietnam conducted global participation and international economic integration with its weak and underdeveloped economy.⁹⁴ The deeper and wider Vietnam's scale of international integration process has

⁹² Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000.

⁹³ Vu Duong Ninh, Vietnam and ASEAN Relation in the 20th Century, *Southeast Asian Studies Review*, Hanoi, July 2000, p.45.

⁹⁴ Nguyen Mai, Hoi Nhap Kinh Te Voi The Gioi, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 4, thang 3 nam 2000, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Mai, Economic Integration Into the World, *Communist Review*, vol.4, March 2000].

been, the more problems and dangerous difficulties and challenges will appear.⁹⁵ 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 United States), 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.⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷ 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

⁹⁵ Nguyen Phu Trong, Mot So Van De Ve Con Duong Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi o Nuoc Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.1, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Phu Trong, Some Questions Concerning the Path toward Socialism in Our Country, *Communist Review*, no.1, 2001].

⁹⁶ Hoang Tu, Loi Ich Quoc Gia la Tren Het, trong Hoc vien Quan he quoc te, *Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban The gioi, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Hoang Tu, National Interest is Above All, in Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, *Vietnamese Foreign Policy*, Hanoi, Global Publishing House, 2007].

⁹⁷ Nguyen Trung, Cho dung cua Viet Nam trong thoi dai toan cau hoa, *Thoi dai moi*, vol.11, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trung, Vietnam's Position in the Globalization Era, *New Era*, vol.11, 2007].

definition.⁹⁸ 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.

4.3. Initial 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 changes⁹⁹ 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."¹⁰⁰ Once again, following Hermann's classification of foreign policy changes, those changes in Vietnam could be classified as "Major Foreign Policy Redirection"¹⁰¹ 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.

⁹⁸ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007; and, Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

⁹⁹ Charles F. Hermann, Changing course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue:1, 1990, p.5.

¹⁰⁰ World of Quotes, <http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/George-F.-Kennan/1/index.html>

¹⁰¹ Charles F. Hermann, *ibid.*, 1990.

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."¹⁰² 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

¹⁰² Quoted in Carlyle A. Thayer, *Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution*, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000.

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.¹⁰³

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's¹⁰⁴ and Goldman's¹⁰⁵ 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 cooperations 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.¹⁰⁶ The

¹⁰³ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Charles F. Hermann, Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue:1, 1990, p.6.

¹⁰⁵ Kjell Goldman, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p.4.

¹⁰⁶ Nguyen Manh Cam, Gia Tri Lau Ben va Dinh Huong Nhat Quan, trong Bo Ngoai Giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.223-230, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Long Lasting Value and Consistent Direction, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.223-230]; and, Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts about Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

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 Cambodia¹⁰⁷ 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

¹⁰⁷ 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 Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), the Cambodia-Laos-Myanmar-Vietnam Sub-regional Cooperation 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/nr040819103029/ns071211134730.

the United States and China) in political, economic and military field. Vietnamese leaders, with the dominance of Neorealism and Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism,¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹ 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; regional and international obstacles: territorial disputes, trade disputes. Especially, the VCP has to solve theoretically and

¹⁰⁸ Nguyen Van Linh, Hoc Tap De Nam Vung va Van Dung Dung Dan Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin, *Nhan Dan*, 10 thang 10 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Study to Firmly Grasp and Correctly Utilize Marxism-Leninism, *People*, October 10, 1989]; Nguyen Duc Binh, Tiep Tuc Mot Cach Kien Dinh va Sang Tao Con Duong Xa Hoi Chu Nghia, *Tap chi Cong San*, phan 2, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Resolute and creativity continuing along the socialist path, *Communist Review*, part 2, 2006].

¹⁰⁹ David Koh, The Politics of a Divided Party and Parkinson’s State in Vietnam, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.23, no.3, 2001, pp.533-551.

¹¹⁰ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

¹¹¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi Quyet ve Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

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 pursues.

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 influence¹¹² and, fears of being assimilation and dependency, and threat of "Peaceful evolution."¹¹³ 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 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.¹¹⁴ This is a closed cycle which reflects the leadership concentration mechanism of the VCP according to one core principle of socialist state structure: "Democratic Centralism."

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

¹¹² Tran Quang Co, *The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong*, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

¹¹³ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution*, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹¹⁴ William S. Turley, *Party, State, and People: Political Structure and Economic Prospects*, in William S. Turley, and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993, and, David Koh, *The Politics of a Divided Party and Parkinson's State in Vietnam*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.23, no.3, 2001.

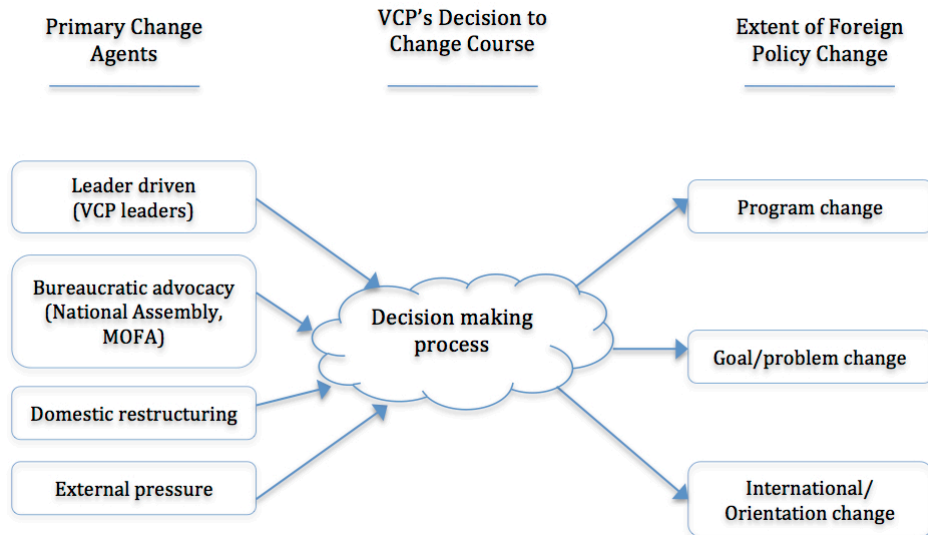


Figure 1: Modification of Hermann's Model ¹¹⁵ on Foreign Policy Change: Vietnam's Case

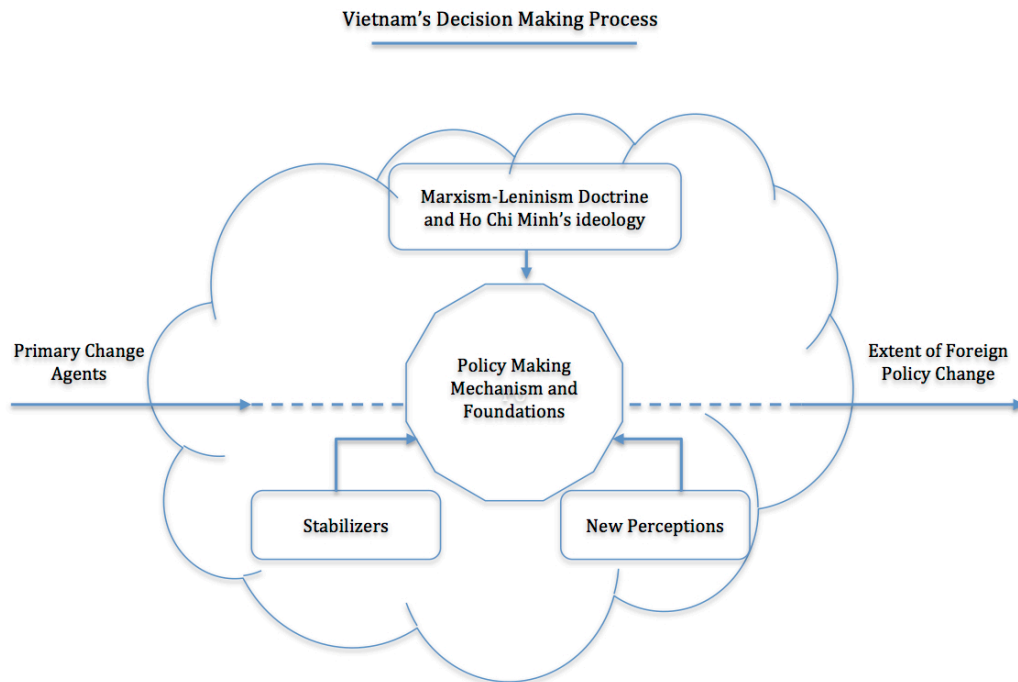


Figure 2: Decision Making Process: Vietnam's Case

Chapter 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

¹¹⁵ Charles F. Hermann, Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.34, issue:1, 1990. Fig 1. The mediating role of decision process between change agents and degree of policy change, p.13.

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.¹¹⁶

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

¹¹⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp.162-163.

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.

CHAPTER 5

**IDEOLOGY-REALITY DILEMMA: VIETNAMESE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FIRST STAGE
OF RENOVATION (1986-1991)**

5.1. Internal politics and the formulation and implementation of the new foreign policy in the first stage of Renovation

The matter of state and ruling regime survival has been on the focus of many scholars of international politics. According to some scholars, “regime survival is of greater significance to national leaders in the context in which fundamental economic and political changes always create new forces challenging ruling regimes.”¹ The policy is designed to cope with such perception of challenges could be different from those which are formulated on the logics of state survival.

The case of Vietnam since 1986 is not an exception. With the Sixth Party Congress,² Hanoi “began a process of reshaping its world view and reexamining the country’s reality” in order to face challenges of a world in which the rules of the game were quite different from the country’s practices, perceptions and experiences.³ Toward the end of the Cold War, there rapidly emerged many changes in both regional and global context. The world also experienced unprecedented developments in the regional and global economic integration process. Globalization was considered not only the mainstream of economic integration but also culture, social and even political accommodations. In Vietnam, coinciding with *Perestroika* in the Soviet Union and *Reform* in China, the process of reshaping of the VCP’s world view began in the mid-1980s, or even earlier.⁴ Vietnam

¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s Security Challenges: Hanoi’s New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122, quoted Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1992, p.13.

² Held in Hanoi, 15-18 December 1986; also known as Reform Party Congress of 1986.

³ Nguyen Dy Nien, The Gioi Dang Thay Doi, Con Chung Ta, trong Bo Ngoai Giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.33, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, The World Changing: How About Us?, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.33].

⁴ According to some scholars and Party leaders, there were some initial efforts of senior member of the Party to carry out reforms, to apply new thinkings of how to advance to socialism in the context of Vietnam. See, Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), tháng 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989]; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

committed to and carried out the *Renovation* with new thinkings in the economic field. Then came latterly were questions about interactions between low and high politics, in other words, economic policy and foreign, security strategy along with geo-strategic shocks of 1989-1991.⁵ The shocks, which combined both economic and strategic shock, and relative interactions between them as well, had significant impacts on the leadership's new thinkings about how to carry out Vietnam's *Renovation* policy in the new context.⁶

Changes in economic perceptions would inevitably lead to ideological outlook and policy shifts in Vietnam. The nature of both internal politics and foreign policy in Vietnam has more to do with the survival of ruling regime that acts in the name of the country. The way that VCP's policy makers identify challenges to the survival and sustainable development of Vietnam has been influenced by the perceived challenges and threats to both the country and the ruling regime.⁷ According to this issue, Vietnam might choose the comprehensive and cooperative foreign policies rather than the exclusive and competitive ones.

This part tries to analyze the foreign policy direction of Vietnam from the internal politics and international perspective, and see how Vietnamese leadership deals with the issues of the changing international context and internal political socio-economic affairs, especially the interplay of ideology and reality in the first stage of *Renovation*. This part, therefore, will be confined to discussing the policy implications of the twos VCP Politburo's Resolution No. 32 and No. 13 to Vietnam's foreign policy direction in the context of *Renovation*. In order to accomplish study objectives, not only content of these Resolutions will be analyzed but also their formulation and implementation processes. It means this part will carry out some further discusses on Vietnam's internal politics, especially internal debates of the VCP over its own *Renovation* policy. From this

⁵ William Branigan, Vietnam Reaffirms Featly to Marxism; Hanoi Shocked by Defeat of Allies in Moscow, *Washington Post*, 6 September 1991.

⁶ Hoang Chi Bao, Chu Nghia Xa Hoi Trong Boi Canh Chinh Tri Cua Doi Moi, *Nhan Dan*, 24 thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Hoang Chi Bao, Socialism in the Political Context of Doi Moi, *People*, August 24, 1989].

⁷ See Le Hong Hiep, Performance-based Legitimacy: The Case of the Communist Party of Vietnam and Doi Moi, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.34, no.2, 2012, pp.145-72; and, Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp.423-444.

perspective, a realist/neorealist approach may be a suitable theoretical tool to analyze and explain the country's foreign policy. By studying VCP's major documents and statements; speeches, monographs, manuscripts and articles by Vietnamese leaders and scholars on the theme, this part also aims to clarify initial evolution of the new foreign policy of Vietnam in the context of the *Doi Moi-Renovation*.

5.1.1. Challenge perception and foreign policy directions in the Politburo Resolution No. 13

Joseph Nye once said: "Security is like oxygen-you tend not to notice it until you begin to lose it, but once that occurs there is nothing else that you will think about."⁸ In accordance with *Doi Moi* policy, the VCP introduced new approaches to foreign policies, national security, regime survival, and party legitimacy; and came to assert that the security of a country depended not only on its national strength but also on the international and regional systems to which the country belongs.⁹

It was the Politburo Resolution No. 13 of 20 May 1988, namely, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, which now can be widely recognized as a fundamental and major landmark in Vietnam's foreign policy. With this Resolution, Vietnamese policy makers formulated a totally new "multidirectional foreign policy" orientation. In this Resolution, the VCP's new leadership argued that three factors, namely: "economic weaknesses, political isolation, and economic blockade are major threats to our country's security and independence."¹⁰ Economic weaknesses and economic blockade were also interpreted as the threat of "poverty." Senior VCP member and diplomat, former Deputy Foreign Minister Tran Quang Co wrote: "The present enemies of Vietnam are

⁸ Joseph S. Nye, East Asia Security: The Case for Deep Engagement, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1995, p.91.

⁹ Ogasawara Takayuki, Vietnam's Security Policy in the Post-Cambodia Period: Diplomatic Dimension, in Dao Huy Ngoc, and Matsunaga Nobuo, eds., *Asia-Pacific and Vietnam-Japan Relations*, Hanoi, Institute for International Relations, 1994, p.108. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2000).

¹⁰ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

poverty and backwardness...”¹¹ From Hanoi’s new perception, poverty and backwardness caused insecurity and threatened the stability of the regime and VCP’s legitimacy. In its later official documents, the VCP rephrased above perception in the terms of “the threat of economically lagging behind other countries in the region and the world.”¹² For the first time in Vietnam’s modern history, the VCP officially recognized that dominant challenges to regime legitimacy and state survival are not from outside as they were in the past. These changes are understandable as for state and regime survival, it is necessary for the VCP to find alternative threats to replace old, outdated ones that mostly based on ideological confrontations. Later and further comments on this issue, Vietnam’s former Vice Premier Vu Khoan wrote: “Reality in many countries has shown that the threats to security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of a country lie within the national borders. Reality has also shown that in many cases, even without the element of foreign aggression, security and sovereignty were challenged and territories were divided because of mistakes in economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious policies. The developmental backwardness will reduce the people’s belief, cause social problems, and inevitably lead to threats to security, public order, and even regime survival.”¹³

To ease the threat of isolation and to make way for further integration into regional and international community, Vietnam changed its old perception of friends, allies to “Friends of Vietnam are all the ones who are ready to cooperate and to assist Vietnam in the fight against poverty and backwardness.”¹⁴ From this perceptions, the VCP gave priority to the

¹¹ Tran Quang Co, The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi: Nha xuất ban chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.108, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.108]. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2010).

¹² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc giua nhiem ky khoa 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1994, tr.15, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh National Mid-term Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1994, p.15].

¹³ Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phat trien va Anh huong trong Quan he quoc te, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.209-210, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.209-210].

¹⁴ Tran Quang Co, The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.108, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.108]. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2010).

expansion and diversification of Vietnam's foreign relations to overcome political dilemma, international isolation and economic blockade. It deployed a new foreign policy motto, namely, "the economic diplomacy," which combined economic and diplomatic means in the search for security and development; and further diminished the role that military-security sector could play.¹⁵

The Politburo-the primary policy making mechanism in Vietnam-agreed on a new codification of foreign policy objectives that gave priority to economic development and laid a greater focus on "national interest"¹⁶ and internal dimension of national security, namely, regime security. They also designed policies to cope with those challenges. That important Politburo Resolution also stated that: "With a strong economy, just-enough national defense capability, and expanded international relations, we will be more able to maintain our independence and successfully construct socialism."¹⁷ It was a clear shift from the traditional communist perception of security toward a more liberal and practical one. The VCP has chosen a new approach to a more balanced concept of national security. Military strength and limited external relations were recognized implicitly to be ineffective to ensure national security as well as regime survival. In the new context and perception, the VCP allowed its senior officials to talk more about that sensitive issue: "the global economic race is now replacing the arm race in the global scale and economic [strength] is becoming the decisive factor in the comprehensive strength of every country."¹⁸ In an important article regarding to Vietnam diplomacy in the new context, Tran Quang Co also wrote: "Recognizing clearly that economic weakness is the possible source of

¹⁵ Gareth Porter, The Transformation of Vietnam's Worldview: From Two Camps to Interdependence, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.19, no.1, June 1990, pp.1-19. See also, Thayer's argument about the economic aspect of this decision in Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000, pp.2-3.

¹⁶ This was the first time VCP used this term in its main official document. This term would quickly become an important basis for the formulation and implementation of Vietnam's national strategy.

¹⁷ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

¹⁸ Tran Quang Co, The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.131, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.131]. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2000).

disadvantages in political, military, social fields and international relations, our Party is determined to lead the country out of poverty and backwardness as soon as possible, thus considering the task of economic developments the top priority... In this period of historic significance, everything must be serving the goal of economic development.”¹⁹

In the past, Vietnam used to be known as a country placed in a strategically important geographic location which quickly became one of the confrontation points between the two systems. For nearly a half of century, Vietnam was drawn into the big power’s games and proudly considered itself as an outpost of socialism. Vietnam's foreign policy at that time was the recognition of a polarized world and the self-determination of Vietnam’s position in the socialist system. These perceptions led Vietnam to pursue international commitments under the influence of Marxism-Leninism, such as the international communist movement, international duties with oppressed peoples, international obligations against the capitalism and imperialism.²⁰ Vietnam is one of the countries which experienced a long and hard history of defending the nation from foreign invasions. That history influenced the Vietnamese’s perceptions of national security.²¹ According to a Vietnamese General, in the Cold War era as the tension between the two system was still at its high state, confrontations and proxy-wars exploded in some strategical clash points including Southeast Asia, national security was used to consider in terms of conducting war and taking military measures, such as building the people arm forces and armies.²² That

¹⁹ Tran Quang Co, Chang Duong Phia Truoc, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.194-195, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, The Way Ahead, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.194-195].

²⁰ Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012, pp.35-36.

²¹ Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phat trien va Anh huong trong Quan he quoc te, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995]; and, Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and, Raymond Feddema, eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.405-424.

²² Pham Quang Can, Cung Co Quoc Phong va An Ninh, Bao Ve Vung Chac To Quoc Xa Hoi Chu Nghia, trong Tran Nham, *Co Mot Viet Nam Nhu The: Doi Moi va Phat Trien*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1996, tr.322, (Vietnamese). [Pham Quang Can, Strengthening National Defense and Security and Defending the Socialist Republic, in Tran Nham, ed., *There is Such a Country of Vietnam: Renovation and Development*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996, p.322].

uncertain and insecure context, according to analyses by the VCP, created threats and challenges to state and regime survival; and in response to which, Vietnam had to devote most of its precious and scarce resources. In the high period of the Cold War, Vietnam spent almost all of its foreign aid to military and security affairs.²³ That inevitably led to negative impacts on political independence, economic stagnation and social crisis in the 1980s. To ensure state and regime survival, the VCP had no way but change.

The Resolution No. 13 also emphasized the strategic goals: “to maintain peace, take advantage of favorable world conditions”²⁴ to stabilize the domestic situation and set the base for economic development over the next ten to fifteen years. These above strategic thinkings were officially formulated to be the two main tasks of Vietnam’s diplomacy: First, it has to create favorable external conditions for economic development and political stabilization by normalizing relations with major powers, especially with China and the United States, and promoting relations with neighboring countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Second, it has to seek possible opportunities to expand foreign economic relations.²⁵ Also on this context, one VCP senior official and diplomat distinguished differences and analyzed relative connections between the security objective and the development objective of a country’s foreign policy. He argued that, on the basis of new thinking and perception about the impact of the economics internationalization and globalization, the thought of self-reliance has been proven outdated and has been replaced by those of diversification of foreign relations. Vietnam’s diplomacy is tasked to find any possibility in order to create and ensure an optimal position in international relations and better preserving independence and sovereignty. Promotion of the country’s international

²³ According to Nicholas Cummings-Bruce, Cambodia conflict costed Vietnam about 2 million dollars a day throughout most of the 1980s. Nicholas Cummings-Bruce, Vietnam “Defeat” as Army Pull Out: No Glory in Hanoi’s Troop Withdrawal, *The Guardian*, London, September 18, 1989.

²⁴ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988]; See also, Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006].

²⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Su That, 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986].

relations, politically and economically, therefore, plays a more importance role as compared with the role of force in the defense of national security.²⁶ This could be voice of the radical reformers.

On the other hand, some powerful conservative factors inside the VCP also analyzed, the greater emphasis on self-reliance,²⁷ in fact, does not mean the avoidance of further integration to the region and the world. The connection and relationship between self-reliance and integration should be analyzed and implemented under the guidance of dialectic materialism's viewpoint. Self-reliance should be seen as a serious effort aimed at building and strengthening the domestic base for better integration into the region and the world. This also takes into account both positive and negative aspects of economic integration as well as interaction with the rest of the world.²⁸ It can be said that, those above voices did not mean to oppose new thinkings and *Doi Moi* policy, but was a call for more focus on internal factors. They were certainly voice of the old guards who preferred a stable and steady renovation²⁹ rather than a too radical and liberal one.

According to Baldwin's analyses, developing a new concept of security always implies the way the leadership perceives threats to its state and vice versa.³⁰ With the Resolution No. 13, Vietnam started a comprehensive restructuring in the overall foreign policy and "a fundamental change in foreign policy thinking relating to matters of security and development, national interests and international obligations, as well as alliances and rally

²⁶ Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phat trien va Anh huong trong Quan he quoc te, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.205-210, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.205-210].

²⁷ Le Duc Anh, Nang Cao Canh Giac, Cung Co Quoc Phong va An Ninh cua Dat Nuoc, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 4, thang 4 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Le Duc Anh, Raise Vigilance, Reinforce National Defense and Security, *Communist Review*, vol.4, April 1988].

²⁸ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and Raymond Feddema eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: View from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston: Brill, 2000, p.414; and, Dang Dinh Quy, va Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc Lap Tu Chu va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Self-Reliance and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

²⁹ Do Muoi, Mo Rong va Nang Cao Hon Nua Hieu Qua Hoat Dong Kinh Te Doi Ngoai, *Nhan Dan*, 14 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Expand and Raise Still Higher the Efficiency of External Economic Activities, *People*, November 14, 1989].

³⁰ David A. Baldwin, The Concept of Security, *Reviews of International Studies*, vol.23, 1997, pp.5-26.

of international forces.”³¹ The VCP formulated “a new concept of comprehensive security that no longer gives priorities to military affairs but allows the conducts of a new foreign policy to play a bigger role in ensuring national security and supporting the economic development of Vietnam.”³² As one Vietnamese diplomat once said, “For the first time, we are relying on diplomacy to safeguard security. In the past, it was only used as a crown to military victory.”³³

Before *Doi Moi*, Hanoi had once seen security as strictly military and exclusive. Its leaders’ world view was decisively sharpened by the external international environment of the high Cold War period; and, consistently based on the “two camps,” “two worlds” view and Marxist-Leninist ideological stricture about the antagonistic contradiction between socialism and capitalism to formulate and implement its policy.³⁴ With the Politburo Resolution No. 13, Hanoi started to shift away from the ideologically divided world view towards the concept of an interdependent, globalized world which it saw as a major trend of the current era. Former Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach,³⁵ one of the leading reformist figures of the 1980s stated that the world economy “is entering a period of the most profound changes since the industrial revolution some 200 years ago,” and all the economies were now “linked with one another in an integrated whole, which is the world economy.”³⁶ It seemed that Thach’s perception was no longer supporting the traditional Vietnamese view of the world as a struggle of the two camps; and in a world of

³¹ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

³² Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam’s New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and Raymond Feddema eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: View from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.409-410. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2010).

³³ Quoted in Michael C. William, *Vietnam at the Crossroad*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1992, p.60.

³⁴ They are the fundamental issues of Marxism and developed later by Lenin which announces that according to historical materialism analyses, the international system was divided into two worlds or two camps, one of which was destined to destroyed the other by the laws of history.

³⁵ Nguyen Co Thach (1921-1998), was an outstanding diplomat of Vietnam. He hold the post of Foreign Minister from Feb 1980 to July 1991; Vice Primer from 1987 to 1991. He was a full member of the Sixth Politburo (1986-1991). He was considered as a radical reformer with pro-Soviet, even pro-U.S view points.

³⁶ Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989].

interdependence, states with different political and economic systems faced similar challenges in a single overarching economic system.³⁷

Thach's perceptions may be under the influence of some international relations specialists who developed concepts of wartime strategy on the foundation of using the language of "scenarios" and power politics analyses.³⁸ Their analyses purely based on realism assessments without any consideration to ideological contextualization. With the emergence and expansion of liberalism and neoliberalism in 1990s, and the initial advantage of globalization, there raised assumptions that: the nature of international relations has changed and closely connected to the globalization process; sovereignty, territorial right and national border has been narrowed; nations have to accept the globalized game and sacrifice part of their supreme national sovereignty unless they want to be left aside and then fallen backward.³⁹ Realism perceptions and realist form of geopolitical analysis gradually lost its vital strength and influence. Some scholars even talked about the end of realism as main theory of international relation.⁴⁰ But in some certain case as Vietnam during the critical period of new thinkings in the late 1980s and early 1990s, realism analyses of national strength, geopolitic factors, power influence and balance of power has been the replacement of ideological approach which was shaken to its foundation due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Someone later named that new approach was a form of deideologizing international relations.⁴¹ For the VCP, it might be a

³⁷ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6, November/December 2006, pp.805-824; Gareth Porter, The Transformation of Vietnam's Worldview: From Two Camps to Interdependence, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.19, no.1, June 1990, p.6.

³⁸ Phan Doan Nam, Mot Vai Suy Nghi Ve Doi Moi Tu Duy Doi Ngoai, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 2, thang 2 nam 1988, tr. 50-54, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Some Thoughts on the Renovation of Thinking on Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, vol.2, January 1988, pp.50-54]; and, Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

³⁹ Nguyen Co Thach, Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

⁴⁰ Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and States Strategies after the Cold War*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999.

⁴¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and, Raymond Feddema, eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, pp.405-424.

tactical choice to solve the certain problems in present and near future while holds fast to the strategical goal toward a bright dawn of communism in the end.

Based on the perceptions of “scenario” format in analyzing foreign-policy and strategic issues, former Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach proposed new thinkings about foreign affairs and national security to the Politburo.⁴² In their nature, those analyses and policy proposals all used realism approach. Thach recognized that diplomatic missions and the formulation of foreign affairs must base on the calculation of national power on the basis of a realpolitik strategy. According to Thach’s point of view, diplomatic calculations need to be the realization of new thinkings of the Sixth Party Congress and gradually escape from the control of ideology. National interest should be the basis and sole foundation of the national strategy formulation process. This notion led Thach to the conclusion that, for Vietnam, the most appropriate foreign policy choice is to abandon its hope to create an ideological alliance with China. Thach were skeptical of Chinese motives and analyzed that, China, itself, do not support this approach and always considers its Chinese national interest is the first priority in foreign policy calculation.⁴³ Therefore, Vietnam should turn to ASEAN, using the “ASEAN card” and regionalism to counterbalance China threat.⁴⁴ He even went further as arguing for greater balance in Vietnam’s foreign relation by improving ties with the United States, Western Europe and Japan.⁴⁵

The increasing pressure from China and the deadly danger if Vietnam falls into China’s control demands and forces Vietnam to ally with not only ASEAN but also even the United States and Western countries in the future ignoring the ideological biases. In Thach’s

⁴² It was no doubt that, Thach was the one behind the Politburo Resolution No. 13.

⁴³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

⁴⁴ Later, in his analyses on Vietnam’s integration process into ASEAN, Carlyle A. Thayer proved that idea and concluded that, “Vietnam joined ASEAN primarily for the political and strategic benefits in calculated it would gain vis-à-vis China and the United States.” Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam and ASEAN, *Conference on Vietnam in 2001: Prospect for Economic and Social Progress*, The Kenney Auditorium, Washington D.C. November 16-17, 2000.

⁴⁵ Nguyen Co Thach, De Tao Ra Dong Luc Manh Me Cho Cong Nghiep Hoa, Hien Dai Hoa, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 10, thang 10 nam 1994, tr.15-18, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, In Order to Create Strong Motive Force for Industrialization and Modernization, *Communist Review*, vol.10, October 1994, pp.15-18].

assessments, the threats from China are apparent and more dangerous than ideological fears causing by “Peaceful evolution” strategy of the West.⁴⁶ Nguyen Co Thach advocated and introduced the concept of regionalism to Vietnam’s diplomacy with a conclusion that, “Vietnam’s chances of survival may lie in regional cooperation better than in conventional strategy of alignment with ideologically motivated friends.”⁴⁷ However, these innovative and pioneer thinkings were not fully supported in the Politburo. They were accused of being too radical and deviating from the traditional Marxist-Leninist approach. The protest from conservative voices and China’s pressure forced the VCP to replace Thach at the Seventh Party Congress.⁴⁸ The leadership changes at the Seventh Party Congress marked the return of ideological strictures in Vietnam’s national strategy. The VCP finally had its choice to go with China instead of pursuing the diversification and multilateralization foreign policy.

Until the late 1990s, Thach’s realpolitik thinkings once again emerged and to be reconsidered the Politburo as the right policy choice for Vietnam. It came along with Politburo’s new assessments about China through lessons of tackling problems relating to Vietnam-China normalization process, experiences from the diplomatic efforts to settle Cambodian issue and the VCP’s acceptance of the concept of interdependence.⁴⁹ The VCP acknowledged that it was the time “to break the fence,” stride across the ideological lines and take part into an interdependent regional community in order to support Vietnam’s strategic purposes of economic development and security stability. Some Vietnamese

⁴⁶ In this point, Thach might have the same idea with Brantly Womack’s analyses about the asymmetry in relations among nations and some influenced factors such as: history, proximity...; See, Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006; and Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

⁴⁷ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri Quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1998].

⁴⁸ Between the Eleventh Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee (Jan 1991) and the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP had its final decision which was considered in favour of pro-ideology school. Nguyen Co Thach and his radical realist faction had to step down. At the Seventh Party Congress, Mr. Thach was removed from the Politburo and Central Committee. He retired later from all of his posts as Vice Premier and Foreign Minister.

⁴⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi Quyet ve Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

scholars once said that it was the second turning-point transformation of the VCP's national strategy (after the historical momentous renovation at the Sixth Party Congress) that led to an evolution for Vietnam's foreign policy in the late 1990s.⁵⁰

Despite fears and protests, Vietnam's policy decision in the late 1980s and early 1990s to normalize its relation with China might look like the choice that follows bandwagoning pattern which Stephen M. Walt has examined thoroughly in his book titled *The Origin of Alliances*. Vietnamese leaders might not directly use Balance of threat theory of Stephen M. Walt⁵¹ and Brantly Womack's Asymmetry theory⁵² in their process of formulating Vietnam's foreign policy. But we have to admit that, ideological calculations and challenge perceptions dominated the VCP in its way of making foreign policy decision.⁵³ Living the harsh reality after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European communist system, Vietnam tends to accuse the United States and Western countries of having devious plot to sabotage the remained socialist countries including Vietnam. The decision to go with China might be considered as a the bandwagoning policy but it was the ideological anchor for Vietnam's socialist boat in the storm of capitalism. The resurrection of ideology in Vietnam's foreign policy making process in the late 1980s and early 1990s is one of the main characteristic of Vietnam's diplomacy in the post Cold War.⁵⁴ According to Thayer's analyses of regime legitimacy and survival, the VCP has to return to its original foundation and use the weapon of ideology to ensure the leadership.⁵⁵ Vietnam still pursues renovation

⁵⁰ Nguyen Manh Cam, *Ngoai Giao Thoi Ky Doi Moi-Mot Giai Doan Phat Trien Quan Trong cu Nen Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Hien Dai*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.92, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, *Diplomacy During the Doi Moi Period-An Important Stage of Development in Contemporary Vietnamese Diplomacy*, *Communist Review*, no.92, 2005]; Vu Khoan, *Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam*, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, *The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

⁵¹ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

⁵² Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁵³ Alexander L. Vuving, *Grand Strategic Fit and Power Shift: Explaining Turning Points in China-Vietnam Relations*, in Shiping Tang, Mingjiang Li, and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Living With China: Regional States and China Through Crises and Turning Points*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

⁵⁴ Hong Ha, *Tinh Hinh The Gioi va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Chung Ta*, *Tap chi Cong san*, tháng 12 năm 1992, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, *The World Situation and Our Diplomacy*, *Communist Review*, Dec 1992].

⁵⁵ Carlyle A. Thayer, *Political Legitimacy of Vietnam's One Party-State: Challenges and Responses*, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2009, 28(4), pp.47-70.

policy but increases the Party's control over economic reforms and protects the ideological core of Marxism and Leninism. With these ideological and conservative perceptions and assessments of the VCP, it seems that Vietnam had limited choice and normalization with China looks like the last way out for Vietnam in the late 1980s.

Changes and adjustments did not come out until mid-1990s with Vietnam-ASEAN, Vietnam-United States rapprochements. May be the Vietnamese are aware of threats and dangers if they continue to isolate from the outside world and limit Vietnam's diplomatic relations on the basis of ideology. Following that framework would definitely lead Vietnam to the worst scenario of becoming politically and diplomatically dependent on China, the scenario that the Vietnamese constantly struggle to avoid through their long and harsh relationship with China. Regarding to this issue, Brantly Womack once analyzed, "In their three thousand years of interaction, China and Vietnam have been through a full range of relationships. Twenty-five years ago they were one another's worst enemy; fifty years ago they were the closest of comrades. Five hundred years ago they each saw themselves as Confucian empires; fifteen hundred years ago Vietnam was a part of China. Throughout all these fluctuations the one constant has been that China is the larger power and Vietnam the smaller. China has rarely been able to dominate Vietnam, and yet the relationship is shaped by its asymmetry."⁵⁶ The threats of being dependent and controlled, and the advantages of participating with the whole world drive the Vietnamese communist leaders to the decision of giving up the pattern of alignment with ideologically motivated friends in formulating foreign policy.⁵⁷ In the new regional and global context, Vietnam needs an all new diplomatic strategy which should be diversified, multilateralized, and balanced. The strategy should also be appropriate with ruling regime's characteristics, Vietnam's

⁵⁶ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.i.

⁵⁷ Do Muoi, Thoi Cuoc Hien Nay va Nhiem Vu Cua Chung Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 8, thang 8 nam 1992, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, The Current Situation and Our Tasks, *Communist Review*, vol.8, August 1992]; Vo Van Kiet, Tin Tuong va Quyet Tam, Giu Vung Doc Lap Tu Chu, Thuc Hien Dan Giau, Nuoc Manh, Xa Hoi Cong Bang, Van Minh, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 11, thang 11 nam 1994, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, With Trust and Determination, Upholding Independence and Self-Reliance, Realizing the Goal of Prosperous People, a Strong Country, and a Equitable and Civilized Society, *Communist Review*, vol.11, November 1994].

historical-social and geopolitical conditions. We will analyze this issue in the next Chapter as we study the second stage of Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War.

At least, in the end of 1980s, in theory, with the No. 13 Resolution, the VCP expressed its belief in a more comprehensive and open minded concept of "strategic security and independence" that declared "security of any country should be based on its conditions of scientific and economic developments and at the same time, is mutually dependent on the security of other countries."⁵⁸ Vietnam's new concept of security has become a more comprehensive one. With this new approach, the VCP considers the importance and balance of both internal and external aspects; independence and interdependence. Thus, the security perception is domestically oriented, which has important and long-term implications for the country's foreign policy.⁵⁹ In other words, this Resolution marked the beginning of Vietnam's transition period from confrontation to accommodation in its foreign policy. At this point, we could see the nature of Hanoi's new comprehensive security approach is "closer to the concept of 'comprehensive security' and 'mutual security' that countries in East and Southeast Asia have adopted."⁶⁰

However, in the Resolution No. 13, the Party has not yet completely reached consensus on the issues of how the Vietnam's regional and global position would change as: (i) the Cold War peak has passed, (ii) Vietnam no longer hold an important role in the strategic triangle confrontation and competition of United States-Sino-Soviet, and (iii) Vietnam's new attitudes and policies towards the Cambodian issue led to the conversion of foreign perspective of the ASEAN countries. The VCP has not yet identified and found the way to deal with relationships which hold decisive roles in its foreign policy, including: (i) the

⁵⁸ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

⁵⁹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's New Concept of Security in the Context of Doi Moi, in Kurt W. Radtke and Raymond Feddema eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: View from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment*, Boston, Brill, 2000, p.424.

⁶⁰ Ogasawara Takayuki, Vietnam's Security Policy in the Post-Cambodia Period: Diplomatic Dimension, in Dao Huy Ngoc and Matsunaga Nobuo, eds., *Asia-Pacific and Vietnam-Japan Relations*, Hanoi, Institute for International Relations, 1994, pp.107-108. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2010).

relationship between economic development and political security stability related to the country survival and regime survival, (ii) the relationship between national interests and international obligations and duties, determination of friends and enemies, and (iii) independence, sovereignty and international cooperation.⁶¹ These confusions caused an unclear determination of priority diplomatic partner that led to scattered international relations and unfocused foreign policy in the early 1990s.

Nevertheless, the Resolution No.13 continued reflecting intense inner-party debates and maintained a constant vigilance toward reform, openness, diversification of relations as it reemphasized, “The struggle is continuing in many forms, not like the confrontational situation as today’s... We must remain constant vigilant, be well prepared to enter a new struggle, defeat all conspiracy and attempt to weaken us, ‘Peaceful evolutions,’ internal sabotage and division.”⁶²

On the context of the leadership’s world view changing and (re)evaluating the strategic goals of the capitalist system, Vietnam has redefined a new foreign policy with “fundamental shift in thought and practice.”⁶³ Despite some limitations, with the 13th Politburo Resolution of May 1988, the VCP had formulated a totally new direction and paradigm for Vietnamese diplomacy. By identifying and analyzing challenges and risks to the survival of the country and ruling regime, the VCP had laid a new basis for future foreign policy formulation and implementation. This was also the first time in its long and hard history, the VCP built a sole and particular resolution on foreign policy. With this Resolution, the VCP had begun a new era in which foreign policy and diplomatic apparatus would play a more important role in formulating and carrying out Vietnam’s strategic goals.

⁶¹ In the late 1980s, the VCP just mentioned international cooperation, the concept of international integration which was more comprehensive had not been developed.

⁶² Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

⁶³ Nguyen Manh Cam, *Ve Trien Khai Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Doi Moi*, trong *Bo Ngoai Giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi: Nha xuat ban chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.160, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, *On the Implementation of a New Foreign Policy*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating into the World and Preserving our National Identity*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.160].

On contemporary standpoint, some may criticize the perceptions and directions in the Resolution No. 13 unassertive and not adequate to the demands of *Renovation*; or even not a breakthrough as some later resolutions. Such issues could happen because the VCP used to be skepticism; and for Vietnam, stability was always the first priority. However, one more thing we need to consider is that in the year 1988, *Renovation* had just been carried out for only 2 years. There were so many unsolved theoretical and practical issues related to questions of why, what and how to carry out *Renovation* process. The political-social and economic situations in Vietnam, in the Soviet Union, in China and other Eastern European socialist countries were harsh. The VCP itself was divided internally and externally about *Renovation* process.⁶⁴ It is reported that there was factions or trends inside the VCP which, according to some scholars,⁶⁵ were reformist versus conservative; or pro-Soviet Union versus pro-China. Those problems, in fact, had dramatically constrained Vietnam's earlier renovation efforts which, as some scholars considered, were *soft* or *half-way reforms*.⁶⁶ In actuality, changes emerged as new perceptions of the Resolution No. 13 were introduced but further and drastic transformations as once expected might need a greater shock to stimulate; or use the words of President Le Duc Anh, when “the situation and conditions in all aspects were ripe for our party to decide...”⁶⁷

Despite the constrains and complexities of international and domestic situation as well as the VCP's internal debates, Vietnam seems to be on the right track and commitment to *Renovation* will be the only way toward a sustainably developed society. At the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP not only reiterated but also made an important revision to the spirit of the Politburo Resolution No. 13. They even went further to declare that a

⁶⁴ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220; and, Tran Xuan Bach, Mot Doi Dieu Suy Nghi Tren Duong Doi Moi, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 1, thang 1 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Tran Xuan Bach, Some Thoughts in the Path of Renovation, *Communist Review*, vol.1, January 1990].

⁶⁵ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York: St Martin's Press, 2000.

⁶⁶ Fforde and Vylder's analyses quoted in David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.27.

⁶⁷ Le Duc Anh, Tong Bi Thu Le Duan Nhu Toi Da Biet (ky cuoi), *Tien Phong*, 10 thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Le Duc Anh, The Le Duan That I Knew (final installment), *Youth Newspaper online*, 10 July 2006].

fundamental development on foreign policy direction that Vietnam would apply a “diversification and multilateralization” diplomacy; or in other words “Vietnam wants to become the friend of all countries in the world community, and struggle for peace, independence and development,” thus marking a momentous breakthrough in the VCP’s view of its relationship to the external world, now characterized by the absence of a particular external enemy.⁶⁸

On the eve of the Cold War end, Vietnam hardly found any alternative but to formulate and implement the *integration*, and later, *accommodation*⁶⁹ policy into the international system, which still considered by some VCP’s senior officials, is dominated by Western, capitalist, and democratic advocated countries. By joining the world “its policy can enhance its international posture and influence its internal weakness.”⁷⁰ In the pragmatic and realist sense, this policy movement and modification could be a tactical adjustment to the *economic* as well as *strategic shock*⁷¹ of power realities that Vietnam had to cope with on its way back to the mainstream of the world affairs.

5.1.2. The process of formulating new foreign policy directions

The Politburo Resolution No. 32 and the Sixth Party Congress: Initial preparations

General context

Vietnam formulated and implemented *Renovation* while the whole country was in severely political-socio-economic crisis which threatened the survival of the nation as well

⁶⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, tr. 36-37, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991, pp.36-37]. This perception was consolidated in Vietnam’s constitution 1992 (Amendment) which mention no specific external enemy and asserted that: “The Socialist Republic of Vietnam pursues a policy of peace, friendship and expanded international relations and cooperation with all countries in the world, irrespective of their political and social system, on the basis of respect for each other’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefits.” See Article 14, the 1992 Constitution of Vietnam, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1992.

⁶⁹ According to the VCP leaders: *Accommodation* but not *Assimilation*. See, Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012.

⁷⁰ Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phát triển và Ảnh hưởng trong Quan hệ quốc tế, trong *Bộ Ngoại giao, Hội Nhập Quốc Tế và Giữ Vững Bản Sắc*, Hanoi, Nhà xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1995, tr.211-212, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.211-212].

⁷¹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.28.

as the leadership of the VCP. The matter of country and regime survival forced the VCP to find a way out. Changing in international context with evidences of deviation and collapse of Eastern European socialist countries; the Gorbachev's radical *Perestroika* with its devastated consequences in the Soviet Union; intense struggles for leadership in China and China Communist Party's extremely careful *Reform*, all of which could led to social crises at anytime.⁷² Vietnam's international relations were in severely complicated situation with international and regional isolation, ASEAN's skepticism, hostile relation with China, and political-military deadlock in Cambodia. That context led to an inevitable demand for the changing of Vietnam's strategic orientation and foreign policy.

After 1976,⁷³ no one in Vietnam could ever imagine an existed world without the "order" which had been analyzed and explained in Marxist-Leninist revolutionary doctrine of the main ideological division of the time between Communism and Capitalism, and its high-state of development: Imperialism. In that world, frontline was clearly defined. Friends or foes were specified in written doctrines, disciplines and policies. Antagonistic contradictions, struggles to solve them between the two main forces of our time: revolutionary and reactionary not only determined the survival of nation-states but also was an essential feature of the dynamics of international relations.⁷⁴ At that time, with impulsively proud triumphant heads of defeating the formidable leader of the imperialist world, the VCP consistently believed Vietnam was an undefeated stronghold of world revolution, and an outpost of communism in Southeast Asia.⁷⁵ Therefore, it was impossible for a Vietnamese foreign policy which was based on the indiscriminating idea of being

⁷² William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220; Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam: Backward Toward the Future, *Government and Opposition*, vol. 27, issue.2, April 1992, pp.177-189; and, Hugh De Santis and Robert A. Manning, Gorbachev's Eurasian Strategy: The Dangers of Success and Failure, RAND Corporation, August 1989, p.22-28.

⁷³ In 1976, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam proclaimed. Vietnam was officially and legally reunified.

⁷⁴ Pham Van Dong, Theo Con Duong cua Cach Mang Thang Muoi, Tang Cuong Tinh Doan Ket va Su Hop Tac Viet-Xo, *Nhan Dan*, 6 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Pham Van Dong, Follow the Path of the October Revolution and Strengthen the Spirit of Vietnamese-Soviet Solidarity and Cooperation, *People*, November 6, 1989].

⁷⁵ Anh Duc, a writer and editor said, "We are talented in fighting. But as you know, over time we made many mistakes, and one was to be so big-mouthed and proud about our victory over the United States. We were so proud over our victory for so long a time, and we thought we could have a victory in everything else." Quoted in Steven Erlanger, Vietnam's Vietnam: Scars of Cambodia, *New York Times*, April 9, 1989.

friends with all who would be friends with it. If there was any idea supposed a scenario in which Vietnam would take part in an interdependent global market economy and join the WTO which, according to Vietnam's leader, was formulated and organized on the capitalist principles and considered as the tools and weapon of capitalism to conquer the world, it certainly was an illusion and utopian perspective. High tension and skepticism also made it impossible for Vietnam to integrate into ASEAN.⁷⁶ Vietnam still kept its own fear and continuously considered the United States as the ringleader of imperialism, and listed it as one of the most dangerous enemies. Vietnam believed absolutely in its capability and supposed that the difficulties, backwardness in Vietnam were the direct consequences of wars and hostile plots and sabotaged actions of the imperialism. Vietnamese also strongly believed that after reunification, Vietnam could become an industrialized country by the year of 2000 just "after four Five Year Plans."⁷⁷ VCP leaders persistently assumed that despite the complexities of international relations and the disadvantages of international environment, as well as the continued antagonistic confrontations between the socialist and capitalist worlds, and the end of the arm conflict involving Vietnam, Vietnam's development would happen despite the external environment, not because of it.⁷⁸

It seems that, despite Vietnam's Marxist-Leninist dialectic materialism fundamental theoretical foundation, its leaders at that time had metaphysical and subjective perceptions and thinkings which later were officially recognized by the VCP as an erroneous application of socialism and a deviation from the fundamental theoretical core of Marxist-Leninist evolutionary doctrine.⁷⁹ Those outlooks pushed Vietnam more faraway from Western countries, and made Vietnamese-American normalization almost impossible.

⁷⁶ Allan E. Goodman, Vietnam and ASEAN: Who Would Have Thought it Possible?, *Asian Survey*, vol.36, no.6, Jun 1996, pp.592-600; and, Hoang Anh Tuan, Why Hasn't Vietnam Gained ASEAN Membership?, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.15, no.3, December 1993, pp.280-291.

⁷⁷ The first Five Year State Plan (1976–1980) after the reunification was introduced by the Fifth National Party Congress in 1976. Vietnam Communist Party, *Complete Works*, vol.37, pp.671-676.

⁷⁸ Today, with "New thinkings," Vietnamese leadership seems to be more objective and dialectic as recognizing that stable regional and global environments are essential for the international economic prosperity that has become the lynchpin of their economic development strategy. See also, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p.6.

⁷⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986].

Vietnam isolated itself partially as a result of its ideology and that also caused the cultural-socio-economic isolation.

The Politburo Resolution No. 32

In the early to mid-1980s, there were clear evidences of fundamental shifts in the world order and system of international relations. The Yalta-bipolar order seemed to be changed as the Soviet Union and socialist system were facing several crises related to the nature of the system. Gorbachev's radical movements in the Soviet Union also questioned the traditional ideas of socialism building. And the changes in the patron of Vietnam-the Soviet Union-inevitably led to the reassessment of national strategy and foreign policy in Vietnam.⁸⁰

In Vietnam, that "top down" pressure⁸¹ forced the Vietnamese fundamentalist leaders to reconsider their hitherto accepted Marxist-Leninist world view. In its preparation for the Sixth Party Congress, which was widely expected to bring about some drastically adjustments, the VCP initially carried out movements to restructure the leadership and personnel arrangement;⁸² and to prepare draft conclusions of ideological orientations and policies. Series of important preparatory conference were organized within the Central Committee and the Politburo. One of them was the Tenth Plenum of the Politburo⁸³ on 9 July 1986. At that Plenum, the Politburo Resolution No. 32,⁸⁴ namely, *New Opportunities and Possibilities to Consolidate and Develop the Economy* was adopted. Despite its main focus on economic issues, this Resolution laid some fundamental changes on the VCP's

⁸⁰ See Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution, in Carlyle Thayer and Ramses Amer, eds., *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2000, pp.2-3.

⁸¹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.29.

⁸² See more about Le Duan and VCP leadership negotiation and restructure in Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty Through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, Paper presented to Workshop on "Viet Nam, East Asia & Beyond" Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008; and, William S. Turley, Party, State, and People: Political Structure and Economic Prospects, in William S. Turley, and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

⁸³ The Tenth Plenum did also make public a number of other leadership changes. Nguyen Van Linh was reappointed to the Secretariat as a senior member.

⁸⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 32-Bo Chinh tri, Cac Co Hoi va Kha Nang Cung Co va Phat Trien Kinh Te*, ngay 9 thang 7 nam 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 32, *New Opportunities and Possibilities to Consolidate and Develop the Economy*, 9 July 1986].

internal and external policy directions.⁸⁵ Regarding to Vietnam's national security policy, it theoretically abandoned the old-ideologically based idea and re-conceptualized a new one on a basis of "*new thinking*." This Resolution also identified "peace and development" the highest priority in the country's strategy and reordered priority to economic development over military. Another importance of the Resolution No. 32 was its policy implications on Cambodian issue and normalization with China. In a special section of this Resolution, the VCP laid guidelines and revised diplomatic policies and main tasks of diplomacy, and formulated movement toward a diplomatic political solution in Cambodia.⁸⁶ Phan Doan Nam, a Vietnamese premier diplomatic scholar, had once argued about the importance and necessity of this new proactive and cooperative policy-which was designed to construct and shape a favorable external environment for Vietnam's development. This policy was in contrast to the previous security sphere and defense focused reactive diplomacy.⁸⁷ According to Tran Quang Co, the then member of the Central Committee and former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, it was not accidental that the Resolution No. 32 which called for a political settlement for Cambodia conflict and normalization with China came right after Gorbachev's Vladivostok Speech.⁸⁸ In that speech, Gorbachev reiterated his ideas of Eurasian strategy and announced some major points of the Soviet Union's new Asia-Pacific foreign policy. He also declared the removal of Beijing's "three obstacles."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ See Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation*, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006], for more analyses on the importances of the Resolution No. 32.

⁸⁶ Words of the VCP's Politburo Resolution No. 32: "The external mission of Vietnam is to have good coordination between the strength of the people and the strength of the era, to take advantage of favourable international conditions to build socialism and defend the Fatherland, proactively create a condition for stability and economic construction. It is necessary to move proactively to a new stage of development, and peaceful coexistence with China, ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations], and the United States, and build Southeast Asia into a region of peace, stability and cooperation." Quoted in Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, tr.26-30, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation*, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006, pp.26-30].

⁸⁷ Phan Doan Nam, *ibid.*, July 2006.

⁸⁸ Mikhail Gorbachev, Statement in Vladivostok, 28 July 1986; See also, Dimitri K. Simes, *Gorbachev: A New Foreign Policy?*, *Foreign Affairs*, vol.55, no.3, 1986.

⁸⁹ To withdraw Soviet army from Afghanistan; terminate the Soviet-Sino border conflicts; and, resolve Cambodia question. See Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]; and, Hugh De Santis and Robert A. Manning, *Gorbachev's Eurasian Strategy: The Dangers of Success and Failure*, RAND Corporation, August 1989, p.16.

Regarding to Vietnam, Gorbachev stated: “The Cambodian question cannot be settled in far-off capitals, including the United Nations, but must be settled between Vietnam and China, the two neighboring socialist countries.”⁹⁰ The withdrawal of the Soviet Union’s support and its disengagement diplomacy in the Cambodian settlement process left Vietnam alone and gave China a decisive diplomatic role. We should notice that, by this statement, Gorbachev also implied and recognized the dual aspects which influenced Vietnam-China relationship: the ideological as well as realpolitik factor. We will return to this point later.

The Resolution No. 32 played an important part in the preparation for official document of the Sixth Party Congress. As one might say: “the spirit of the Resolution was adopted by the Sixth Congress.”⁹¹ The later official Political Report of the Sixth Party Congress initiated the strong and synchronous reform in Vietnam. In addition, the social-economic and political dire-straits of Vietnam, and the strong influences of international and regional context had then led to indispensable changes in the perception of leaders as well as the leadership structure in Vietnam. In turn, these changes have brought in significant changes in Vietnam’s national policy.⁹²

But in fact, *Doi Moi* is not an easy and smooth transformation. The internal debates and even struggles over ideology and reality, socialism and capitalism, the real conspiracies of imperialism and hegemonist powers separated the VCP. While many believed in the new world view perceptions and “new thinkings” that the Resolution No. 32 initiated, there were not a sufficient consensus within the Party and the condition might be not ripe to make a full impact of this Resolution at that time.⁹³ In the preparation of this Resolution

⁹⁰ Mikhail Gorbachev’s Statement in Vladivostok, 28 July 1986. See also Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi: 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi: 2003].

⁹¹ Quoted in Carlyle A. Thayer, *Upholding State Sovereignty Through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy*, Paper presented to Workshop on “*Viet Nam, East Asia & Beyond*” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

⁹² Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012, p.35.

⁹³ Regarding to the settlement of the Cambodia conflict-one important part of the Resolution No. 32, at the time of 1986, Vietnam still hesitated to compromise. Controversies and skepticism within the VCP toward China and ASEAN limited the significant thinkings of this Resolution until two years later as the VCP had it final decision to solve the Cambodia conflict diplomatically.

and the Political Report of the Sixth Party Congress, some senior officials of the VCP, mostly in military and public security section, continued to view the world on the basis of ideological stricture about the antagonistic contradiction between the two systems.⁹⁴ They continued to support the perception of a divided world with friends and enemies. Former Interior Minister Pham Hung⁹⁵ reiterated that at and after the Sixth Party Congress: “In the first stage of the period of transition to socialism in our country, the struggle to defeat the multi-faceted war of sabotage waged by hegemonists in collusion with imperialism is closely linked to the struggle to determine ‘who will triumph over whom’ in the context of the socialist and capitalist system. Therefore, the tense, decisive, complex, and long-range characteristics of that struggle will increase constantly. The struggle to determine ‘who will triumph over whom’ in the context of the two systems will take place throughout the period of transition to socialism in our country, especially in its first stage.”⁹⁶

The Sixth Party Congress

In the mid and late-1980s, with Gorbachev’s reformist domestic policy and new approaches to international relations, the Soviet Union seemed to move on a new path of *Perestroika* with the consequent rapprochement and peaceful coexistence with the United States and China. Being a long-term Soviet follower and under an increasing demand of a stronger reform in Vietnam, Hanoi began a review of its major economic and foreign policy. In December 1986, Vietnam adopted a bold new policy of *Doi Moi-Renovation* at the Sixth Party Congress. At this Congress, the VCP directly admitted the failure of the command economy and focused on the goals of overcoming the crisis in the domestic economy.⁹⁷ The

⁹⁴ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, Asian Survey, vol.46, no.6, November/December 2006, pp.805-824.

⁹⁵ Pham Hung (1912-1988), was a powerful member in the VCP Central Committee and Politburo (1956-1988). At the time before the Sixth Party Congress, he was the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1976-1987); and also Minister of Interior (1980-1987). Later, he became the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Primer)(1987-1988). He used to be considered as a conservative hard-liner.

⁹⁶ Pham Hung’s statement at the Sixth Party Congress in Hanoi December 1986, *The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party, 1982-1986*. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

⁹⁷ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986]. “In the past ten years (1975-1985) we have made a lot of mistakes on determining our objectives and approaching to building the material and technological foundations for socialist reform and economic management... Errors in the leadership and administration of the economy over the last five years (1980-1985) in distributing and transporting food were very serious.”

Party scheduled to change Vietnam's fundamental socialist thinkings starting from economics to foreign policy. The VCP also analyzed and examined the international context and global power structure to conclude that changes in major powers' strategies presented a precious opportunities for Vietnam to pursue the goals of peace and independence, extended foreign relations and development which were set since its foundation in 1945. Hanoi quickly shifted its overall strategic perception and particularly that of security and foreign policy.⁹⁸

After intense debates in preparatory sessions and even in the official plenary meeting, the VCP reached a consensus about the strategic tasks which were later declared as the tasks of national construction and defense. Regarding to economic field, the Congress agreed that, Vietnam should implement a new thinking in economics policy, carry out process of economic reforms, accept non-state sectors in the economy, participate in the global division of labour, and integrate into the world economy. After several amendments and major modifications,⁹⁹ the finally official Political Report of the Sixth Party Congress stated that, "We stand for equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries regardless of different socio-political systems and on the basis of the principle of peaceful coexistence."¹⁰⁰ As well as common statements of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union about reform, the VCP's statement of the process of "internationalisation of the forces of production" that led to an "inevitable demand for economic cooperation" and "peaceful coexistence" between different incompatible ideological systems¹⁰¹ was certainly the consequence of "bottom up"¹⁰² and

⁹⁸ Vu Khoan, Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.432, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.432]. Also quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung (2000).

⁹⁹ See Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty Through Global Integration: The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, Paper presented to Workshop on "*Viet Nam, East Asia & Beyond*" Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, tr.134, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991, p.134].

¹⁰¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1986, tr. 34-35, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986, pp.34-35].

¹⁰² David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.29.

“top down” pressures that led to changes in perceptions and world view of the VCP, as well as leadership structure and, new type of leadership. It also could be the results of the VCP’s self-transforming process from a fundamentalist, dogmatic, and adhering to orthodoxy communist party to a more pragmatic and realist one which saw the globalization not only challenges but also opportunities.

These perceptions, on one hand encouraged new thinkings in economics; and, had significant implications for Vietnam foreign policy later. It seems that Vietnamese leadership was about to use geo-economics as another policy foundation in addition to the fundamentalist geo-ideology. With this shifting, the VCP revealed its will and intention to gradually reduce political dependence and security commitment to one big power, which one might call: interdependence in a positive way.¹⁰³ Vietnam, as always, tried to find its own way out of the influences of powers. But on the other hand, as the conservative was still a powerful force and fundamental perceptions still dominated the VCP, the Congress had to choose a middle-way approach to its policy for main strategic partner: the Soviet Union. The VCP continued to declare the importance of consolidating the all-sided cooperation with the big brother; consistently pursued the Soviet’s foreign policy paradigm and considered it as a monolith in Vietnam’s foreign policy.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, Vietnamese leaders tried to solve the contradictions between fundamental idea of antagonistic and irreconcilable “camps” and “new thinkings” of a new unified global civilization that based on core shared values. They did not totally agree with the Soviet Union in some fundamental theoretical issues.¹⁰⁵ In

¹⁰³ These initial perceptions were later studied, confirmed and further developed by some VCP’s senior officials and diplomats. See, Tran Quang Co, *The Gioi sau Chien Tranh Lanh va Chau A Thai Binh Duong*, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.131-133, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World After the Cold War And Asia-Pacific*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.131-133.]

¹⁰⁴ “In 1978, after the unification of Vietnam, VCP’s leaders decided to commit to the socialist bloc by joining an alliance with the socialist countries led by the Soviet Union. For a time, Vietnam has been based its security on the Soviet Union against the threats from China, the United States and Western countries.” See Luong Ngoc Thanh, *Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions*, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012, p.36.

¹⁰⁵ Hoang Tung, Editor-in-Chief of the VCP newspaper *Nhan Dan*, assessed the Soviet Union 27th Party Congress, “Obviously the Soviet’s own emerging lack of confidence in the formal doctrine’s ability to deal with the complex questions of the future in international relations made him remove the ‘who will triumph over whom’ and the three revolutionary currents from his vocabulary.” *Nhan Dan*, March 1986. Also quoted in Eero Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations, 1975-93*, London, Macmillan, 1997, pp.174-175.

the preparatory process for the Sixth Party Congress, there were some different assessments on what was going on in the Soviet Union and raised the question of whether Vietnam's *Renovation* should follow the guidelines that Mr. Gorbachev had worked out. Regarding to this problem, Eero Palmujoki has some unique analyses which reflect Vietnamese leaders' perceptions and stances about *Renovation* cause and foreign affairs directions and orientations.¹⁰⁶ According to these analyses, there has been a significant shift in Vietnam since 1986. *Renovation* perceptions, at first, have been officially developed at the Sixth Party Congress and implemented gradually in economic and political fields including the process of formulating and implementing foreign policy.¹⁰⁷ After the Sixth Party Congress, it seemed that the VCP has accepted a more pluralistic view of the international system. In party's official documents, statements of the VCP's leaders, academic articles and lectures of intelligentsia, there has occurred concept of international order, concept of a diverse and non-polarized international system along with the old Marxism-Leninism ones. Vietnamese leaders also tried to situate their fundamental concepts of "socialist camp" in a more pluralistic and interdependent international system.¹⁰⁸

However, it was not such an easy and smooth transformation. Vietnam has adhered to Marxism-Leninism and Communism doctrine for too long. They are the main foundation, the core of regime's legitimacy and state survival. Cannot abandon ideological foundation completely, Vietnamese leaders have struggled to explain and interpret those fundamental concepts in new way.¹⁰⁹ The two-camps socialist concept of "who will triumph over

¹⁰⁶ Eero Palmujoki, *Vietnam and the World: Marxist-Leninist Doctrine and the Changes in International Relations, 1975-93*, London, Macmillan, 1997.

¹⁰⁷ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220; and, Nguyen Van Linh, Phat Bieu tai Truong Dang Nguyen Ai Quoc, Ha Noi, thang 9 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at Nguyen Ai Quoc Party Institute, Hanoi, September 1989].

¹⁰⁸ Do Muoi, Mo Rong va Nang Cao Hon Nua Hieu Qua Hoat Dong Kinh Te Doi Ngoai, *Nhan Dan*, 14 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Expand and Raise Still Higher the Efficiency of External Economic Activities, *People*, November 14, 1989].

¹⁰⁹ Nguyen Duc Binh, Dang trong Su Nghiep Doi Moi vi Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, *Nhan Dan*, 8 thang 2 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, The Party in the Mission of Doi Moi for Socialism, *People*, 8 Feb 1990]; and, Nguyen Van Linh, Doi Moi, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.86, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Renovation, *Communist Review*, no.86, 2005].

whom” has been redefined and replaced by Marxist concepts of “transition to socialism.” From the Sixth Party Congress up to now, the VCP uses this concept to expound for the pursuing socialist ideology and protect the idea of an ultimate socialist triumph. In the context of socialist theoretical and practical crisis with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries, those concepts are the last moral sheet-anchor for Vietnam. They are the theoretical tool and new foundation of regime survival. Some scholars pointed out that, by introducing those concepts at the Sixth Party Congress and in later stages of *Renovation*, the VCP has pretended to ignore reality and denied to answer the present harsh questions; and emphasized that everything would turn out to be all right in the end.¹¹⁰ Although those concepts of “transition to socialism” were strongly emphasized in party’s official theoretical manuscripts and policies after the Sixth Party Congress, there was no significant change in foreign policy in mid-1980s. The VCP seemed to put its priority in economic affairs, tackling with social-economic crisis, collecting experiences and saving time for later political-diplomatic adjustments.¹¹¹ Using trial and error method, formulating policy basing on historical lessons and practical experiences, is the VCP’s tradition approach, especially at the crisis time of the 1980s. At that time, the VCP barely found an appropriate development model for Vietnam’s actual conditions and Party’s management ability.

At the end of 1986, after having initial assessments about the transformation and implementation process of “transition to socialism” concepts, the VCP gradually and carefully used them in the process of analyzing and formulating foreign policy. Being trapped by both ideology and reality, for the VCP, choice was neither two worlds nor one world, it was “less than two worlds but more than one world.”¹¹² The middle-way approach

¹¹⁰ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.84.

¹¹¹ Keith B. Richburg, Vietnam Tackles Its Economic Ills; Hanoi’s Hopes for New Trade After Cambodia Pullout Fading, *Washington Post*, October 5, 1989; and, William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

¹¹² David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp.102-103.

of the VCP at the Sixth Party Congress was also revealed as most of VCP's senior leaders intended to focus on the economic problems and resolved them by pragmatic adjustments without challenging the basis ideological foundation and assumption of the Party. On the other words, they tried to isolate the political and security issues from the economic issue. That one of many reasons that some scholars considered the *reform Party Congress* of 1986 was a *soft-reform* congress.¹¹³ We also can argued that the VCP in 1986 planned to use a duo-track approach to formulate national strategy as one track for internal problems, and the other for external issues.

These above developments generated partly from the ideological outlook that Vietnam is always based on, and also from the determinations of global ideological confrontation and influences of the high period of the Cold War. The VCP also blamed Western countries of having strategic conspiracies to influence Vietnam and Southeast Asia both directly and indirectly. To change these outlooks, adjust policies, and solve skepticism were not easy tasks and could not be done immediately. It should be a long and harsh process which required great efforts, breakthrough perceptions and charismatic political figures inside the VCP and Vietnamese society. And simultaneously, new thinking, new perception needed suitable internal and external context. Regarding to this issue, General Le Duc Anh, the then President of Vietnam once stated that: "For this reason I think that though we usually say that the Sixth Party Congress was the critical juncture of the nation's *Doi Moi*, and that is correct, that doesn't mean that it was only at the Sixth Party Congress we had reform. This thought had been nascent from the time of the Fourth Party Congress, and was even more apparent at the Fifth Party Congress, and on the threshold of the Sixth Party Congress, the situation and conditions in all aspects (ideological understanding, socioeconomic...) were ripe for our party to decide to publicly announce the policy of the comprehensive *Doi Moi* of the country's economy."¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Fforde and Vylder analyses quoted in David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p.27.

¹¹⁴ President Le Duc Anh, Tong Bi Thu Le Duan Nhu Toi Da Biet (ky cuoi), *Tien Phong*, 10 thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Le Duc Anh, The Le Duan That I Knew (final installment)], *Tien Phong online*, 10 July 2006.

In the period of 1986-1988, the socio-economic crisis in Vietnam reached its highest stage. Up to 1988, *Renovation* process has been implemented for 2 years with changes in the VCP's leadership style, perceptions, new thinkings and policies, but the new socio-economic policies hadn't operated effectively yet; foreign policies seemed to be in a stalemate as Vietnam was still in isolation and self-isolation. Regarding to these problems, some scholars argued that although the Sixth Party Congress introduced some bold new perceptions but the VCP seemed hesitated and had no detailed long-range reform programs. *Renovation* seemed to be only theoretical policy as there was no real program of reform.¹¹⁵ Internal emergency pressures with new thinkings about how to solve self-obstacles forced Vietnamese leaders to recognize that Vietnam needed outside helps which came from not only its traditional socialist allies but also capitalist countries. Vietnam had to make full use of advantages of international political-economic conditions to overcome crisis and develop the country. The policy changes and adjustments of the Resolution No. 32 and the Sixth Party Congress seemed not enough. Bureaucratic and political resistances constrained the economic reforms. "New thinking," and "new style of leadership" seemed hardly strong enough to change the old style. *Renovation* seemed stalemated as Vietnam entered the late 1980s. Even Nguyen Van Linh, the top leader of the VCP had to complained in early 1988, "If you have a new policy, but the people think and act according to very old style, the resolution-no matter how good they may be-are still kept in the drawer."¹¹⁶ He had to accept that there still were considerable negative resistances by conservative forces in the Party. Vietnam needed another bold new breakthrough and stronger commitment to *Doi Moi* in order to break the internal obstacles, change the deadlock context of international relations. The VCP had no other choice but to move

¹¹⁵ Vice Premier Vo Van Kiet in his report to National Assembly in December 1988 expressed the overall confusion and uncertainty among the party's top leaders. "In the past, the party used to make decisions on everything. Now, it is the party's policy to merely set the guidelines. The rest is left to the National Assembly... I really feel very bewildered and do not know what to do."

¹¹⁶ Clayton Jones, *The Perils of Reform: Vietnam Chief Assails Old-Style Politics*, *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 Feb 1988, quoted in David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.55.

towards further renovation. And it was the context just before the promulgation of the Politburo Resolution No. 13 of 20 May 1988.

Inner-party Debates

Ideology or Reality?

In the preparation and formulation of the Resolution No. 13, the biggest issue which caused many controversies and debates in the highest leadership mechanisms of VCP was the relationship between ideology and reality; the Party leadership and nation-state's interest or in other words, the relationship between socialism and Vietnamese nation-state. Some Vietnamese scholars even raised questions related to the fundamental core of socialism. Phan Dinh Dieu wrote in his 1988 article titled *Some Observations about Today's Era and Our Path*, "Our goal is socialism. But the concept of socialism is being renovated and we must change our awareness on this subject."¹¹⁷ Solving these problems appropriately, then the VCP could reach general consensus in its outlook and orientation not only in foreign affairs but also the whole renovation policies.

As mentioned above, the early 1980s was the most difficult time for Vietnam. The country not only had wars on both sides (border war with China, and military intervention in Cambodia), but also had to deal with the negative consequences of its own national strategies and diplomacy. Vietnam was facing "the threat of being politically isolated and economically encircled."¹¹⁸ For the first time, Vietnam felt it being left alone. The Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe had to solve their own domestic issues and withdraw attentions from Vietnam. As the peaceful coexistence trends spreading all over the world, ideological confrontation was no longer the main topic of the 1980s. Vietnam lost its strategic importance to both systems. Things even had gone worse as

¹¹⁷ Phan Dinh Dieu, Vai Nhan Thuc ve Thoi Dai Ngay Nay va Con Duong Cua Chung Ta, *To Quoc*, Co quan trung uong Dang Xa hoi Viet Nam, thang 9 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Phan Dinh Dieu, Some Observations about Today's Era and Our Path, *Fatherland*, Organ of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Socialist Party, September 1988].

¹¹⁸ Tran Quang Co, Cuc Dien The Gioi va Van Nuoc, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.101, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, The World Situation and the Opportunity for our Country, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.101].

social turmoils, economic stagnations and political crises spreading all over the Soviet Union, China and the Eastern European socialist countries in the late 1980s. Vietnam lost almost all of its friends and allies. In Southeast Asia, tension was high while the Cambodia conflict not yet solved, ASEAN still kept its skepticism toward the so-called Vietnamese aggressive diplomacy, and while relations with the United States and China had not yet been normalized. Hanoi felt a more dangerous and threatened scenario that could happen to the country and regime survival being an intensified state of not only isolation from the rest of the world but also ideological disorientation. Regarding to this issue, Dieu said, “We are part of the world and have to find our role in the world within a general equilibrium of the system. What position is the most beneficial to us? That depends on our capabilities.”¹¹⁹

“Peaceful evolution”-a phrase which was always referred in VCP’s meetings, statements and official, academic documents.¹²⁰ Right in the initial preparations of formulating the Resolution No. 32, this issue was put on the frontline of intense debates among several powerful figures within the VCP’s most powerful circle. The limited results of the Resolution No. 32, then, seemed to prove that the balance tilted toward the conservative trend which always insisted on stability, and keeping renovation process in full control. The conservative hard-liners also expressed their fears of capitalist influences and interventions through “Peaceful evolution” means and strategies. Due to strong influences of the conservative trend and also hesitations of the reformist leaders, the Politburo Resolution No. 32 seemed to be a middle-way approach to *Renovation* policy. It was a Vietnamese response toward the pressure of *Perestroika* in the Soviet Union and *Reform* in China. But it was still far from a comprehensive renovation policy that Vietnam needed. The Resolution No. 32, as analyses above, despite bringing in “new thinking” idea and

¹¹⁹ Phan Dinh Dieu, *Vai Nhan Thuc ve Thoi Dai Ngay Nay va Con Duong Cua Chung Ta, To Quoc*, Co quan trung uong Dang Xa hoi Viet Nam, thang 9 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Phan Dinh Dieu, Some Observations about Today’s Era and Our Path, *Fatherland*, Organ of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Socialist Party, September 1988].

¹²⁰ Tran Ba Khoa, *Canh Giac Voi Am Muu Dien Bien Hoa Binh Cua Cac The Luc Thu Dich, Tap chi Cong san*, so 1, thang 1 nam 1993, (Vietnamese). [Tran Ba Khoa, Vigilant Over the Devious Aim of Peaceful Evolution of Hostile Forces, *Communist Review*, vol.1, January 1993].

introducing new approaches to economic and foreign policies, still lacked concrete implementation measures and left many unsolved important issues related to the relationship between ideology and reality. There could be a conclusion that, in the mid-1980s, on the eve of the Sixth Party Congress, despite having general consensus on renovation guideline, the VCP was still confused about how to formulate and carry out renovation policy as it had no experiences, and while in the Soviet Union and China, experiments were still in the middle of nowhere.¹²¹ This problem was protracted even at and after the Sixth Party Congress as the VCP was still divided internally about the relationship between ideology and reality.¹²²

Le Duc Tho,¹²³ a diplomat and political figure, who according to Western scholars' assessments, was an "example of the opponents of change, and a recognizable face attached to the label of 'conservative,' the head of the Party Organization Department."¹²⁴ He was a powerful figure in the Politburo and had introduced significant influences to Vietnamese national policies since the late 1970s to the early 1980s. With his power and influence, along with his followers, Le Duc Tho implemented a hardline policy, especially on Cambodia and China affairs. He almost said no to radical and reformist ideas. He consistently rejected requests of "new thinkings" in ideology, culture and economics. He also denied ideas of "new style of leadership," and considered them as "erroneous view points" and deviations from the fundamental core of socialism. The political coalition of

¹²¹ Vo Van Kiet, *Bao Cao truoc Quoc Hoi*, thang 12 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, *Report to the National Assembly*, December 1988]; and, William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

¹²² Even ten years later in 2006, Nguyen Duc Binh, the Party's former top ideologist wondered, "After the catastrophe of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, should we continue along the socialist path or not? or: should we stop talking about socialism, stop talking about Marxism-Leninism, and just do what it takes to have a 'prosperous people, strong country, just society, democracy, and civilization' and consider that enough?" Nguyen Duc Binh, Gop Y Du Thao Van Kien Dai Hoi Dang X: Van De Tieu Chuan Dang Vien, *Tuoi Tre*, 25 thang 2 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Contributing ideas on the draft document of the Tenth Party Congress: The Issue of Standards for Party Members, *Youth Newspaper*, February 25, 2006].

¹²³ Le Duc Tho (1911-1990), a well-known Vietnamese politician and diplomat. He was Henry Kissinger's former diplomatic adversary during Paris Peace Talk. He was considered as the second powerful man of the VCP in the 1980s. Tho hold the Standing Member status of the Central Committee's Secretariat of the Party from 1982 until 1986 in charge of party organization affairs.

¹²⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.31.

Le Duan-the number one figure, with Le Duc Tho-who controlled the Party's powerful organization mechanism, had created a strong and firm obstacle to Vietnam's initial efforts of renovation. Prematurity and minority ideas were criticized and punished harshly. Many of senior VCP officials were charged of holding "erroneous view points,"¹²⁵ and removed from their important positions, such as the cases of Nguyen Van Linh¹²⁶ and Tran Do.¹²⁷

However, with changes of the context and increasing pressure of socio-economic problems, and new perceptions from the reality in Vietnam, renovation experiences from the Soviet Union and China, also as the decline of dogmatic and fundamental orthodoxy led to the influence and power decline of conservative hard-liners. The political struggle reached its pinnacle when Le Duc Tho was retired from the Politburo of the Sixth Party Congress. His power was gradually declined and he only hold the role as a member of the Central Committee's Advisory Board. From that moment on, Le Duc Tho and his hard-line followers were no longer holding the dominant role within the Party's inner power circle. Conservative trend had to share power with rising reformist figures. At the time of the Sixth Party Congress, it seemed that the VCP had balanced its internal struggle. And with the new leadership leading by Nguyen Van Linh, the figure who used to be accused of holding too liberal ideas in economic policy,¹²⁸ the VCP finally had its choice of commitment to *Doi Moi* policy.

¹²⁵ This phrase was originally used by Tho and his followers to accuse Tran Do of holding radical reformist ideas. See, *The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party, 1976-1982 and 1982-1986*.

¹²⁶ Nguyen Van Linh (1915-1998), though considered as a promising Party next generation politician, was "remove" from the Politburo in 1982 because of his liberal viewpoint in economic policy. He resisted to a too rapid capitalist transformation program in the South and planned to preserve the force of private capital. He and Le Duan-the head of the Party, had series of heated arguments over the transformation of the South to communism. He resigned from the Politburo and then became Secretary of Ho Chi Minh city Communist Party Committee. Later, after the death of Le Duan and the decline of Le Duc Tho's power, he was appointed the General Secretary of Vietnam Communist Party from 1986 to 1991. He was born in Hai Duong in the North, but spent most of his life fighting in (1939-1975) and helping to manage the South (1975-1986). After the Sixth Party Congress, he led the *Doi Moi* process and begun to remove the Stalinist elements of Vietnamese Communism.

¹²⁷ Tran Do (1923-2002), member of the VCP Central Committee (1960-1991), Vice Chairman of National Assembly (VII), Minister of Culture (1989-1992), was one of the earliest senior officials to use these terms of "new thinking," "new style of leadership," to support reform view point, and "does not accept things as they are." He thought Vietnam's situation had fundamentally changed and the implication of the new realities was imperative. Tran Do was later criticized and borne the Party's political fatal charge of holding "erroneous view points," and violating party's principles. In 1999, he was expelled from the Party.

¹²⁸ Nguyen Van Linh's conversation with Tran Do (1986): "the two of us have been criticized for being liberal. You were liberal in the field of literature and I was liberal in economics." And, "In the end, everything will turn out to be fine." Quoted in Tran Do, *Dai Hoi Nam*, (Vietnamese). [Tran Do, *The Fifth Congress*]. Nguyen Van Linh was chosen by the VCP at the Sixth Party Congress to replace Truong Chinh as General Secretary. He gained a reputation as a well-known reformer for his liberal economics and politics thinking. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

Hard-liners or Reformers?

In spite of the fact that the Sixth Party Congress had had its positive influences on the *Renovation* process in Vietnam and brought in initial solutions to solve the contradiction between the dogmatic ideology view points and pragmatic reality perceptions, there still existed many objective and subjective obstacles to those initial renovation efforts. As David Elliott once said: “The fundamental idea of antagonistic and irreconcilable ‘camps’ persisted at the Sixth Party Congress even as the logical coherence of the concept began to disintegrated.”¹²⁹ With economic tensions and social unrests increasingly emerged in the Eastern European socialist countries, China and even in the Soviet Union, fears of country and regime survival also raised among VCP’s members.¹³⁰ Even a strong advocate of renovation as General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh had delivered some statements which expressed his unassertive stance to renovation pace, supported the perception to give higher priority to stability and to increase Party’s control over *Renovation* process. It can be said that the conservative versus reformist struggle existed not only in the VCP but also in each individual member of the VCP, especially senior leaders. It looks like there are two facets both have been existed inside individual VCP’s member. This dilemma originated from the ideological nature of the VCP and its ideological dominance over each member. As long as the VCP has been trapped by ideology-reality obstacle, the above dilemma still exists.

The “new thinkings,” which were first publicly introduced in the Resolution No. 32 and later, carefully codified in the Resolution No. 13, reflected results of the protracted ideological internal debates of the VCP and more over gave an early warning about the emergence of a new trend. In mid-1984, Le Duan-General Secretary of the VCP, one of the

¹²⁹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.27.

¹³⁰ Nguyen Van Linh, *Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc*, *Nhan Dan*, 15 thang 12 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Consolidate Peace, Raise Vigilance, Develop Comprehensive Strength to Defend the Fatherland, *People*, December 15, 1989]; and, Tran Xuan Bach, *Mot Doi Dieu Suy Nghi Tren Duong Doi Moi*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 1, thang 1 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Tran Xuan Bach, Some Thoughts in the Path of Renovation, *Communist Review*, vol.1, January 1990].

most powerful political figure and charismatic leader in Vietnam's contemporary history, who generally regarded as a Marxist fundamentalist and a pillar of orthodoxy, had conceded "Vietnam was building socialism in a new world situation." Prior to that time, no one could imagine a strict hard-liner like him had to change his mind to some extent and recognized the real situation that Vietnam had to face in the crisis time of the 1980s. Some foreign scholars supposed that despite importances that those changes had in Vietnam contemporary history but they were tactical movements of the VCP on its strategic long march to socialism.¹³¹ On the other words, Le Duan's concession was a tactical one step backward to advance a strategical two steps forward. No one knows for sure those analyses might correct as Le Duan died in July 1986, just before the Sixth Party Congress. Without Le Duan, the conservative trend lost its powerful support and gradually declined in term of influence over the VCP's policy formulation and implementation process. But it did not disappeared as the struggle between ideology and reality still exists inside the VCP. Hardline conservative trend which advocated gradually reform and political-socio-economic stability has been wisely used by Vietnamese leadership as a tactical brake to control renovation's pace, scope and scale when they feel things might go out of control and threaten the ruling regime survival. *Renovation* in Vietnam, therefore, has been neither too pragmatically conservative as China nor too politically radical as the Soviet Union.¹³² It can be concluded that the internal politics of Vietnam in the 1980s and later *Renovation* period is shaped in the interaction between the two conservative and reformist trend. But the deep interference and even interdependence of this relation sometime makes it difficult to draw the frontline. There also can be seen some evidences of the gradual displacement of the world view of the Party leaders by new thinkings which now dominates the scene, despite pockets of resistance on the part of an "old guard"-now reduced in numbers and influence. A realist

¹³¹ William S. Turley, and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

¹³² William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

outlook, pragmatic approach and heavily influenced dialectic materialism foundation has formed a particularly Vietnamese characterized *Doi Moi-Renovation*.

Nguyen Van Linh, one of the pioneer reformers who was recognized as the pathfinder of Vietnam's *Renovation* or Vietnam's Gorbachev, even stated in mid-1989 in harsh Cold War language, "For a long time in the past, when analyzing the world situation, we unanimously noted that in the world there are two camps, the socialist camp and capitalist camp, and four fundamental contradictions... However, for a long time after that we did not talk about it any more. Is it true that these have become old-fashioned? No, absolutely not. In my opinion, this is our shortcoming, especially in ideological work. This, more or less, had certain persons to mistakenly believe that the nature of imperialism has changed. As long as imperialism exists and as long as the socialist revolution has not yet achieved victory on a world scale, the value of these Leninist theses remains intact."¹³³ He also emphasized on keeping vigilance with the plot of using the cover of *Doi Moi* to denounce the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism.¹³⁴ It was a clear resurrection of the "old thinking" about national security which once had been replaced and conceptualized by the "national interest" on the foundation of "new thinkings" of the Resolution No. 13. Although VCP consistently expressed its will to the cause of *Doi Moi*, the re-conceptualization was well underway. That means the VCP has not yet completely abandoned either its fundamentalist ideology or the general concept of "two worlds," and the inevitable triumph of socialism. The interplay of ideology and reality will continue to influence the VCP's foreign policy making process. This might also be a Nguyen Van Linh's rebuke to Gorbachev speech to the United Nations in December 1988. In his statement, Linh not only emphasized the "insidious scheme of imperialists" but also warned of "negative influences of the wrong ideological tendencies in a number of

¹³³ Nguyen Van Linh, Phat Bieu tai Ky hop thu 7, Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 6, thang 8 nam 1989, trong Lich Su Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1986-1991, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at the Sixth Central Committee, Seventh Plenum, August 1989, in *The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party*, 1986-1991].

¹³⁴ Nguyen Van Linh, Hoc Tap De Nam Vung va Van Dung Dung Dan Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin, *Nhan Dan*, 10 thang 10 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Study to Firmly Grasp and Correctly Utilize Marxism-Leninism, *People*, October 10, 1989].

socialist countries” and “deviant ideological viewpoints among handful or cadres and party members.”¹³⁵ He strongly stated that, “We cannot disregard these manifestations because they can spread. More over, there still in our society a breeding ground for these poisons. There has also been the impact of wrong ideological currents coming from outside.” And “We should not assume that imperialism will die a simple, superficial death... Imperialism continues to alter its forms, methods, and tactics to suit the situation, while maintaining its true nature.” Then he came to conclusion, “This mean that even more vigilance would be required as imperialists devise more subtle tactics to stave off their demise”¹³⁶ In series of speeches in late September 1989, he went further with harder language as he accused Western countries of using “peaceful evolution” to subvert Vietnam socialism, “In the past we had to fight the enemy with actual weapon, and defeating them was not easy. Today, under condition of peace, we have to struggle with the enemy’s ‘peaceful evolution’ on every front, and defeating them will be even more difficult, fierce, and complicated.”¹³⁷ According to him, preserving the peace was an importance task, but Vietnam should not lose vigilance.

But later, in December the same year, in an article written for the military newspaper, he reiterated his reformist ideas and formulated an early version of new security concept which would combine all the factors, “You cannot protect the Fatherland without a strong military. But political, economic and diplomatic factors also play a key role in the mission of defending the country. We must organize and mobilize each facet: struggle and construction, politics and economics, creating a comprehensive strength to defend the Fatherland, just as we know how to develop comprehensive strength to defeat enemy during the war.”¹³⁸ Linh emphasized the political objectives and identified them were the core issues for national

¹³⁵ Nguyen Van Linh, Phat Bieu tai Ky hop thu 7, Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 6, thang 8 nam 1989, trong Lich Su Dang Cong san Viet Nam, 1986-1991, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at the Sixth Central Committee, Seventh Plenum, August 1989, in *The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party, 1986-1991*].

¹³⁶ Nguyen Van Linh, *ibid.*, August 1989.

¹³⁷ Nguyen Van Linh, Phan Dau Xung Dang la To Bao Chien Dau Vi Su Nghiep Cua Dang va Nhan Dan, Vi Ly Tuong Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, *Nhan Dan*, 19 thang 19 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Strike to be worthy of the fighting newspaper of the party and the people, for the idea of socialism, *People*, October 19, 1989].

¹³⁸ Nguyen Van Linh, Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc, *Nhan Dan*, 15 thang 12 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Consolidate peace, raise vigilance, develop comprehensive strength to defend the Fatherland, *People*, December 15, 1989].

security-defense and nation-state interests. In this article, Linh also raised some fundamental key issues which later were discussed and developed at the Seventh Party Congress as he wrote, “united and closely cooperate with the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, while resolutely and patiently removing the obstacles for a friendly relationship with China, and broadening all aspects of relations with all nation in the world, including those with different political systems in order to increase the number of friends and decrease the number of enemies, while actively engaging in the life of the international system.”¹³⁹ That statement was a manifestation of thinking transformation of not only Nguyen Van Linh but also the Party Central Committee. That new perception also laid one of the conner-stones on the way toward a more comprehensive foreign strategy at the Seventh Party Congress.¹⁴⁰ By those statements, Linh, on behalf of the VCP, also revealed some possibilities about forthcoming important adjustments in foreign policy perceptions and thinkings of Vietnam. They were seeds of the comprehensive security concept which advocates the roles of economic-politics and diplomatic factors; the acceptance of a whole diversified and pluralistic new world. By stating Vietnam would actively take part into the world and follow the laws and practices of that system, Linh also indirectly inferred that Vietnam would abandon the “two worlds” view of international system. However, with his confirmation on continuing to maintain Vietnam’s relations with other socialist countries and look for a normalization solution with China, Linh and the VCP’s perceptions were the mixture of reformist and conservative ideas. On one hand, Vietnam wants to be a responsible and prestigious member of international community, but on the other hand, the VCP remains vigilant and minds the conspiracies and negative impacts from the imperialism and hostile forces.¹⁴¹ In the period of 1989-1990, a transition

¹³⁹ Nguyen Van Linh, *Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc*, *Nhan Dan*, 15 tháng 12 năm 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Consolidate peace, raise vigilance, develop comprehensive strength to defend the Fatherland, *People*, December 15, 1989].

¹⁴⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet 10 Ban Chap hanh trung uong khoa VI ve Du thao Bao cao chinh tri Dai hoi VII*, Ha Noi, tháng 11 năm 1990, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, *The Sixth Central Committee Resolution No. 10 about Political Report for the Seventh National Party Congress*, Hanoi, November 1990].

¹⁴¹ Nguyen Van Linh, *ibid.*, December 15, 1989. Nguyen Van Linh concluded his article that Vietnam needed to maintain vigilance and resolve to smash the aggressive hostile plots, while at the same time firmly seeking ways to resolve disputes between nations through negotiations.

time to post-Cold War diplomacy, Vietnam had not yet completely escaped from the impacts and dominations of Cold War alignment and rhetoric. The new thinkings supported the acceptance of possible risks in order to integrate and exploit benefits from the newly established global system after the Cold War. While hardline ideas remained skeptical about the plots of capitalism through “Peaceful evolution,” and wanted to carry out renovation with caution. They did not accept reforms unless they were assured that there were no possible risks to state stability and regime’s control ability.

In December 1989, in his attendance at a meeting of Vietnam People’s Army senior official, Premier Do Muoi¹⁴² agreed and made further explanation to the above viewpoints: “We must recognize that today security and development have a very close connection to each other, and a reciprocal impact. In an age of the scientific and technological revolution, and in an era of a high level of globalization of the international economy, the independence and security of a country must rest on a sufficient military strength, and a strong political-economic foundation, along with broad international cooperative relationships, at the same time creating interlocking ties and interdependence of interests. Weakness in the economy and defense and political instability are great dangers to the independence and security of the country. With a comprehensive strength that rests on the foundation of a strong economy, a firm and stable political regime, and a sufficient military establishment, along with broadening cooperative international relations, we have a greater chance of preserving peace, independence, and successfully building socialism.” This view seemed a bit complicated as Do Muoi—a reputable conservative hard-liner—at one end called for political stability and enhancing role of military and security sections, but in the other end, he also revealed the idea of tolerating the broad outlines of new security concept¹⁴³

¹⁴² Doi Muoi, Secretary General of the VCP from June 1991 to December 1997. After the Sixth Party Congress, he was elected a Politburo member and considered to be the 4th-highest member. He became Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) in 1988 defeating Nguyen Van Linh’s protege from the South, Vo Van Kiet. Doi Muoi was usually considered as a conservative who advocated stability over radical change. He was also a consensus leader and worked to strengthen the Central Committee’s role in policy making and implementing process. He had proved flexible and willing to listen, but he had difficulty absorbing information that inevitably led to his conservative stance. He officially retired in 1997 and became an advisor to the Central Committee from 1997 until 2001.

¹⁴³ Later, the VCP termed this as “comprehensive security.”

which as David Elliott argued “in terms much clearer than the purported reform leader Nguyen Van Linh.”¹⁴⁴ We could have an initial conclusion that most of the Vietnamese leaderships had both conservative-reformist ideas with the utmost goal of ensuring regime survival and country sustainable development. They could change their viewpoints or shift side as they felt the above goal is being threatened. Some might call it is the Vietnamese dialectical leadership style.

Intelligentsia's Ideas

Recently, after nearly two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, some Vietnamese technocrats and political scholars still suppose that despite drastically changes in and realist, pragmatic approaches of domestic and foreign policies after 1986, in their nature, those policies were still consistent with the tenets of Vietnam's fundamental foundation: Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts.¹⁴⁵ In Vietnam, technocrats and scholars are used to reflect the official perceptions of the Party. They are the ones who formulate and implement the national policies under the guidance and control of the powerful Party leaderships. Their works also reflect the ideological debates and power struggles within the secret inner power circle of the VCP.

It is said that the historic Sixth Party Congress paved the way for *Renovation* and introduced reformist terms as “new thinking,” “new style of leadership,” and allowed, to some extent, the reformers-who had been under constant threat of accusation as “revisionist,” and “anti-party element” to express their viewpoints. But the intense confrontation between advocates of change and doctrinaire conservative limited renovation efforts. At that time, there could be many people may feel, or actually found out by their

¹⁴⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.64.

¹⁴⁵ Nguyen Duc Binh, Tiep Tuc Mot Cach Kien Dinh va Sang Tao Con Duong Xa Hoi Chu Nghia, *Tap chi Cong San*, phan 2, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Resolute and creativity continuing along the socialist path, *Communist Review*, part 2, 2006]; and, Mai Hoai Anh, Nhung Thanh Tuu Co Ban Trong Qua Trinh Thuc Hien Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai cua Dai hoi IX, trong Trinh Muu, chu bien., *Qua Trinh Trien Khai Thuc Hien Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai cua Dai hoi IX Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Ly luan chinh tri, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Mai Hoai Anh, Fundamental Achievements in the Implementation Process of Foreign Policy Guideline of the Ninth Party Congress, in Trinh Muu, eds, *The Implementation Process of Foreign Policy of the Ninth Party Congress of Vietnamese Communist Party*, Hanoi, Political Theoretical Publishing House, 2005].

own observations and analyses that the foreign imposed orthodoxy, management mechanism and even the overall system were wrong and inapplicable to meet Vietnam's nation-state demands and situation. But few of them dared to explicitly say so due to the risks of being accused of holding "erroneous view points" or deviating from the path of socialism. Phan Dinh Dieu, a mathematician and not a party member, was one of those few. His non-confrontational and scholarly manner might help him out of severe accusation as he had several analysis articles and public expressions regarding to leadership style, ideological outlook, and even the fundamental theoretical core of the Party. Some scholars supposed that Dieu was backed up by some powerful senior members of the VCP,¹⁴⁶ who advocated to reform but lacked knowledge and experience and wanted to find an alternative appropriate explanation to their policy choice. And may be, the VCP's leadership at the very beginning of *Renovation* had neither idea nor experience about *Doi Moi*, so they allowed more freedom for scholars and party members to experience political and theoretical debates.¹⁴⁷ Dieu once wrote, "If we are poor and underdeveloped, our goal in the coming decade must give priority to developing production and escaping from poverty and backwardness. By every means, increasing production and making many products for society is the most needed thing at present. To meet this 'benign' objective, the confrontational slogans such as 'who will defeat whom' and pointless tense relations are not appropriate."¹⁴⁸ Later, Dieu even went farther as he argued "I persist in hoping that the Party itself will change. People who think responsibility about our country's future must favour change with stability. The best way to achieve this is to convince the Party that it should face realities and abandon its old ways... the Party has two sides, the communist side and the patriot side. If t could keep the latter and abandon the former, it might

¹⁴⁶ Victor Mallet, Vietnamese Communist Party Sees Writing on the Wall: Observers Believe the Country Will Have to Abandon Marxism, *Financial Times*, London, March 16, 1993.

¹⁴⁷ Stein Tonnesson's 1992 interview with Phan Dinh Dieu at Vietnam Institute of Information Technology, Hanoi. Source: <http://hieuminh.org/2012/02/02/interview-with-the-vietnamese-mathematician-phan-dinh-dieu/>. Accessed on 20 November 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Phan Dinh Dieu, Vai Nhan Thuc ve Thoi Dai Ngay Nay va Con Duong Cua Chung Ta, *To Quoc*, Co quan trung uong Dang Xa hoi Viet Nam, thang 9 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Phan Dinh Dieu, Some Observations about Today's Era and Our Path, *Fatherland*, Organ of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Socialist Party, September 1988].

transform itself into a genuine patriotic force.”¹⁴⁹ Many of Dieu’s innovated ideas were later adopted explicitly or implicitly by the Party.

In the end of September 1989, the top leader of Vietnam, Nguyen Van Linh delivered an important speech which reiterated an uncompromising viewpoint about the role and infallibility of Marxism-Leninism, “There has never been a scientific and revolutionary theory like Marxism-Leninism. It is a ‘comprehensive and logically tight theory which gives people a total world view’ and a theory that not only aims at ‘understanding the world, but also changing it.’”¹⁵⁰ This hard-line viewpoint caused obstacles and challenges to reform-minded intellectuals. In the period of political instability, theoretical debates, and economic transition, it is difficult to identify proper position or specify clear ideological line. Even the above Linh’s conservative speeches could be explained by some party leaders and Linh’s aide that they were intended mainly to show Linh’s firm believe in socialism; and that he could be a hard-liner in the leadership when the time came.

At the age of 73 with poor physical health,¹⁵¹ some scholars supposed that regardless of his reform achievements and efforts, Nguyen Van Linh was only a transition figure.¹⁵² In internal party meetings about personnel, Linh also officially announced his retirement in the late 1990 when the VCP would hold the Seventh Congress. The year of 1989 was a hard time for Nguyen Van Linh as he had to manage renovation efforts and reconcile differences between the two trends of reform and conservative inside the Party. As many Vietnamese senior officials, Linh knew that *Renovation* process is irreversible, but it can be delayed. The stormy debates and even struggles within the Central Committee about *Renovation’s* pace,

¹⁴⁹ Stein Tonnesson’s 1992 interview with Phan Dinh Dieu at Vietnam Institute of Information Technology, Hanoi. Source: <http://hieuminh.org/2012/02/02/interview-with-the-vietnamese-mathematician-phan-dinh-dieu/>. Accessed on 20 November 2012.

¹⁵⁰ Nguyen Van Linh, Hoc Tap De Nam Vung va Van Dung Dung Dan Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin, *Nhan Dan*, 10 thang 10 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Study to Firmly Grasp and Correctly Utilize Marxism-Leninism, *People*, October 10, 1989]. See also, Karl Marx, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol.21, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995. “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

¹⁵¹ October 1989, Nguyen Van Linh led a senior delegation to visit German Democratic Republic to attend the fortieth anniversary of the founding the nation. Eric Honecker delivered a speech named *We will continue to advance along the path to socialism*. After official activities, Linh disappeared from public and VCP’s newspaper *Nhan Dan* announced he was going to “rest for a period in Eastern Germany.” That event raised a rumor of a stroke that forced Linh to hospital. After his return to Vietnam, Linh continued his jobs and appeared to have normal health. However, questions of Linh’s one week disappearance were still remained.

¹⁵² Steve Erlanger, Vietnam Leaders Reported Deeply Divided, *New York Times*, January 31, 1991.

details, priorities and impacts exploded almost everyday. Since the Sixth Party Congress, Linh was the Party's Secretary General-the supreme leader of Vietnam, but with the Vietnamese collective leadership style, Linh could not have supreme power over the Politburo.¹⁵³ With sharp disagreements within the Politburo regarding to *Renovation* issues, Linh must build alliances to deal with each particular affair. That circumstance could be used to explain some of Linh's abnormal behaviors in early and mid-1989 as he appeared hard-liners in the leadership. At the same time, Linh was criticized for the stagnancy in economic reform, the conservative in politics transformation, and also the obstacles in foreign policy orientations.¹⁵⁴ As the above analyses, the year of 1989 was a hard time for Vietnam with crises in socialist system, the strategic changes of the Soviet Union, the hard stances of China in its relations with Vietnam, in addition to Vietnam's domestic political-economic crises. That context raised Party's fears about losing control over the society, deviating from socialist orientation, the credibility gap and economic inequality with renewed capitalist exploitation, and even popular unrest.¹⁵⁵ The VCP had defined that although *Renovation* process was indispensable and irreversible, but the Party must assert ruling role and hold fast fundamental perceptions and thinkings which has been the advocates of fundamental change on the socialist reservation. "Vietnam would not become pluralist, multiparty democracy, and 'the state will legislate limitations to private businesses in such branches and professions as are necessary' to preserve the Communist character of the nation."¹⁵⁶ This was the language that Nguyen Van Linh-a reformer, used in his statement at a Party Central Committee meeting in late March 1989.

¹⁵³ About Vietnamese leadership style, see analyses in Thai Quang Trung, *Collective Leadership and Factionalism. An Essay on Ho Chi Minh's Legacy, Pacific Affairs*, vol.59, no.3, Autumn 1986, pp.530-531.

¹⁵⁴ Tran Ngoc Chau, executive editor of Tuoi Tre, the Party youth newspaper said, "The man who pushes the plow is too old. He has spoiled everything. I don't think the reform process is going as I wished." Quoted in Keith B. Richburg, *Vietnam Tackles Its Economic ills; Hanoi's Hopes for New Trade After Cambodia Pullout Fading, Washington Post*, October 5, 1989.

¹⁵⁵ Ha Xuan Truong, editor in chief of Communist Review, said in an interview with foreign journalists after the Central Committee Sixth Plenum in March 1989, there was no firm alliance among the Politburo members. They shifted on particular issues. But there remained many influence political figures in the Central Committee, who were afraid that the new way was not socialism. They also worried about the encouragement of private capitalism at the expense of the state sector, the degree of openness to the West and Western influence, the attempts to purify the Party. See also Steven Erlanger, *Vietnam, Drained by Dogmatism Tries a "Restructuring" of Its Own, The New York Times*, April 24, 1989.

¹⁵⁶ Nguyen Van Linh, Statement at the Sixth Plenum of Sixth Central Committee, March 1989. *The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party, 1986-1991*. Also quoted in Steven Erlanger, *Hanoi Chief Assails Obstacles to "Renovation," The New York Times*, April 2, 1989.

However, according to notions of Vietnamese leaders and communist think-tanks, there exist some issues about socialism, Marxism-Leninism that should be reconsidered, expounded and applied appropriately to present context in order to ensure regime's ruling role and socialist orientation.¹⁵⁷ May be for them, policy shifting was a matter of necessity or even regime survival, not choice. In other word, there are some voice inside the Party about the flexibility of conceiving and implementing Marxism-Leninism. Vu Huu Ngoan, in his work in early 1990, mentioned about the relationship between persuasion and compulsion in ideological work and advocated the more flexibility and introspection about the ideological task. He wrote, "To put it another way, we cannot forbid people to think, but can only guide their way of thinking." And "If in the past our ideological task aimed at sharpening the contradictions between the enemy and ourselves, and struggling to resolve the contradictions in a way that would bring victory to the people, today the ideological work has to deal with a new situation: resolving contradictions among the people, internal to socialist society."¹⁵⁸

The occurrence and acceptance currents of new thinkings both inside and out side the Party proved that the VCP, in the late 1980s and on the eve of the Seventh Party Congress, has some significant changes in perceptions including new thinkings about theoretical challenges and theoretical system of the Party. Beside hardline fundamentalist statements to confirm Party's ruling role and secure its ideological legitimacy foundation, VCP also allowed some theoretical studies in order to explain the flexibility in Party's policies. That movement could be seen as an initiation for new policy orientations at the Party's Seventh Congress.¹⁵⁹ That

¹⁵⁷ Tran Xuan Bach, *Mot Doi Dieu Suy Nghi Tren Duong Doi Moi*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 1, thang 1 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Tran Xuan Bach, Some Thoughts in the Path of Renovation, *Communist Review*, vol.1, January 1990].

¹⁵⁸ Vu Huu Ngoan, *Doi Moi Cong Tac Tu Tuong De Phat Huy Truyen Thong va Bao Dam Hieu Qua Lanh Dao*, *Nhan Dan*, 12 thang 2 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Vu Huu Ngoan, Renovate the Ideological Task to Develop the Tradition and Guarantee Effectiveness in Leadership, *People*, February 12, 1990].

¹⁵⁹ In the late 1980s, several leading newspapers and theoretical journals of the VCP published a number of articles which analyzed the causes of crises and collapses in Eastern European socialist countries. According to them, those socialist countries did not pay enough attention to living standard of the majority, ignored democratic issues and Party's legitimacy... From those lessons, the VCP has changed its own previous mottos which only called upon the populace not to think of themselves, but only of the Party and the struggle. Hoang Chi Bao wrote, "Violating the principle of material interests, no matter what the circumstances and what ever the reason, will always lead to negative reactions from the people, will erode their ties to society, and will reduce or even completely rapidly annihilate their good will and enthusiasm for their work." Hoang Chi Bao, *Chu Nghia Xa Hoi Trong Boi Canh Chinh Tri Cua Doi Moi*, *Nhan Dan*, 24 thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Hoang Chi Bao, Socialism in the Political Context of Doi Moi, *People*, August 24, 1989]; see also more data and analyses regarding to the preparation of the Seventh Party Congress in Carlyle A. Thayer, *Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy*, paper presented to Workshop on "Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

double-faced approach showed the fact that, in its policy choice for the *Renovation* process, the VCP still put high priority for stability of the society, Party's ruling ability and communist ideal persistence. Even in some particular case, the VCP had to recognize theoretically that there exist necessary demands for new perceptions about socialism, socialist model and knowhow to build such a society.

Within two years from 1986 to 1988, the VCP had to face with both increasingly internal and external pressures. It was forced to manage a way out and formulate an appropriate policy guidance for Vietnamese diplomacy. It must be a breakthrough start which would lay a completely new and comprehensive foreign policy orientation. The Politburo Resolution No. 13 might be the one. The formulation of this Resolution was the changing process of the VCP's diplomacy thinking. It also an intense internal struggle within the VCP between new thinkings, new outlook against the old ones; the creative and proactive diplomatic guidance against the skepticism and backwardness of the old ones; and the modern realist, pragmatic perceptions of socialism and nation-state's interest against the old dogmatic fundamentalist orthodoxy. Despite some limitations, this Resolution officially declared bold new policy which dramatically changed the outlook and perception of not only VCP's officials but also the whole Vietnamese. It deserved to be recognized as one of the milestones in the Vietnam's contemporary diplomacy history.¹⁶⁰

Assessing and examining Vietnam's *Renovation*, some scholars supposed that the road, which Vietnam has taken, is actually the repeat of what had happened previously in the Soviet Union's *Perestroika* and China's *Reform*. As before in its period of building socialism in the North and the "Socialist transformation" in the South, Vietnam dogmatically and mechanically imitated existed model from its big socialist brothers. These assessments have their own reasons as in context of the 1980s, Vietnam has been under dramatically influenced from the two great changes in the Soviet Union and China.

¹⁶⁰ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.12.

Vietnamese leaders received tons of advices and guidelines from its two big brothers.¹⁶¹ Vietnamese think-tanks have not totally negated that reality. They have admitted that Vietnamese leaders are under significantly influenced from other socialist countries in the process of adopting and implementing Vietnam's *Renovation*. Steps and models of change have been carefully studied and selectively applied in Vietnamese context. Also according to Vietnamese scholars, external influences are only part of *Renovation*'s motivations. Internal requirements are the most important factors that determine the Vietnam's renovation. They proved this point by referring to several "breaking the fence" efforts since 1960s in the North and later 1970s-1980s in the South. More over, according to these scholars, social-political characteristics and power structure of Vietnam during 1980s prevented the VCP from implementing the China's reform framework.¹⁶² On the eve of *Renovation* and later in the very first stage of *Renovation*, Vietnam focused on examining economic adjustments, while limitedly and reluctantly carried out political reform. On foreign policy field, there raised some new thinkings but the VCP remained cautious. Vietnam tried its own way of *Renovation* which is neither too political radical as the Soviet Union's *Glasnost*, nor economic radical, diplomatic pragmatic, political conservative strategy of the China's *Reform*.¹⁶³ According to the VCP's analyses, Vietnam started its *Renovation* with backward starting point. The society was not only under developed but also in the severe social-economic crisis. Vietnam inevitably could neither withstand Gorbachev's radical political steps nor Yeltsin's "economic shock" therapy. The *Renovation* process in Vietnam has been carried out under strict control of the Party about pace, field, and manner in order to ensure the two strategic goals of regime survival and

¹⁶¹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹⁶² Alexander L. Vuving, *The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam*, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

¹⁶³ Vo Van Kiet, *Dong Gop Y Kien vao Bao cao Tong ket Ly luan va Thuc tien 20 nam Doi Moi*, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, *Suggestions to the Concluding Report on Theory and Practice of 20 years of Renovation*, 2005]; and, William S. Turley, *Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus*, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

state survival, as some foreign scholars once pointed out. The VCP neither wants nor accepts such a *Renovation* framework which might contain any risks to Party's legitimacy, regime's survival and state's stability. This point could be used to explain the conservative political behaviors of some reformist senior leaders of the VCP. Despite the fact that they were the ones who advocate reform, but in nature, they are all communists. For them, *Renovation* was just an alternative way toward socialism as the old Soviet-style one has failed. So that, at some certain times, as raising fears of reform pace and losing control, they tended to become conservative.

From internal perspective, Vietnamese think-tanks opposed those survival theory based analyses. There is nothing to say about regime survival and state survival. In other world, communist regime and Vietnamese nation-state are one. According to their point of views, the Party has no own interest; and the Party is not an “unfamiliar entity” which stands both above and outside of the society. The Party is the representative of Vietnamese nation-state and the people. The Party reckons and believes that, socialism is the only right choice for Vietnam; and nothing could replace Marxism-Leninism and communism ideology. Armed with Marxist-Leninist theoretical weapons, the Party and the people of Vietnam will overcome every obstacles and advance to the bright dawn of communism. As the statement of General Secretary Le Duan, one of Vietnamese charismatic leaders, “This Nation and Socialism are One.”¹⁶⁴

With the above strategic perceptions, Vietnamese diplomacy then struggled to tackle both theoretical and practical obstacles. Despite initial policy adjustments, the VCP still had to deal with internal contradictions about national strategy including foreign policy orientations. The case of dismissing Tran Xuan Bach,¹⁶⁵ member of the Sixth Central

¹⁶⁴ Le Duan, *Tuyen Tap (1975-1986)*, Tap 3, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 2009, (Vietnamese). [Le Duan, *Selected Works (1975-1986)*, vol.3, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2009].

¹⁶⁵ Tran Xuan Bach (1924-2006) was a Vietnamese senior politician. He was elected to the politburo at the Sixth Party National Congress in 1986. During the earlier period of *Doi Moi*, Bach was considered as a radical reformer. He was even named as Vietnam's Boris Yeltsin by some foreign journalists. Bach advocated political liberalization to support economic reforms. His stances and approaches were different from the rest of the politburo who were always emphasized “political stability is the most important thing.” As a result, Bach was removed from the politburo in March 1990.

Committee Politburo, was a typical example of the VCP's caution in carrying out *Renovation* process. It also revealed keen debates inside the Party's Central Committee and even the Politburo about economic renovation and political reforms. The move to restructure in the highest leadership level of the VCP also revealed characteristics of power structure and leadership manner during the critical period from the late 1980s to early 1990s.

Vietnamese reformers: The reformist approach toward socialism

We also need to reckon that, not all Vietnamese reformers have same roadmaps and orientations; and also not all of them are political liberals. In their nature, they are all communists who have been educated and trained in the Marxist-Leninist ideological environment with the ambition to build and protect the socialist regime.¹⁶⁶ As the reformers, they recognized that, changes were necessary and inevitable for the survival and development of both Vietnam nation-state and Vietnam socialism. Academic analyses could prove that changes were needed to address economic difficulties, political challenges, and diplomatic isolation. But perhaps, first and foremost, for Vietnamese reformers, in the early stages of *Renovation*, changes were needed to relieve the pressure of the economic crisis. With fears of an economic downturn which could threaten country's stability and development, and also implementation of strategic objectives to build socialism, Vietnamese reformers have advocated new thinkings and new economic management policy. The later changes in the political, security, diplomatic spheres originated from the derivative demands of the economic reform. This is also one of the reasons that Vietnamese *Renovation* in the first stage was not too radical. The VCP mainly focused on economic reform while kept political stability, and gradually tackled political-diplomatic obstacles. When dealing with political, security, diplomatic issues, a few of the reformers might not keep the radical stance, but switched to moderate reformers. In other words, they became more conservative when dealing with political issues. As communists with perceptions and thinkings adhering

¹⁶⁶ About the two strategic goals, see Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Two Strategic Tasks: Building Socialism and Defending the Fatherland, in Pushpa Thambipillai, ed., *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Aldershot, Gower Publishing Company, 1983, pp.299-324.

to the existence and strength of the communist party and socialist regime, they do not encourage and support liberal political views that are contradictory in nature with communist ideology, and might contain potential risks to the survival of the socialist regime.¹⁶⁷ To say that does not mean there is absolutely no political reform in Vietnam, but the *Renovation* process has been carried out gradually and carefully to the extent, scope and pace within VCP's control capabilities and an accepted political and conceptual framework.¹⁶⁸ Political reform is defined to meet strategic goals of social stability, strengthen the leadership of the Party and to ensure the existence and development of the socialist regime, but not to break it.¹⁶⁹ It is the common goal of both reformers and conservatives in Vietnam. The differences are their ways of thinking and doing.

Unlike the Bureaucratic politics model in the political institutions of other countries, the characteristics of political power structures in Vietnam in the early stages of *Renovation* have distinctive features, not only from the Western capitalism countries but also the other socialist regimes.¹⁷⁰ It is possible to draw some initial conclusions about the characteristics of reformist and conservative trend in the VCP in the early stages of *Renovation* as follows: (1) VCP's stances and framework for reform are always prudent, not too liberal nor too conservative. Sometimes we could witness the shift between the two trends. In other words, there is no clear boundary between reformers and conservatives. (2) Power transition not generation transition in the early stages of renovation has shaped the strategic stability in national strategy and foreign policy of Vietnam. The existence of collective leadership structure, plus the absence of a charismatic leader with extreme power and

¹⁶⁷ Nguyen Duc Binh, Gop Y Du Thao Van Kien Dai Hoi Dang X: Van De Tieu Chuan Dang Vien, *Tuoi Tre*, 25 thang 2 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Contributing ideas on the draft document of the Tenth Party Congress: The Issue of Standards for Party Members, *Youth Newspaper*, February 25, 2006]; Nguyen Duc Binh, Khong Co Chuyen Chu Nghia Mac-Lenin Sup Do hay Loi Thoi, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 11, thang 11 nam 1994, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Marxism-Leninism Did Not Collapse Nor Become Obsolete, *Communist Review*, vol.11, November 1994].

¹⁶⁸ William S. Turley, Party, State, and People: Political Structure and Economic Prospects, in William S. Turley, and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

¹⁶⁹ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

¹⁷⁰ Thaveeporn Vasavakul, Vietnam's one-Party Rule and Socialist Democracy?, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.36, no.37, 15-21 Sep 2001, pp.3518-3524; and, Thai Quang Trung, Collective Leadership and Factionalism. An Essay on Ho Chi Minh's Legacy, *Pacific Affairs*, vol.59, no.3, Autumn 1986, pp.530-531.

prestige over the whole Central Committee and Politburo have created one characteristic that dominated Vietnam's *Renovation* process. (3) Whether supporting reformist or conservative trend, basically they have a common purpose toward the existence and development of the socialist regime, the stability and development of country, and the survival of the Party. It can be said that the conservative trend in Vietnam was a conservative approach toward renovation by promoting social stability and ensuring political control while carrying out economic reforms. Meanwhile, the reformist trend aimed to speed up the reform, at first in economic field and then quickly prepare necessary conditions for political reform. The reformers have open-minded view points about ideological foundations. According to them, ideological foundations are strategic issues not short term ones. Therefore, in certain times, especially in the early stages of *Renovation*, it is necessary to base on realpolitik calculations and place high priority on national interest in the formulation of national strategy including foreign policy. According to David Elliott, Vietnamese reformers were those "whose main concern was that Vietnam would fall hopelessly behind in the global race for economic development"; and conservative was those "whose main concern was regime preservation and salving the status quo." They can be named "primarily nationalist" and "primarily regime reservation."¹⁷¹

The relationship between economic development and social-political stability is a fundamental issue that the VCP must resolve when it formulates and implements *Renovation*. This relationship continues to dominate later important decisions of the VCP from purely international economic integration towards comprehensively international integration. By distinguishing trends of reformer or conservative, the above analyses reflected the nature of Vietnamese politics in *Renovation* period. Depending on perceptions and analyses in each historical period on challenges and threats to Vietnam, VCP's leaders will have different political behaviors which reveal that they are reformers or

¹⁷¹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.34.

conservatives. In other words, challenge-threat perceptions and analyses dominate Vietnam's *Renovation* process. This finding partly explains policy moves of VCP's senior leaders such as Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Van Linh, Do Muoi, Vo Van Kiet and Nguyen Co Thach in the early stages of *Renovation* and even Le Duan in the years just before 1986. Steven Erlanger once said, "There is a struggle going on for the soul of Vietnamese socialism. It is between the bureaucratic conservative mechanism and the new mechanism of the market, between the theorists and pragmatists, and it is a struggle inside each one of us... I think this period is the hardest time, because it is the transition between the old and the new... All over the world and in other socialist countries, hundred of millions of people recognize that they must live as life is and work as life demands, and not as the ice demands."¹⁷²

Basically, the common viewpoints of the VCP agreed that the world's scientific and technological development as well as the globalization trend has affected strongly and brought opportunities for global breaking-out economic growth; while at the same time, the gap between the rich and poor, the inequality between countries has been increasing significantly.¹⁷³ This created the biggest challenge for Vietnam-the threat of poverty and lagging behind other countries in term of economics, together with the scheme to subvert, control Vietnam by the hostile forces and capitalist countries. The conservative viewpoints considered the risk of peaceful evolution-a new face of the East-West ideological confrontation, the most serious. This conclusion came from the perception that national strength, national security and national interests derived from national defense-security power rather than economic power. By analyzing policies and statements of Vietnam's leadership in the late 1980s, we could reach an initial conclusion that, this view came not

¹⁷² Steven Erlanger, Vietnam, Drained by Dogmatism Tries a "Restructuring" of Its Own, *The New York Times*, April 24, 1989.

¹⁷³ Phan Doan Nam, Cach Mang Khoa Hoc Cong Nghe va Quan He Quoc Te Hien Dai, *Nghien cuu Quoc te*, so 3 (24), thang 6 nam 1998, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, The Scientific-Technological Revolution and Modern International Relations, *International Studies*, vol.3, (24), June 1998]; Vo Van Kiet, Nhung Doi Hoi Moi Cua Thoi Cuoc, *Quoc Te*, 13 thang 4 nam 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, New Requirements of the Situation, *International Affairs*, 13 April 2005].

only from the traditional conservatives of the security and military block, but also from those who had radical views but been influenced by the complicated movement processes and concerns about the institutional survival of the socialist state and the Communist Party's leadership.

Addressing the era's confrontation and world situation to build the foundation for foreign policy formulation was the traditional way of the VCP. In its main trend of thinking the Party stated that the East-West confrontation had declined, the Cold War had passed its high-period, great and significant changes were happening in the world order and conjunction. The competition, in other words, the conflict among Western countries in order to strengthen their positions, creating a new world order for the sake of each country, would be the dominant trend of the new international system and world order. The trend of détente among vertices of the strategic triangle of United States-Sino-Soviet would inevitably lead to the formation of a new world order that could be a multi-polar and multi-center one. Regarding Hanoi's concern of a new global order, with a realpolitik view, Tran Quang Co had once questioned: "Will the 1990s be a respite for an era of peace and developments for the mankind? Will the world economic and political order be the one of equality, justice and mutual benefits for all or the one imposed by a 'closed club' of big powers?"¹⁷⁴

The relative weakness of the Soviet Union and the increasing influence from China may force Vietnam to implement a pragmatic and realist national strategy, taking advantage of the United States and other Western countries to create a strategic balance and fill the power vacuum caused by the Soviet Union's retreat from Southeast Asia. This fact has created a significant "top down" pressure on Vietnam foreign policy. Even so, there were still powerful voices in the VCP about on the continuation of the East-West confrontation, the antagonistic contradiction between two ideological systems that would inevitably lead

¹⁷⁴ Tran Quang Co, *Cuc Dien The Gioi va Van Nuoc*, trong *Bo Ngoai Giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Hanoi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.97, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *The World Situation and the Opportunity for our Country*, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, p.97].

to the policy of going along with China.¹⁷⁵ These ideas continued to put the old views on national security and defense strategy and foreign policy of the VCP.

The VCP has not yet completely reached consensus in its commitment to the policy of diversification and multi-lateralization according to the Resolution No.13. The reason was that a part of the Party still thought that ideological-based forces mobilization was a necessity. Diversification is necessary but ideological core values needed to be maintained, finding and building relationship with strategic alliances based on ideological viewpoints had to be done (that implied to promote and improve relations with China). However, this point of view was under the pressure caused by the trend to define national interests as a basis to national strategy and foreign policy in the new context.¹⁷⁶ Although the spirit of the Resolution No.13 supported this thinking, the implicitly protracted debates within the VCP still made the implementation of the new diplomacy more difficult.

5.2. VCP's efforts to settle the Cambodia conflict: Approaching to the new foreign policy direction

5.2.1. External pressures and internal requirements

Vietnam's efforts and plans while working out a comprehensive solution to the Cambodian issue revealed the policy of multilateralization of the VCP. However, such new foreign direction and affairs were not fully implemented and developed due to opinion limits and the ideology governance. Vietnamese's diplomacy efforts in handling the Cambodia conflict were not completely the demonstration of the multilateralization policy; however, to some extent it was a step towards that policy, or at least put the first bricks for the successful deployment of the later multilateral foreign policy guidelines. Vietnamese foreign policy during the middle and the late 1980s were basically affected by regulations

¹⁷⁵ Phan Doan Nam, Mau Thuan va Phuong Thuc Giai Quyet Mau Thuan Trong Quan He Quoc Te Ngay Nay, *Tap chi Cong san*, so 30, thang 10 nam 2003, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Contradictions and Contradiction-Solving Methods in Contemporary International Relations, *Communist Review*, vol.30, October 2003].

¹⁷⁶ Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989].

of political and economic socialist preconceptions; as well as established on the foundation of ideological benefit calculation. The analysis of Vietnamese foreign affair directions during that period, therefore, could not be separated from the analysis of political-economic opinions of the VCP.

Right from the beginning of 1980s, Vietnamese scientists raised numerous ideas on the indispensability and the usefulness of a global economic system. They proved that it would be disadvantageous for Vietnam in particular and socialist countries in general to separate themselves subjectively from that system. Nevertheless, such pioneering ideologies were not accepted when the viewpoint of dividing the world based on ideology still played the leading role in Vietnam. The standstill in the socialist economic system led to new economic foreign perceptions in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries. In the middle of 1980s in Vietnam, the VCP despite maintaining ideological viewpoints on politics and foreign affairs, initially accepted that there was the only one world economic system; therefore, socialist countries including Vietnam did not necessarily establish a separate economic system and isolated themselves. Assimilating¹⁷⁷ into the world economic system and welcoming common mankind's achievements were the vital needs of the survival.¹⁷⁸

Although VCP's strategic orientations at the beginning of *Doi Moi* period were only limited on economy, supporting international economic assimilation, keeping caution in politics and foreign affairs, VCP's leaders had to admit that in order to fully integrate into the world economy, Vietnam needed to make fundamental changes in foreign affair directions; as well as developed an all new diplomatic strategy in which the issue of

¹⁷⁷ During that time, VCP only developed the concept of assimilation rather than distinguishing assimilation with integration or accommodation.

¹⁷⁸ Do Muoi, Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan, *Nhan Dan*, 2 thang 9 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Continue the Task of Doi Moi, Unite to Advance for the Victory of Socialism, for the Well Being and Happiness of the People, *People*, September 2, 1990, "The scientific and technological revolution and the trajectory of economic globalization is offering the people's of the world many great possibilities to develop." He also acknowledged that the Party had committed many mistakes in economic policy over many years and concluded "At present, we facing the reality that the living standard and level of development of our people is too low. That is a tense situation and a big challenge for our people."

Cambodia must be firstly handled by the external measure. And Vietnam's military existence in Cambodia must be abolished. By breaking the deadlock situation in Cambodia, Vietnam's diplomacy will pave the way for the normalization with China, ASEAN, the United States and Western countries, which would allow Vietnam to fully integrate into the international community. Tran Quang Co wrote, "Also in the period from 1986 to 1988 the economic and social crisis in our country reached a high plateau. In the face of the urgent requirements of the international and domestic situations, our Party decided that in the area of external affairs we would shift to a new phase of new struggle and peaceful coexistence with China, ASEAN, and the United States, in order to rapidly rebuild our economy and develop in peace. The period of struggle aimed at a total victory of the Cambodian revolution, under the illusion that the 'situation is irreversible,' had come to an end, and we had to acknowledge the reality of a step-by-step struggle to achieve a political solution for the Cambodian question."¹⁷⁹

The withdrawing of troops and finding a peaceful solution to the Cambodia conflict were mentioned in the VCP's working programs from the early 1980s. Ministry of Foreign Affairs also implemented several diplomatic maneuvers with China, and ASEAN countries to implement these policy orientations. However, the intense relationship between parties, China's rigidity, ASEAN's suspicion as well as Vietnam's uncompromisingness mostly pushed the above efforts into the standstill. Despite the Politburo Resolution No. 32 with breakthroughs in diplomatic thinkings and foreign policy directions, Vietnam's existing internal contradictions, hesitation in withdrawing its presence from Cambodia as well as ideological intentions prevented Vietnam from handling definitively the Cambodian issue, and limited adjustments and changing orientations in its foreign affairs. Only after the Sixth Party Congress and especially after the Politburo Resolution No. 13, could the VCP achieve certain agreement and consensus on the guideline in handling the Cambodia

¹⁷⁹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

conflict. According to VCP's official evaluations and several Vietnamese scholars' academic analyses, this was a new progress in diplomatic thinkings and guidelines; a deployment of multilateralization and diversification foreign policies; the first step confirming a pro-active, dynamic and responsible diplomatic viewpoint in Vietnam's international relations in order to escape itself from being isolated and self isolating. Concurrently, it was also thought that these were the first steps towards a new security concept, with the emphasis on the role of economic power and interdependence between countries.¹⁸⁰

With a realpolitik attitudes, Tran Quang Co analyzed that the new strategic guidelines of the Sixth Party Congress showed the relationship between new thinking in domestic reforms and new thinking in external relations. However, handling the Cambodian issue was not simple results of extending internal reforms to foreign policy sphere, but in fact was the combination of Vietnamese diplomacy's adaptation to external strategic environment changes and power countries' dominated influences.¹⁸¹ Numerous reasons stood behind VCP's decisions on the Cambodian issue, including the détente trend, the peaceful coexistence viewpoint of Gorbachev and the Soviet Union's strategic changes following Gorbachev's new thinking-directions that may be one of the decisive reasons. Vietnam's decisions on the Cambodian issue, to some certain extent, were mostly similar to the Soviet Union's decisions on Afghanistan. Improvements in the Soviet Union's foreign policies with the United States and China at that time strongly affected Vietnam's diplomatic choices and decisions. The Soviet Union tended to withdraw from the Southeast Asia region and reduce military and economic assistance for its traditional allies in this region. Agreements and concessions, implemented by Gorbachev to achieve normalization with China, had pushed Vietnam into the lonely status and therefore forced it to find a

¹⁸⁰ Statement of Premier Do Muoi in December 1989 which introduced ideas of the integration and interdependence between economic development and security; and the "just enough" concept regarding to arm force ability. In this statement, he also reordered the top priority to the economic factor and argued that the economic factor in international relations had become the key to national security. This was also the initial step toward the introduction of the new security concept and Vietnam's foreign policy of "adding friends while reducing enemies."

¹⁸¹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

definitive solution to the Cambodian issue. According to Karen M. Sutter's analysis, Soviet-Sino relation and diplomacy played an important and significant role for the end game in Cambodia. "During a meeting on Harbin in September 1990, just prior to the Jakarta talks, China and the Soviet Union both agreed to suspend military support for Cambodia."¹⁸²

From the angles of insiders who were under much pressure of different parties, Vietnamese officials especially those at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarked that powers played important and decisive roles in handling the Cambodian issue, despite their direct or indirect intervention. Tackling the Cambodia issue was not merely handling the internal contradictions between Cambodian factions but was the struggle between powers who wanted to dominate or continue their influences over the Southeast Asia. The Cambodian issue was also related to China's ambition of controlling Vietnam, as well as restricting the return and increasing influence of the United States in Southeast Asia in future. These were China's strategic calculations in the context that the declined Soviet Union was in weak position and had to withdraw from its traditional influential regions and make concessions to China and the United States globally. The Cambodia conflict in particular, Vietnam and ASEAN in general, therefore, continued to be the conflicts in strategic interests between China and Western countries, specifically the United States through its regional allies.¹⁸³

Apart from external "top down" pressures, domestic economic crisis pressures forced Vietnam to make concessions in its national policies and agreements on ideological notions

¹⁸² Karen M. Sutter, *China's Vietnam Policy: The Road to Normalization and Prospects for the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship*, *Journal of Northeast Asia Studies*, vol.12, (Summer) 1993, p.21.

¹⁸³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. In his remarkable realpolitik analysis, Co wrote, "On the surface it looked like the factions in Cambodia and the neighboring countries would play the key role in deciding the Cambodian question because they were parties whose interests were most closely involved. But if we examine it carefully, then we will see that the big powers will play the decisive role. In searching a solution, we naturally had to concentrate on the factors that directly affected the third tier, but we couldn't possibly overlook moves of change among the countries in the first tier, the strategies of the big countries, the United States, the Soviet Union, and especially China. In our view, China, unlike the United States and the Soviet, constantly changed its strategies." In August 1990, United States Secretary of State James Baker stated that he would discuss with Vietnam's representative to the United Nation about Cambodian issue. That means the matter relating to Cambodia conflict would be resolved within the framework of the permanent member of the United Nation Security Council.

in order to work out comprehensive measures to Cambodian issue, which had already been a huge burden for Vietnamese economy and made negative influence on Vietnam's diplomatic and political prestige. Several Government officials assumed that Cambodia was Vietnam's version of the Russia's Afghanistan, "We are forced to go by our own internal difficulties and declining economy, the need for jobs and Western investment to solidify our renovation. And we stayed too long. We can no longer afford to be isolated in the world when our neighbors in Southeast Asia are developing with such speed."¹⁸⁴ Some officials even went further when they admitted that, "During our stay, we have made some mistakes. Instead of helping the Cambodians to grow up, we did many things and let them do few. That's why the time is so long. And we have come to a conclusion that will be right forever, that the revolution of each country and the independence of each country must be managed by each nation themselves; and the support of others can only be secondary."¹⁸⁵ One famous Vietnamese novelist even went further by saying that, "Let the Cambodians build any 'ism' they want to. It's up to them. Perhaps the kingdom of Cambodia will come back. But let them build a regime suitable to themselves."¹⁸⁶

As analyzed above, the handling approach of the Cambodian issue was under the control of complicated international relationships and benefits. As for Vietnam, it had to handle problems with China for not only relationship normalization, but also obtaining an acceptable solution to the Cambodian issue. The concern for "the imperialist are plotting to exterminate socialism... They are plotting peaceful evolution,"¹⁸⁷ pushed Vietnamese highest-ranking leaders to the consideration for tightening relationships of the remained socialist countries; ideology needed to be reconfirmed as the core of national strategy and foreign policy. They did not oppose to, nor did they absolutely eliminate realpolitik and

¹⁸⁴ Quoted in Steven Erlanger, Vietnam's Vietnam: Scars of Cambodia, *New York Times*, April 9, 1989.

¹⁸⁵ Major General Tran Cong Man, editor of *Quan Doi Nhan dan* [Army People's Daily], quoted in Steven Erlanger, Vietnam's Vietnam: Scars of Cambodia, *New York Times*, April 9, 1989.

¹⁸⁶ Nguyen Quang Sang, quoted in Steven Erlanger, Vietnam's Vietnam: Scars of Cambodia, *New York Times*, April 9, 1989.

¹⁸⁷ Nguyen Van Linh's talks with the Chinese Ambassador in Hanoi, June 5, 1990, quoted in Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

pragmatic calculations, but continued to maintain the viewpoint of restricting those intentions in economic field in order to ensure the political stability which was the prerequisite, according to the VCP, for the national development. In the context of turmoil, the Party must strengthen its control in politics and external affairs. Such viewpoints led Vietnam to the only choice to reestablish the relationship with China and hoped this socialist brother would build up strategic ally relation with Vietnam on the foundation of ideology.¹⁸⁸ The above choice regulated Vietnamese viewpoints in handling the Cambodia conflict, which was related to the so-called the “Red Solution.”¹⁸⁹

5.2.2. The “Red Solution”: The resurrection of ideological foundation

It can be said that in the early stage of *Renovation*, Vietnam’s foreign relations were characterized as the overlapping between the ideology and reality. During *Renovation*, practical viewpoints gradually dominated. In some specific situations, even the VCP made important decisions on the basis of national benefits first and foremost. However, it must be admitted that with Vietnam’s characteristics of *Renovation*, it was possible for either radical or conservative viewpoints to exist. The VCP always tried to harmonize by selecting a policy move towards social stability and the survival of Party’s leadership role, as well as emphasizing the Party’s solidarity and unity. Conservative viewpoints and strategic calculations based on ideological foundations therefore still existed in the VCP’s highest power structures and Party’s supreme leaders. A domestic socio-political turmoil, or a shift in the global strategic order and regional political landscape may be a stimulus for the emergence of those viewpoints, which in turn would directly affect Vietnam’s foreign policy directions. Chaos in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s played a role of such an agent.

¹⁸⁸ This issue will be discussed in details in the subtitle 5.3.

¹⁸⁹ Regarding to settlement process of the Cambodia conflict, Gorbachev once proposed idea of resolving among Cambodian communist factions including the Khmer Rouge. Some Vietnamese leaders supported that idea and consulted with China as an ideological foundations for both the Cambodia conflict as well as Vietnam-Sino normalization. For more details, see Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

That several Vietnamese leaders supported the “Red Solution” for the Cambodia conflict not only implied that Vietnam’s foreign policies would be officially based on ideological foundations, but also an announcement to China that the common things in socialist ideology between two countries was the ultimately important issue which needed to be given more priority than their national benefit conflicts. It can be said that, by proposing the “Red Solution,” some supreme leaders of the VCP implicitly rose up ideological viewpoints and considered them as the regulated foundation for Vietnam’s foreign policies.¹⁹⁰ Objections by those who supported the realist viewpoints were also extremely severe. However, several events in accordance with the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991 and difficulties in reestablishing normal relationships with ASEAN and with the United States, led to the resurrection and domination of conservative viewpoints.¹⁹¹

Nevertheless, China’s practical moves as approaching negotiation about Vietnamese-Sino normalization and the reality regarding to settlements of the Cambodia conflict in 1991 put Vietnamese leaders into a new context in which they realized China’s real face in maneuvering its national strategy and foreign policy. Such face was not much different from the previous remarks by Nguyen Co Thach and his fellows at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That realization of the VCP led to some adjustments and improvements of foreign policy directions at the Seventh Party Congress.¹⁹² However, not until there were improvements in the world and regional contexts, as well as Vietnam’s accession into ASEAN and establishing normal diplomatic relations with the United States, did such new diplomatic thinkings really promote their practical uses.

The process in which Vietnam foreign affairs participated in handling the Cambodia conflict originated from internal and external pressures, which was started and directed by

¹⁹⁰ Nguyen Van Linh, “We must see that there also contradictions between China and the imperialists on the question of Cambodia. We must have a strategy to exploit these contradictions. Don’t struggle with China to the point that it pushes them to close ranks with the imperialists.” Nguyen Van Linh’s dialogue with Cambodian Premier Hun Sen in September 1990 after the Vietnam-China Chengdu Meeting, quoted in Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

¹⁹¹ The expulsion of Politburo member, Vice Premier cum Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Nguyen Co Thach was an evidence for that context.

¹⁹² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet Hoi nghi trung uong 3 khoa 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1992, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Third Plenum Resolution*, the Seventh Central Committee, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1992].

new diplomatic thinkings of openness, multilateralization and diversification in the early stage of *Doi Moi*, especially with viewpoints of the Politburo Resolution No. 13. Nevertheless, in the late 1980s, together with increasing pressure from China, shifts in the Soviet Union's global and regional strategy, also adjustments of its policies and attitude towards Vietnam (regarding in the context of bipolar relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, the Soviet Union and China; or triangular relations among the those three powers), and the Cambodia conflict (regarding the Afghanistan problems and the Soviet Union-China issue) made strong impacts on VCP's diplomatic thinkings. There were several arguments and confrontations within VCP's internal supreme power apparatuses on the relationship between ideology and reality regarding to foreign policy making process-which were not tackled radically by the Sixth Party Congress and the Politburo Resolution No. 13. As a senior advisor of the Central Committee, former Premier Pham Van Dong said to Tran Quang Co in August 1990, "We must dare to play the game with the United Nation and the Security Council, with the United States and the Europeans. We need to utilize the American factor in the new situation... The plan is very good in theory, but the key is how to implement it... We shouldn't put forth demands that are too great."¹⁹³ In spite of not yet achieving goals set by the Party in the initial stage of *Doi Moi*, Vietnam's diplomatic efforts in settling the Cambodia conflict, as well as in Vietnamese-Sino normalization process could be considered as the first steps, despite being extremely difficult, toward a new and really "openness" foreign policy following the diversification and multilateralization directions in later stages.

The Soviet-American Summit in Malta and agreements between Gorbachev and Bush there helped conclude the Cold War in principles. The denial-even betrayal as some fundamentalist communist cadres later accused-of communist ideology in Gorbachev's plan of globally strategic concessions and withdrawing from traditional influenced regions including Southeast Asia put Vietnam into an extremely embarrassing situation. At that

¹⁹³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

time, the VCP seemed to be disoriented socio-politically and diplomatically as most of Vietnam's fundamental foundations of national strategy such as communist ideology, strategic directions and supports of the Soviet Union and socialist system had been eliminated by Gorbachev's new global détente strategies.¹⁹⁴ The VCP later suffered from another shock when witnessing the Soviet Union's policy maneuvers in Eastern Europe and Gorbachev's deal on German unification. Such above-mentioned developments produced a stir to even the most rigid conservative leaders of the VCP. They felt scared and lonely in a new world order with numerous contingencies. Vietnamese leaders assumed that, the Soviet Union and even China really abandoned socialist ideology in their foreign policy formulating and implementing processes. Realpolitik calculations and national interests played leading and decisive roles in the process of making national strategies and foreign policy of these two socialist powers. Either socialism with Chinese characteristics, or the Soviet Union's *Perestroika* socialism were in fact the ideological dainty names for pragmatic and realist political directions based on the calculations of national interests and the denials of their so-called proletarian international duties which had been always expected by Vietnam. David Elliott analyzed that, "These developments raised fundamental questions for Vietnam in understanding the nature of the international system in which its diplomacy was conducted."¹⁹⁵

5.2.3. A comprehensive diplomatic settlement for Cambodia conflict: Initial steps toward the policy of diversification and multilateralization

After the Sixth Party Congress, although Vietnam's leaders had started to change their thinkings, shown commitment to renovation, but internal problems had still been unresolved basically. Furthermore, the decline of support and pressure from the Soviet Union that

¹⁹⁴ In Malta summit in December 1989, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed on the détente and ending of the Cold War in principle and terminating the ideological confrontation, the VCP did not have any responses even when the Soviet Union sent a delegation to Vietnam to clarify this strategic directions. Steve Erlanger reported effects of that momentous change on Vietnamese politics by quoting a Vietnamese senior party member, "This is the biggest crisis in the socialist camp since 1917. Right now the leadership just doesn't know what to do... There is a contradiction between reality and their principles, which they cannot abandon." Steve Erlanger, Vietnam Leaders Reported Deeply Divided, *New York Times*, January 31, 1991.

¹⁹⁵ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 112.

forced Vietnam to reform both political and economic system more strongly. Gorbachev's new thinking of the peaceful coexistence directly led towards the East-West détente.¹⁹⁶ The growing influence from China had forced Vietnam to set up new strategic moves, expand its external relations to counter the threat from China,¹⁹⁷ and break the deadlock over foreign affairs and solve domestic crisis. After the Sixth Party Congress, most of VCP's senior diplomats realised that: "The most direct and powerful influence on the Cambodia conflict and Vietnam was the accommodation between the Soviet Union and China."¹⁹⁸

In 1987, the VCP continued to seek a diplomatic solution for the Cambodia conflict in order to open up a new path for Vietnam diplomacy. The debates within the Party on Cambodian problem-solving measures and efforts had demonstrated the formation and development of the new foreign policy and diplomatic viewpoints-those had been later specified in the Resolution No. 13. According to Tran Quang Co, both the VCP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs committed internally that in the past recent years Vietnam had been so strongly dependent upon the Soviet Union and China in thinking and acting that it has lost its self-control and restricted itself in relation with the world and the Southeast Asia.¹⁹⁹ Former Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach said, "It is not necessary to do with China only. We must see that the three major countries the United States, the Soviet Union, and China joined to discuss a solutions framework. The experiences in 1954 and 1973 should be remembered. We will continue making a full use of the United States-Soviet and the Sino-Soviet confrontation. We cannot neglect the United States, we will have to reach a consensus with the Unites States either. Therefore, it is not wise to just speak with the

¹⁹⁶ Mikhail Gorbachev, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, 1988.

¹⁹⁷ At that time, many top leaders of the VCP recognized that China was the most and biggest threat, even the introductory section of Vietnam Constitution (1982) stated that China was a direct enemy. In its Fifth National Congress Political Report, the Party stated that, "The Chinese ruling circles unmasked themselves as a direct and dangerous enemy of our people." Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Bao cao chinh tri, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 5*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1982, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, Political Report, *Fifth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1982].

¹⁹⁸ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. After his landmark Vladivostok speech in July 1986, Gorbachev began to implement a rapprochement movement with China. In order to meet three Chinese conditions, the Soviet Union pressed Vietnam to reach an accommodation with China and a political settlement in Cambodia.

¹⁹⁹ Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

Chinese.”²⁰⁰ Vietnamese leaders found that in order to create a position and regain the initiative for Vietnam diplomacy, it is crucial to analyze and take advantage of the conflict of interest between the concerned major countries. Vietnam’s optimum position in international relations must be identified, and a balance in foreign policy must be foreseen. At the same time, it was essential to diversify and multilateralize Vietnam’s relations with the noncommunist world to make pressure on China and to limit or even avoid asymmetric status with this big neighbor.²⁰¹ Enhancing activities to normalize diplomatic relations with the United States, Western countries and ASEAN would bring Vietnam a new status and more power when deploying relations and negotiations with China. Vietnam would be easily overwhelmed by China and have to compromise if it was weak and alone.

However, this viewpoint also encountered subjective and objective difficulties. Objectively, Gorbachev from a calculation of superpower’s interests and concessions to the United States in his new global strategy, either accidentally or intentionally had put Vietnam on the situation of “solving the Cambodian issue with China.”²⁰² While the approach and solution for the Cambodian issue played a decisive role in the formulation of Vietnam’s new foreign policy. Subjectively, the VCP remained biased and rigid thinking about “two camps” since establishing and promoting relations with the West were almost forbidden. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a shock when it mentioned about the expanding relationship outside the socialist block.²⁰³ It was the requirements of reality but it was so difficult to change the mindset and accept it quickly. Although the new foreign relation thinking of diversification and multilateralization had been emerged quite early in Vietnam, since the beginning of 1980s,²⁰⁴ but it had only been accepted and interpreted in

²⁰⁰ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²⁰¹ About the analyses on asymmetric relation theory see Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

²⁰² Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003; see also, Hugh De Santis and Robert A. Manning, *Gorbachev’s Eurasian Strategy: The Dangers of Success and Failure*, RAND Corporation, August 1989.

²⁰³ Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

²⁰⁴ Phan Dinh Dieu’s petition to Vietnam National Assembly External Relation Committee (1981). He called the Party to abandon confrontational policy toward countries outside the socialist camp to release Vietnam’s isolation. Vietnam National Assembly Documents, Hanoi, 1981.

policies years after the Sixth Congress, in particular during the process of finding solutions for the Cambodia conflict, and normalizing relations with China, the United States, ASEAN and Western countries. This was also the time to formulate and implement the Resolution No. 13 of the Politburo. And it was not too late to do so although this new thinking had been accepted and implemented slowly.

While détente and dialogue trend between two superpowers was strongly promoted on a global scale,²⁰⁵ Vietnam in this context had proactively pushed diplomatic moves to find solutions for the Cambodian issue, try to bring about rapprochement with ASEAN countries.²⁰⁶ The 1988 Vietnam's announcement of troops withdrawal from Cambodia under the observation of invited foreign observers had helped to change the situation.²⁰⁷ These actions had created an opportunity to break the deadlock on the Cambodian issue, establish a new and feasible direction for Vietnam diplomacy of following the world's common trend of cooperation and openness. With Vietnam's openness and cooperation commitments, lesser fears of Vietnam's military involvement by other ASEAN countries, mutual trust was gradually reestablished in Southeast Asia. Regarding to Cambodian issue, as new fora had been established and new partners had been invited, the role of China thus gradually narrowed, the pressure from China on Vietnam decreased. It seemed that Vietnam had found a new diplomatic strategy to deal with China's influence and pressure. These practical experiences had been reflected in the Resolution No.13.

In the Resolution No.13, the Party decided that the problem of Cambodia must be solved completely before 1990 and determined the viewpoints of non-interference, peaceful coexistence. Ideological outlook and internationalist duties were no longer the foundation of foreign policy formulation. For Laos and Cambodia, the Resolution stated

²⁰⁵ Tran Quang Co wrote "The Sixth Congress unfolded in the context of a tendency toward consolidating peace in the developing world, and big countries going deeply into an accommodation relationship of each pair, the United States-the Soviet Union, the United States and China, and the Soviet Union-China." Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²⁰⁶ Communiqué of 29 July 1987 of Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the meeting between Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach and his Indonesian counterpart Mochtar, the representative for ASEAN and Southeast Asia countries.

²⁰⁷ On May 26, 1988, Vietnam announced that it would withdraw half of the troops from Cambodia by the end of 1988 and all of the troops by 1990. In fact, Vietnam completed that plan in September 1989.

clearly, “Whether Laos and Cambodia will advance to socialism or follow the path of nationalism and democratic, their peoples and their parties will decide in accordance with the country’s reality and aspirations of the peoples.”²⁰⁸

Regarding to China, Tran Quang Co remembered there emerged many confusions and worries among the Vietnamese, “Why were the other countries in the region worried about China, while Vietnam placed its hopes on China (as a strategic ally)?”; “Was the expansionist hegemonic face of China the main one, or was its socialism?”; “What was the real nature of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristic’?”²⁰⁹ After harsh debates and even compromises, the Politburo meeting in March 1987 on diplomatic struggling scheme and to prepare for the Resolution No. 13 indicated that: There exists two faces in China’s strategy-the socialist elements and the hegemonic policy. The supreme power body of the VCP further stated that China did not have common interests with Vietnam or any other socialist countries in the works of socialism protection against imperialism. China only protects its socialism and hegemony.²¹⁰ The Spratly Islands incidents in 1988 and a series of small-scale clashes on the land border between the two countries, and the difficulties caused by China when Vietnam tried to solve the Cambodia conflict had proved that the statement was correct.²¹¹ But the Party seemed still be divided and could not reach consensus. A part of the Party emphasized and protested China’s hegemonic scheme and ambitions, then raised the anti-Chinese spirit within the VCP. Some even argued that the suggestion from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to revise the Party’s Charter and amend the introductory statement of the Constitution (1980) was a capitulation to China.²¹² This

²⁰⁸ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

²⁰⁹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²¹⁰ Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003. “China proclaims that it is protecting socialism, but it never proclaims that is defending socialism in countries of the world. This means that China is only protecting the socialism and hegemonism of China.” But this stance shifted as chaos emerged in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries after 1989 and in the early 1990s. See also Carlyle A. Thayer, *Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest*, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994.

²¹¹ See Chapter 6 for further discussions.

²¹² On 20 May 1987, Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted to the Politburo a proposal of amending the introductory statement of the Constitution (1980). The proposal suggested to delete the paragraph saying China as a “*direct and most dangerous enemy*” like it had been deleted in the Party’s Charter. On 26 August 1988, the National Assembly approved this amendment.

tension caused difficulties in implementing the policy of normalizing relations with China and thus generally affected on the policy of diversification and multilateralization of Vietnam diplomacy. It could be considered a diplomacy-security dilemma of Vietnam in the late 1980s as long as the interplay of realpolitik calculation and ideological outlook was still protracted.²¹³

However, upon the demand from the context and the new foreign policy thinking, the Politburo reached a consensus on an external relations orientation and confirmed it through the Politburo Resolution No. 13 of 20 May 1988, in which the problem of Cambodia and the normalization of relations with China would be solved first of all in order to set up the first step for the new foreign policy of Vietnam. The Resolution stated clearly that, “Striving to normalize relations with China is an arduous, complicated, and time-consuming process. The relationship between the two countries after normalization cannot be back as it was in the 1950s, 1960s.”²¹⁴ Clearly, it was the VCP’s policy choice for both primarily strategic concerns and economic developments. The Party also identified its viewpoints and ideas in formulating and implementing the foreign policy with China: “It is crucial to avoid incorrect thoughts that considered China as purely hegemony or purely socialist.”²¹⁵ This new orientation of the Resolution No.13 was a big step forward compared to previous policy toward China, which was usually one-sided or one-dimensional either supporting or opposing. Theoretically, recognizing China from a new perspective reflected new openness thinkings about international relations of Vietnam and, laid out initial steps toward the balanced diplomacy that would be applied later in the normalization and rapprochement process with ASEAN, the United States and other Western countries in the late 1990s.

²¹³ Tran Quang Co once wrote about this fundamental issue: “Is concentrating on economic development the only way or the most effective way to reinforce stability and escape from the social and economic crisis in the country and raise international status of our country, and cope with ‘peaceful revolution’? Have we given a high enough priority to economic development?” Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²¹⁴ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

²¹⁵ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, *ibid.*, 20 May 1988.

5.3. Vietnam's approach toward normalization with China

5.3.1. Ideology versus realpolitik diplomacy

Vietnam-China relationship was evaluated by several scholars as one of the typical asymmetric relations which played a certain role in the research and development of international relations theory.²¹⁶ According to Brantly Womack, “the Sino-Vietnamese relationship became the defining relationship for difference phases of the Southeast Asian regional politics and a major element of global international relations. Although the success of normalization since 1991 has taken the relationship out of world headlines, the stability of relations between China and Vietnam remains an essential part of the foundation of international order in Asia.”²¹⁷ Using asymmetric theory, Womack also analyzed that, “The one constant in relations between China and Vietnam since the unification of the Chinese empire in 221 BC has been that China is always much the larger partner. Regardless of whether the relationship was hostile, friendly, or in between, it has been asymmetric.”²¹⁸ Vietnamese War or the Second Indochina War was given high priority and shaped major features in Chinese foreign policies. During that time, this country decided that Vietnam, like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea previously, was used to prevent the United States's threats and influences as well as a strategic card in China's policies toward the Soviet Union. That Vietnamese War ended in 1975 with Vietnam's independence and unification which led to shifts in and reshaping of foreign policies of not only Vietnam but also China.²¹⁹ For Vietnam, the 1975-victory set a new phase in its domestic and foreign policy. In that momentous moment, Vietnamese leaders proudly considered itself as an undefeated outpost of socialism. The VCP attempted to

²¹⁶ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006. “The Sino-Vietnamese relationship therefore presents an interesting case of a long-term asymmetric relationship that has moved through a full gamut of possible variations. Moreover, the asymmetry of the relationship can be used to explain its restlessness as well as the methods that both sides have used to define and manage it.” p.1.

²¹⁷ Brantly Womack, *ibid.*, 2006, p.1.

²¹⁸ Brantly Womack, *ibid.*, 2006, p.1.

²¹⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer, *The Structure of Vietnam-China Relations, 1991-2008*, paper for the Third International Conference on Vietnamese Studies, Hanoi, 4-7 December 2008; Brantly Womack, *Modernization and the Sino-Vietnamese Model*, *International Journal of China Studies*, vol.2, no.2, August/September 2011, pp.157-175.

formulate new national strategies from the standpoint of independence and self-reliance and, tried to redefine Vietnam's role in regional and international political system. For China, the Paris Peace Convention of 1973 with articles on troop withdrawing and ending the United States's direct military intervention into Vietnam helped stop the global threat to China from Vietnamese War, concurrently helped strengthen its diplomatic maneuvers to be closer to that of the United States in order to fight against the Soviet Union's influence and pressure. The ending of the Vietnam War also led to the ending of policy priorities given to Vietnam in China's diplomacy. China looked forward to a new Vietnam which would be more friendly with China and gradually escaped from the Soviet Union's control.²²⁰ Differences in each side's considerations and assessments on Vietnam's status and role in regional power structures and the world order led to contradictions and hostility between the two neighboring countries during late 1970s-early 1980s.²²¹

For a long time, Vietnam depended on the Soviet Union economically, diplomatically, and later security. However, complicated happenings in the Soviet Union in *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* period put Vietnamese leaders into a dilemma. They even did not know how to react or decide what Vietnam should do when facing Gorbachev's too radical policies. Although previously, Vietnam had implemented several adjustments in order to reduce its dependence on the Soviet Union, and to tackle the isolated context and to prepare for the struggle against potential negative impacts together with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries. That Vietnam active and dynamic move for a comprehensive diplomatic solution to the Cambodia conflict on the one hand proved that, Vietnam wanted to escape from international ideological ties, and focus more on national security interests; on the other hand, that move concurrently reflected Vietnam's trend of shifting from socialist isolation to international community integration.²²²

²²⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Relations with China and the United States, in Phan Quang Minh, ed., *The Role of Vietnam in the Asia-Pacific*, Hanoi, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam, 2011.

²²¹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²²² Mark Manyin, Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005.

New international context forced Vietnam to make fundamental adjustments in its security strategy and foreign policy. Under realism calculations, Vietnam would have to gradually move its external relations towards the West, first and foremost was the United States and ASEAN countries while continuing to maintain its strategic allied relations with the Soviet Union. Those strategic calculations based on the viewpoint of considering national interests as the core foundation for foreign policy making process.²²³ On the other hand, apart from that trend, several Vietnamese senior officials assumed that, threats from the Western countries were more severe than those from China,²²⁴ and hoped that China, with their ideological adherences, would replace the Soviet Union to raise the flag of socialism and assist Vietnam.²²⁵ They advocated to cling on to ideological calculations in the formulation of national strategy. The late 1980s witnessed severe competitiveness and confrontations between these two stances within the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party.²²⁶ Those inner-party debates even led to the leaving of a Politburo full member, Vice Premier cum Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Co Thach, a famous Vietnamese diplomat who supported realist viewpoints of shifting diplomatic paradigm toward the West, and advocated further economic renovation with modified market mechanisms.²²⁷ According to Mr. Thach, Vietnam should promote its accession into ASEAN and make full use of the regionalization card to balance against the pressure and threats from China.²²⁸ According to some scholars, Nguyen Co Thach was

²²³ Hien Do, Economic Interdependence within ASEAN: A Perspective on the Vietnamese Strategy for Development and National Security, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.105-118.

²²⁴ Nguyen Van Linh, Phat bieu Be mac Hoi nghi 7 cua Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 9 nam 1989, tr.5-12, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at the Closure of the 7th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, Communist review, September 1989, pp.5-12.

²²⁵ Le Duc Anh, "The Americans and the West want to have a pretext to eliminate communism. They are eliminating it in Eastern Europe. They have announced that they will eliminate communism throughout the entire world. Clearly they are the direct and dangerous enemy. We have to look for an ally. That ally is China." Le Duc Anh's dialogue with Cambodian Premier Hunsen in September 1990 after the Vietnam-China Chengdu Meeting, quoted in Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²²⁶ Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994.

²²⁷ Steven Erlanger, Vietnamese Leader, Assailing the West, Ignites Fear at Home, *New York Times*, September 20, 1989, "It was Mr. Thach who had pressed for the early withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia to end Vietnam's economic and political isolation, and if the withdrawal does not produce some results, Mr. Thach's position will be jeopardized."

²²⁸ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6, November/December 2006, pp.805-824; and, Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

considered as an anti-China figure in the Sixth Central Committee Politburo, who supported realpolitik calculations and radical renovation trend similar to that of the Soviet Union and be inclined to the West.²²⁹

Vietnam entered the *Renovation* course with strategic confusions, lack of both a dominated theory as well as a practical socialist management and development model, when the Soviet Union model seemed to increasingly diverge from the Marxism-Leninism's fundamental principles and less effective in practice. The changes in international political context, together with the Soviet Union's strategic adjustments, global and regional détente trends,²³⁰ as well as Gorbachev's ambiguousness in socialist commitment and his pragmatic approach in foreign policy led to the absence of strategic paradigm and foreign policy directions on which Vietnam used to depend during the Cold War. In the late 1980s, Vietnam felt lonely and isolated in a hostile international environment with severe socio-political chaoses, some of which were directly related to the survival of Vietnam socialist regime and Party's leadership. For the VCP, assessing choices and making decisions became an extremely difficult task.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist system consolidated concerns about capitalism's plots of intervention and sabotage Vietnam, which led to the resurrection and domination of the ideological viewpoint during early 1990s. Vietnam decided to facilitate normalization with China, put its trust in the common ideological points with China. That may be due to: (i) Vietnamese leaders were still too adhered to the fundamental ideological viewpoints despite their repeated statements of commitments to *Doi Moi*, acceptances of the *New Thinkings*, and abandon the old "two camps" theory. Indeed they still tried to cling onto their old communist viewpoints when assumed that they were the survival foundation of the regime and the assurance of the Party's leadership.²³¹ (ii) Complicated situations in

²²⁹ Steve Erlanger, Vietnam Leaders Reported Deeply Divided, *New York Times*, January 31, 1991. "At the recent meeting, Mr. Thach was criticized for being 'pro-Soviet,' which still translates here as meaning too eager for political changes."

²³⁰ Especially those movements between the pairs of some major global and regional powers including the Soviet Union-the United States and the Soviet Union-China.

²³¹ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries pushed Vietnamese leaders back to the old awareness about the existed plots of capitalist countries of using “Peaceful evolution” strategy to eliminate the socialist Vietnam. Vietnam felt it was vulnerable and needed a lifebuoy of ideological foundation.²³² Although part of its leaders was still aware of national interests being the foundation of policy making process, their voice was minority and dominated by concerns about political turmoil and regime collapse. (iii) Moreover, despite Vietnam’s efforts in tackling the Cambodia conflict and its desire for accessing ASEAN as well as facilitating diplomatic normalization with the United States, the refusal from the United States, suspicions and obstacles among ASEAN’s members gradually pushed Vietnam towards China. This was partly because of the United States’ and ASEAN’s precaution in assessing Vietnam’s political and diplomatic maneuvers, but also reflected inner-party’s hesitations to fully integrate into the world.²³³ That fact also proved the trend of shifting directions and reshaping foreign policy toward the West had not yet absolutely dominated within the Politburo.

The decision on normalization with China, on the one hand, showed Vietnamese leaders’ hope of an old world-the socialist world on the foundation of communist ideology; on the other hand, reflected the standstill in Vietnam’s strategic international relation directions.²³⁴ Several scholars argued that Vietnamese’s choice of normalization with China “might be termed Vietnam’s security dilemma,”²³⁵ as too many historical issues and territorial disputes were not handled between the two countries; the Vietnamese always suspected of China’s expansion ambition. For China, it always considered Vietnam to be a

²³² Premier Do Muoi, *Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi*, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan, *Nhan Dan*, 2 thang 9 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Continue the task of Doi Moi, unite to advance for the victory of socialism, for the well being and happiness of the people, *People*, September 2, 1990]. He stated, “The international situation is evolving in a very complex manner. The crisis in the Eastern European socialist countries is extremely serious, and will have a not insignificant impact on building socialism in our country. The enemy forces are carrying out many activities to sabotage the development and protection of the Fatherland of our people.”

²³³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²³⁴ Nguyen Vu Tung, *Vietnam’s Security Challenges: Hanoi’s New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies*, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122.

²³⁵ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.88.

“naughty boy” and considered its national interests to be the core of its national strategies rather than ideology as expected by Vietnamese leaders. The VCP was probably aware of that problem, but they might have no better choices at the difficult time of early 1990s. When that context was changed during the middle of 1990s, Vietnam’s opportunities of regional integration and international accommodation into the Western hemisphere became clearer; VCP’s fears of being economically assimilated and politically transformed seemed to disappear. The VCP tried the institutionalist approach to join ASEAN²³⁶ and deployed foreign policy directions of multilateralization and diversification international relations by normalizing its relations with the United States and other Western countries.²³⁷

Basically, a lot of people may blame Vietnam’s confusions and standstills in foreign relations during late 1980s and early 1990s on objective conditions and situations. Indeed, it was clear that during those years, the VCP could not reach comprehensive consensus on the issue of relationship between ideology and reality. The VCP still adhered to fundamental socialist strictures and could not stop using ideology as policy making foundations, which led to the fact that the United States, ASEAN and Western countries remarked Vietnam did not really make commitments to comprehensive *Renovation*. Vietnam formulated several new foreign policy guidelines and directions, and they all sounded well in theory but had not been practically and effectively implemented. Realpolitik policies were trapped by ideological obstacles. For its part, the VCP had not made drastic policy maneuvers to confirm its determination in integrating into the regional and international community.²³⁸ The ideological fears and socio-political system discrimination once again dominated VCP’s national strategic and diplomatic perceptions. Such objective and subjective combinations resulted in Vietnam’s decision to lean closer to

²³⁶ Nguyen Vu Tung, Testing the Institutional Approach Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam’s New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.51-70.

²³⁷ Eero Palmujoki, Vietnam’s Integration into the World National and Global Interfaces, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam’s New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.120-133.

²³⁸ Alexander L. Vuving, The Two-Headed Grand Strategy: Vietnamese Foreign Policy since *Doi Moi*, paper of the conference, *Vietnam Update 2004: Strategic and Foreign Relations*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 25-26 November 2004.

China's side. Although it could not be denied that the rapprochement brought about certain benefits to Vietnam. However, it was clear that such benefits could not compensate for the concessions that Vietnam had to accept;²³⁹ as well as the opportunities that Vietnam should have obtained if it could integrate early into the international community. Failing to diversify foreign relations and break isolated diplomatic context, Vietnam was unable to counterpoise China's influences and pressure, which was also the strategic lessons drawn by several Vietnamese diplomatic agencies²⁴⁰ and the VCP at its following Party Congresses.

Regarding external relations, the identification of the nature and foundation of the relationships plays a decisive role in all the maneuvers of foreign policies among countries. Basically, countries found their common things to shape their relationships; moreover, the development levels of external relations depended on the properties and features of such common attention. During the preparatory process for formulating new foreign policy directions, including the goal of rapprochement with China, Vietnamese leaders faced severe disagreements and splits when evaluating and identifying the common issues, the foundation and the nature of Vietnam-Sino relationship.²⁴¹ Should Vietnam continue its precaution viewpoint based on the realpolitik calculation and focused on national interests, or should it deploy the viewpoint that assumed ideological solidarity between two countries and "Chinese needs to raise the flag of socialism high and resolutely defend Marxism-Leninism."²⁴² The question, "What was the real nature of 'socialism with Chinese characteristic'?" was reiterated for many times inside Vietnamese leaders' head, in VCP's

²³⁹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]; and, Karen M. Sutter, China's Vietnam Policy: The Road to Normalization and Prospects for the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship, *Journal of Northeast Asia Studies*, vol.12, (Summer) 1993.

²⁴⁰ Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006]; and, Vu Khoan, *Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam*, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

²⁴¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

²⁴² Nguyen Van Linh's talks with the Chinese Ambassador in Hanoi, June 5, 1990, quoted in Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

inner-power cycle meetings, in Party's internal documents, and in several specialized studies by Vietnamese political scholars. There were various viewpoints on this issue, and despite relatively fundamental conclusions of the Politburo Resolution No. 13, the VCP was still extremely confused in obtaining Party consensus in its evaluation about the nature of Chinese politics and China's real ambitions. Disagreements continued to exist in the Party's top leaders and apparatuses such as the Politburo and Central Committee in the preparatory process towards normalization with China, and also, during the process of implementing new foreign policy directions of the Seventh Party Congress.

Notably, several conservative figures, who used to have rigid attitudes towards China, tended to change their attitudes and sought supports from China as well as drove Vietnamese foreign policies toward China on the basis of ideological foundation after fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where concentrated numerous voices of radical reform, still maintained relatively cautious attitudes despite its previous supports for a less hostile policy toward China. It could be seen that the realism perceptions and realpolitik calculation tended to dominate in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam in the early 1990s. Different approaches to national strategic issues caused the separation in notions and split in policies toward China in Vietnam's supreme power agencies. Concerns about the survival of the socialist regimes and the leadership role of the Party led several Vietnamese high-ranking officials head for an allied-orbit with China. Meanwhile, the reformers, with realism calculations, assumed that promoting relationship with China was essential but it should depend upon national interests rather than ideological foundation. They analyzed several historical lessons of Vietnam-China relations to prove that Chinese leaders neither considering socialism's interests more important than China's national interests, nor sacrificing its national interests to protect the socialist Vietnam. In fact, on the contrary, China would be willing to sacrifice Vietnam to obtain much benefits for the development

and stability of China.²⁴³ Those incidents had happened many times in the past and would certainly reoccur in the future.

In the early 1980s, the VCP maintained the viewpoint that China did not pay attention to socialism's interests, instead implemented the policy of non-confrontation with imperialism and pursued the pragmatic development strategy. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a change in VCP's viewpoints when expressing its hope about China's replacement of the Soviet Union in holding aloft the socialist flag, as well as undertaking the responsibility of carrying out the world socialist revolution.²⁴⁴ In other words, Vietnamese leaders expected to establish new diplomatic relation paradigm with China based on the ideological foundation. Vietnamese leaders hoped Vietnamese-Sino relations would move from diplomatic relation normalization to establishment of strategic alliance. Moreover, the VCP expected to rely on China in protecting Vietnam from negative impacts and devious plots of sabotage and destroying of capitalist countries. Vietnam's diplomacy from realist strategic calculations in the early stage of *Doi Moi*, shifted back to its starting point with the viewpoint of "two worlds," and shaping external relations on ideological foundation in the harsh reality after the fall of the Soviet Union. Tran Quang Co revealed that, "in a number of branches of Party Central and even in the Politburo there arose different views about how to evaluate Tian An Men as well as the situations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At this time the favored line was 'however expansionist it may be, China is still a socialist country.'"²⁴⁵

In contrast to the viewpoints of several members of the Politburo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained the viewpoint that China always handled its external relation issues based on its national interests. China tried to control Vietnam by taking advantage of

²⁴³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]; and, Carlyle A. Thayer, The Tyranny of Geography: Vietnamese Strategies to Constrain China in the South China Sea, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.33, no.3, 2011.

²⁴⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

²⁴⁵ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

the Cambodia conflict, and forced Vietnam to depend upon China.²⁴⁶ As Tran Quang Co analyzed, “In our view: China at present has two faces, a socialist face and a hegemonistic expansionist face. Its socialist nature is most clearly demonstrated in its internal policies and economic structures. But the foreign-policy line of China still retained its traditional expansionist hegemonist nature. The unchanging aspect of China is its hegemonism. Depending on their own interests at any given time, a given country might become China’s friend or enemy.”²⁴⁷ And “China proclaims that it is protecting socialism, but it never proclaims that is defending socialism in the socialist countries of the world. This means that China is only protecting the socialism and hegemonism of China.”²⁴⁸ At the turning points of the late 1980s and early 1990s when VCP was in the final preparatory process for the Seventh Party Congress, those above assessments about China’s intentions and international strategic tremors played a decisive role in formulating Vietnam’s national strategies and shaping new foreign policy directions.

5.3.2. Obstacles in the negotiation: Normalization or compromise

During the negotiation process toward normalization with China, Vietnam indeed faced numerous difficulties due to its wrong evaluation of China’s intentions and strategic directions. Vietnam’s mistakes in overestimating the ideological foundation and hoping that China would rely on the common socialist directions pushed it into weak position in the negotiation and had to accept important concessions, which later led to certain stagnancies and obstacles to the implementation of Vietnam’s omni-directional foreign policies.²⁴⁹ These evaluations could be seen through reports on the First Round of Vietnam-China’s negotiation in normalization by former Deputy Minister of Foreign

²⁴⁶ Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: The Cases of China, Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 26(3), September 2003; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

²⁴⁷ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²⁴⁸ Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

²⁴⁹ “Foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification,” in the words of the Seventh Party Congress, *Official Documents, Foreign affairs section*. Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

Affairs Tran Quang Co, “As the person directly negotiating with China, I presented the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s Report to the Politburo, which included an evaluation of the devious aims that China wanted to achieve in this negotiation. The devious aims of China with respect to relations with Vietnam concerning the Cambodian issue has been clearly revealed over the course of these meetings. China’s strategy is to place highest priority on the struggle to win over the United States and the Europeans and ASEAN to serve their goal of ‘four modernizations.’ Their policy towards Vietnam, and also towards the Soviet Union and other countries has to serve this highest interest, and not cause the slightest negative influence on China’s relations with the United States, the Europeans, and ASEAN. Precisely for this reason, China is not responding to the proposals of General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and Le Duc Anh to the Chinese Ambassador prior to the negotiations.”²⁵⁰ Co also remarked his experiences through negotiations that China, by taking advantages of Vietnam’s concerns about “Peaceful evolution” and the collapse of socialist countries, increased its ideological and political pressures to Vietnam. That several Party’s senior officials expressed their concerns about the West’s devious intentions and asking China to hold aloft the socialist flags was a serious mistake and revealed Vietnam fatal weakness for China—with its skillful diplomatic tradition, to exploit. “Because of this they used our strong desire to cooperate with China to pressure us in the negotiations.”²⁵¹ According to Co’s analysis, despite Vietnam’s efforts in finding and proving common benefits with China on the ideological issue, China with its inherent characteristics, only assumed that the core foundation must be nation-state interests under the influence of realism. However, as they were entering negotiation with Vietnam, the Chinese side always showed their socialist face and used their communist hands to attract and tie Vietnam. Whenever it came to either domestic affairs or national interests, the Chinese would certainly show their real faces and never compromise. Co also concluded the problem that not only the Chinese tried to lure

²⁵⁰ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

²⁵¹ Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

some Vietnamese leaders with a socialist bait, but also those leaders deluded themselves as they didn't dare to go alone on the road toward socialism in the harsh reality after the Cold War. Through the negotiation process with China, that situation gradually changed and Vietnam initially realized that trying to adhere to ideological viewpoints in the process of formulating foreign policy was no longer relevant as the "two worlds-two camps" boundaries had been eliminated by powers due to their own aims of pursuing nation-state interests.²⁵² Together with the world changes, the nation-state interests needed to be reconsidered and recalculated or even redefined to ensure the sound directions for national strategy and foreign policy.

During final negotiation rounds, there were changes in China's attitudes, especially its cooperation in handling the Cambodia conflict along with normalization negotiation. Previously, China always set the prerequisite for negotiation process as Vietnam must reach a comprehensive solution for the Cambodia conflict. As an experienced diplomat and senior party member, who held a thorough understanding about China and was responsible for diplomatic negotiations for the Cambodia conflict, Tran Quang Co analyzed, China's changes in policies resulted from its top priorities of "Four modernizations" at that time, with the highest priority given to economic development. After the 1989-Tien An Men incident, China was virtually embargoed and isolated by the West. Meanwhile, it seemed to be more favorable for Vietnam when the United States and Western countries were actively implementing diplomatic activities in Southeast Asia. The biggest obstacle among Vietnam, ASEAN and the United States was gradually lifted by Vietnam's commitment of finding a comprehensive diplomatic and political solution for Cambodia and withdrawing all of its troops from Cambodia at the end of 1989. China had been already isolated all over the world; and it was possible to be isolated right in its traditionally influential area.

²⁵² The history of China-Soviet Union relations showed that, China changed its attitude towards the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and accused them of following revisionism. It reflected Chinese pragmatic approach to national strategy. China also betrayed and sacrificed Vietnam's interest as it secretly negotiated with the United States and France to reach the Geneva Peace Accord-1954, and later in Paris negotiations on Vietnam War-1972. In late 1970s, China-Soviet confrontations and China's rapprochement with the United States put Vietnam in to completely isolated situation. And later, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, The Soviet Union and China neglected the ideological foundation or only used it as the label of gathering forces in their foreign policies when such label was beneficial to their national interests.

Even regarding the Cambodia conflict, if China did not have any new policy moves, it would have lost control of the situation.²⁵³ This was indeed the opportunity for Vietnam, said Co, to deploy openness diplomatic directions-the omni-directional foreign policy, towards the balance of influence among powers on the basis of nation-state interests.

However, due to tight clinging on to the ideological viewpoint and concerns about the United States' as well as Western countries' devious aims, the Sixth and Seventh Central Committee Politburo decided to accept China's conditions and gave top priority on the normalization. That decision led to Vietnam's concessions in numerous issues in solving the Cambodia conflict, causing disadvantages to the allies²⁵⁴ and losing its prestige in front of regional and international community.²⁵⁵ Concurrently, by neglecting the above-mentioned analyses and evaluations by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, did the VCP lose the opportunity of reaching rapid normalization with the United States and ASEAN for the second time when it was still holding number of cards. At a seminar on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam diplomatic service, former Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam reached a conclusion that, "one of the shortcomings frequently mentioned was that there were many times when we didn't change our thinking in a timely fashion, and did not grasp the changes in the face of international relations at various historical turning points in a timely manner, and had shortcomings in researching and forecasting strategy, which persists in managing the richly diversified external activities in the new era."²⁵⁶ Then after several years, despite obtaining the goal of normalization and international economic integration, Vietnam had once again to make concessions to the United States and the West, as well as wasted time and missed numerous development opportunities. The balanced foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification, therefore, were slowly

²⁵³ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, Tran Quang Co's Memoirs, Hanoi, 2003].

²⁵⁴ The People Republic of Kampuchea, and the ruling party, Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party.

²⁵⁵ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

²⁵⁶ Nguyen Manh Cam, Phat bieu Tong ket Hoi Thao Ky Niem 50 Nam Ngoai Giao Viet Nam, *Tap chi Nghien cuu Quoc te*, So dac biet, so.7, thang 9 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Closing Speech at a Seminar on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam Diplomacy, *International Studies*, Special issue, no.7, September 1995].

brought into full play. During the early 1990s, Vietnam's diplomacy was under much pressure from China without making any breakthrough to counterpoise to such pressure.

After internal debates and tense negotiations with China with several political concessions accepted by Vietnam, on 5 November 1991 in Beijing, leaders of Vietnam and China officially announced about the normalization of Vietnamese-Sino relationship and declared a new stage for the two countries external relations in particular and the Southeast Asian geopolitical context in general.²⁵⁷ As analyzed above, the normalization, with different approaches and viewpoints, led to different conclusions from both sides. As for Vietnam, although the set goals by the VCP had not been completely achieved, basically a big obstacle in Vietnam's external relations was tackled to create a breakthrough to solve the Cambodia conflict. Those maneuvers also led towards the removing of diplomatic and political standstills between Vietnam and ASEAN, Vietnam and Western countries. Unlike what Vietnamese conservative leaders had expected, the joint declaration on Vietnam-China's normalization bore a cold, cautious and distant language, which clearly stated that the two countries' relation was not completely based on the ideological solidarity, nor the socialism protection ally was founded. In his memoirs, Tran Quang Co bitterly reiterated the joint declaration, "Vietnam-China relations will abide by the principles of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and mutual nonaggression and noninterference in each other's internal affairs... Relations between Vietnam and China are not an alliance relationship, and will not return to the relationship status of the 1950s and 1960s."²⁵⁸

Chapter conclusion

As presented above, several most radical voices from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still supported the approach of promoting normal and comprehensive relations with the United States and Western countries instead of only depending upon China. However, their voices were not strong enough to be persuasive. Moreover, it was not relevant when the

²⁵⁷ Previously, the main obstacle between Vietnam and China, the Cambodia conflict, was settled down on 23 October 1991 among 19 countries and 4 Cambodian factions in Paris.

²⁵⁸ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

VCP had neither theoretical tools nor practical experiences to tackle absolutely and thoroughly the ideology-reality dilemma, which were only inherent completely after the Seventh Party Congress with the introduction of newly developed policies regarding to new approach and understandings of socialism and the road towards socialism.²⁵⁹ Those new theoretical tools were also results of the assessment of newly developed foreign policy directions implementation process and the revision of renovation practices and experiences after the fall of the Soviet Union. In addition, it was notable that the VCP with its frequent caution to China, quietly conducted studies and piloted relationship building with ASEAN and initially towards relation improvement with the United States. China's attitudes and diplomatic moves during and after normalization, and in handling the Cambodia conflict finally showed Vietnamese leaders a fact that Vietnam could not adhere only to the ideological foundation on the process of formulating and implementing foreign policy.²⁶⁰ Reality or in other word, national interests and realpolitik calculations play an increasingly important role in Vietnam's diplomacy and national strategy.

The fact that Chinese leaders refused Vietnam's request in founding an ideology-based alliance,²⁶¹ together with Chinese's deviousness in the process of negotiating normalization and handling the Cambodia conflict showed neither Vietnamese expected symmetry in Vietnam-China relation, nor ideological considerations of China.²⁶² There was the only way for Vietnam, either absolutely depended on China or it had to find its own way. China's strategic viewpoints and Vietnam's external relation practices in the early stage of *Renovation* forced Vietnam to return to the multilateral foreign policy directions and to establish new partnership relations to gain more room for maneuvering and countering the

²⁵⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

²⁶⁰ Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so 14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation*, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006].

²⁶¹ Chinese Premier Li Peng's address in August, 1990: He called for the "two neighbors" not "two comrades" as Vietnamese leaders' proposal to restore normal relations. Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²⁶² Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

China's external and political pressures.²⁶³ Probably, the clear awareness of reality and elimination of ideological illusions in the process of making foreign policy was one of the significant achievements obtained by the VCP, apart from shortcomings and concessions during the normalization with China. Vietnam approached China with an ideological illusion and a dilemma of ideology and reality. And it left with a conclusion that diversification is "only feasible external alternative to Vietnam's total dependence on China."²⁶⁴ New situation and perceptions gradually strengthened Vietnam's political diplomatic viewpoints towards realism with more materialistic and pragmatic calculations, and helped Vietnam to move towards a balanced foreign policy lately.

Deciding to process normalization, at first,²⁶⁵ with China was probably VCP's dilemma. As analyzed above, this choice was controlled by both ideological and realpolitik calculations. Probably as set by destiny, Vietnam must handle this issue with China sooner or later for its own survival and development. As said by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Manh Cam, "One can choose friends, but no one can choose their neighbors; our security and national interest are always linked to our neighbors and the countries in the regions."²⁶⁶ The logic of geopolitics and the politics of asymmetry forced Vietnam to have new choices for the post-Cold War era. As David Elliott once observed, "As the last echoes of the Cold War faded away, Vietnam had been forced to change partner in a changing world."²⁶⁷ Failing to obtain what it wanted from China, together with suffering from China's regional hegemonistic ambition, Vietnam did not have any other choices except deploying the foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification, reconnecting with the noncommunist world, especially with ASEAN countries and the United States.

²⁶³ William S. Turley, Vietnamese Security in Domestic and Regional Focus: The Political-Economic Nexus, in Richard J. Ellings, and Sheldon W. Simon, eds., *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millennium*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996, pp.175-220.

²⁶⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.88.

²⁶⁵ Before normalizations with ASEAN countries, the United States and Western countries.

²⁶⁶ Nguyen Manh Cam, Phat bieu Tong ket Hoi Thao Ky Niem 50 Nam Ngoai Giao Viet Nam, *Tap chi Nghien cuu Quoc te*, So dac biet, so.7, thang 9 nam 1995, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Closing Speech at a Seminar on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam Diplomacy, *International Studies*, Special issue, no.7, September 1995].

²⁶⁷ David W.P. Elliott, *ibid.*, p.123.

CHAPTER 6

**NATIONAL INTEREST ASPECT OF DIPLOMATIC ALIGNMENT: REALPOLITIK
FOUNDATION OF VIETNAMESE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SECOND STAGE OF
RENOVATION (1991-2001)**

6.1. The Seventh Party Congress and the restructuring of Vietnamese foreign policy

6.1.1. Inner-party debates on the eve of the Seventh Party Congress

Ideological and political turmoils before the Seventh Party Congress

In the early 1990s, the VCP implemented the preparation for the Seventh Party Congress, which was expected to bring about changes in the Party's awareness and policies. *Doi Moi* was implemented for five years, and obviously there were different assessments on the achievements as well as the methods of the renovation. There were always tense arguments within internal VCP. Happenings in the Soviet Union and East Europe during this time made strong impacts on Vietnamese leaders.¹ However, with the awareness of the necessity of domestic reforms to the survival of Vietnam, General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh still supported the viewpoint that continuing *Doi Moi* promotion was necessary. *Renovation* itself did not vitally lead to turmoils and collapse, if it was implemented correctly, it would play the decisive role and ensure Vietnam's capacity of handling the issues happening in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries. Lessons of failure from superior socialist countries would help Vietnam find out a suitable way for itself. Nonetheless, the closer the Seventh Party Congress was, the more uncontrollable the situation was out of control of Mr. Linh and his reformist supporters.² There were not any positive changes in the socio-economic situations, foreign

¹ Steven Erlanger reported that, bad situations in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern European socialist countries "have frighten Vietnam's aging leaders. The Politburo has stalled economic reforms begun in late 1987. Vietnam still seeks foreign investment, but foreigners now see increased risks." Steven Erlanger, *Its Gains Dissipated, Vietnam Tries to Salvages Its Economy*, *New York Times*, 17 Feb 1991.

² David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.59.

aids were cut down, the economy was in standstill together with America's embargo, which led to more and more difficult situation. There appeared more and more voices in Vietnam which raised criticism. They cast doubt on reform agenda and expressed uncertainty about the international situation and Vietnam's ability to adjust.

In September 1989, Vietnam's leaders were concerned about complicated and dangerous turmoils which were happening in the Soviet Union, East Europe as well as in China. Those happenings proved to conservative viewpoints that changes were easily out of the control and caused unexpected consequences. *Doi Moi* supported-viewpoints were also strongly affected; even several high-ranking officials who supported reform gradually became more conservative,³ which was explainable as whether maintaining conservative or reformist viewpoints, to VCP's leaders, was two different ways towards the same goal of guaranteeing the existence of socialist regime, the leadership of Vietnam Communist Party, and Vietnam's stable development.⁴ That explanation could also be used to shed light on the returning to conservative attitudes and viewpoints of Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh in speeches at the end of 1989 (as analyzed in Chapter 5).⁵

In the transition period of 1989-1991, the preparatory time for major orientations of the Seventh Party Congress, VCP's high-ranking leaders did not really change their thoughts

³ Steven Erlanger, Vietnamese Leader, Assailing the West, Ignites Fear at Home, *The New York Times*, September 20, 1989, "Conservative voices that were muted during the first two years of Mr. Linh's rule, which began in December 1986, are now dominating debate."

⁴ Steven Erlanger, *ibid.*, September 20, 1989. "In a speech for Vietnam's national day on 2nd of September, Mr. Linh said Vietnam was prepared 'to broaden our external economic relations with all other countries, foreign companies and international organizations' without political conditions, but he warned against 'the life style and decadent culture' of the bourgeoisie and the West."

⁵ Serious domestic problems in late 1988 forced Mr. Linh to confront. He also faced with severe critics from other senior leaders both reformers and conservatives. They were all worried about Vietnam's difficulties at that time. But with a charismatic leader like Nguyen Van Linh, he appeared confident at the beginning of 1989 and believed that the pace of change was indispensable, irreversible, and manageable. But by summer 1989, with series of chaotic events in the Eastern European socialist countries and radical changes and even turmoils in the Soviet Union, even the confident and reformist advocated Nguyen Van Linh became alarmed. He later retreated to the Vietnamese communist traditional Cold War paranoia. He revised his hardline, delivered some conservative speeches that called for protecting the fundamental core of Marxism-Leninism and the cause of socialism in Vietnam. At that time, the VCP Politburo also promulgated a secret Resolution about national defense and new concept of national security, though the accompanying diplomatic strategy was a hybrid of the old and new. See, Vietnamese Communist Party Politburo secret Resolution No. 2 entitled *On Strengthening National Defence in the New Revolutionary Stage*, 1987. See also, Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

and viewpoints, although the Politburo's Resolution at the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Party Committee "clearly pointed out the need to strongly shift the focus in foreign policy from political relations to political-economic relations."⁶ At the end of 1989, Advisor Pham Van Dong, in an article in a Party's newspaper-*Nhan Dan*, still emphasized the importance and the comrade relation between Vietnam Communist Party and the Soviet Union's Communists, and concurrently confirmed the soundness in the *Renovation* course in the Soviet Union. Vietnamese leaders, despite being aware of the vital requirements of the situation and the necessity of changes in diplomatic thinkings, with concerns about losing stability and lacking assistance as well as ideological obstacles were still constrained within a vicious circle of ideology and reality. Even the title of Pham Van Dong's article, "Follow the Path of the October Revolution and Strengthen the Spirit of Vietnamese-Soviet Solidarity and Cooperation,"⁷ partly reflected this issue. On September 2, 1990, Do Muoi, the then General Secretary of the VCP stated that, "The international situation is evolving in a very complex manner. The crisis in the Eastern European socialist countries is extremely serious, and will have a not insignificant impact on building socialism in our country. The enemy forces are carrying out many activities to sabotage the development and protection of the Fatherland of our people."⁸

Vietnam was not accepted yet by capitalist countries and nor did it accept the application of the whole capitalism development models; at the same time it was gradually becoming alone when normalization with China was not achieved yet whereas the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries were on the brink of collapse. Vietnam seemed to be hesitant between the two ways, which did not bring about any responses.

⁶ Nguyen Dy Nien, *Chinh Sach va Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Trong Thoi ky Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.90, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, Foreign Policies and Activities During the Doi Moi Period, *Communist Review*, no.90, 2005].

⁷ Pham Van Dong, *Theo Con Duong cua Cach Mang Thang Muoi, Tang Cuong Tinh Doan Ket va Su Hop Tac Viet-Xo*, *Nhan Dan*, 6 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Pham Van Dong, *Follow the Path of the October Revolution and Strengthen the Spirit of Vietnamese-Soviet Solidarity and Cooperation*, *People*, November 6, 1989.

⁸ Do Muoi, *Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan*, [Continue the Task of Doi Moi, Unite to Advance for the Victory of Socialism, for the Well Being and Happiness of the People], *Nhan Dan*, September 2, 1990.

Vietnam wanted to be adaptive to practical requirements by using the “buffer-zone” of capitalism while maintaining the nature of socialism. In other words, the world order approach for Vietnam was more than one world but less than two worlds.⁹ The complexity and embarrassment in the above mentioned strategic viewpoint made direct impacts on Vietnam’s diplomatic viewpoints and policies, which was reflected through the confusion and unclearness in Vietnam’s external relation activities during 1989-1991. In spite of Nguyen Van Linh’s remarks, “We want to cooperate equally on the basis of mutual benefit with all countries without discriminating between different sociopolitical system,”¹⁰ in fact the VCP still lacked policy mechanisms and organization structures to concretize political viewpoints which were still controversial. The identification of partners and establishment of Vietnam’s partnership¹¹ continued to be under the domination of ideological strictures when it was continued to be given higher priorities in relations within COMECON bloc and neighboring countries¹² although the VCP had obtained, at least in theory, the expansion of partner and partnership concepts when accepting, to certain extent, to cooperate with countries out of the “socialist camp.” However, it seemed to be the strategic necessity rather than a strategic choice.¹³

Fierce fluctuations in the communist word strongly affected the viewpoints and thoughts of numerous Vietnamese long-time revolutionaries, and forced them to reconsider

⁹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.102.

¹⁰ Nguyen Van Linh’s statement quoted in Yuli Ismartono Looking for New Friends to Help Push Capitalist Program, *IPS International Service*, 6 Aug 1991. And, Nguyen Van Linh’s interview with Mainichi Shimbun, Socialism Will Certainly Overcome the Challenges, *Nhan Dan*, 24 April 1990.

¹¹ The concepts of partner and partnership in Vietnam’s diplomacy will be analyzed in Chapter 7.

¹² In October 1989, in a statement to military journalists, Premier Do Muoi “emphasized how important it was to maintain strong economic ties with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and to treat them as the anchor of Vietnam’s foreign economic relations” (David W.P. Elliott, 2012, p.60). Even a year later, on 2 September 1990, he restated that viewpoint by saying that “Today, during our task of *Doi Moi* the country, the assistance of international friends will have a great significance.” Do Muoi, Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan, *Nhan Dan*, 2 thang 9 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Continue the Task of Doi Moi, Unite to Advance for the Victory of Socialism, for the Well Being and Happiness of the People, *People*, September 2, 1990].

¹³ Premier Do Muoi once stated, “with respect to partner in cooperation and expanding external economic relations, we will continue to give first place to cooperation with the Soviet Union, Laos, and Cambodia, and other socialist countries, strive to cooperate with Third World countries, and developed capitalist countries along with the various international economic organizations. We place importance on cooperation with countries in the region both for reasons of economic interest and the interest in preserving peace and stability in the region.” Do Muoi, Mo Rong va Nang Cao Hon Nua Hieu Qua Hoat Dong Kinh Te Doi Ngoai, *Nhan Dan*, 14 thang 11 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Expand and Raise Still Higher the Efficiency of External Economic Activities, *People*, November 14, 1989].

and reevaluate the communism ideological foundation, their understandings on Marxism-Leninism as an absolute superiority of socialism tool which had been used for national liberalization and social equality creation in Vietnam. Numerous questions were raised on socialism, Marxism-Leninism, practical socialist models in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as the application of those models in Vietnam,¹⁴ which were really taboo issues in the past. That Eastern European socialist countries abandoned communism in late 1989 and early 1990, and that the Soviet Union nearly did nothing when the ideological sphere which was being struggled to be created gradually disintegrated, strongly affected Vietnamese leaders.¹⁵ It was difficult to imagine how Vietnamese leaders felt when witnessing helplessly the above issues, which were impossible for them just a few years ago.

During this period, with “China-tilt” trend and the reduction in the Soviet Union’s influences, as well as VCP’s concern about the too radical viewpoints and actions by Gorbachev, currents of viewpoints similar to Deng Xiaoping’s pragmatism started to emerge in Vietnam. They argued that Vietnam needed to identify its own way and redefine itself in a new world.¹⁶ Accordingly, the so-called name of socialism or capitalism was not

¹⁴ Tran Bach Dang, a veteran party leader and a scholar once analyzed, “The reality of Vietnam after the revolution is the different from what I imagined when I joined the Party... Life has shown us that it is much more complicated. The thing is, we received Marxism in a theoretical sense, not in a full sense, and the information was not very precise. Marxism came to Vietnam through the interpretation of Stalin and Mao Ze Dong. It was simplified to a great extent. And now we read the classic works of Marx and other founders, and we find that thing were not so simple. Though the social conditions under which marx wrote his works are not the same now, the principles are the same. Yet those principles were not interpreted precisely correctly.” Quoted in Steven Erlanger, Esther B. Fein, Edward A. Gargan, Bill Keller, Nicholas D. Kristof, and Philip Taubman, *Voice of the Party Faithful: Searching For A Part in the New Era*, *New York Times*, January 22, 1989.

¹⁵ In a theoretical conference held in Hanoi at Vietnam Social Science Institute (Feb 1990) between Soviet and Vietnamese scholars about the role of Communist party in the development of the society. One leading Soviet ideologist argued “There were distinctive aspects of reform in both countries, but the key was to recognize the diversity and pluralism of the socialist world. Each country would have to find its own from of communism.” He also referred to Gorbachev’s new concept of reciprocal impact among all countries and peoples. Nguyen Duc Binh, VCP’s chief ideologist rebuked with Cold War harsh language “we cannot fail to be dictator with regard to the enemies of the people. Even in a number of fraternal socialist countries, when carrying out democracy and glasnost, we can clearly see that out there in society there are elements who are estranged from the regime, to say nothing of political opportunist who are scheming to use democracy and glasnost to attack the party in order to carry out devious plans that are contrary to the interest of the people. If you are not dictatorial with these enemies of the people, the every democracy of the people cannot be guaranteed.” See, Nguyen Duc Binh, *Dang trong Su Nghiep Doi Moi vi Chu Nghia Xa Hoi*, *Nhan Dan*, 8 thang 2 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, *The Party in the Mission of Doi Moi for Socialism*, *People*, 8 Feb 1990].

¹⁶ David Elliott argued that, “With the historical roots of the party’s ties to the Soviet Union now a delicate subject, and the increasing uneasiness of the Vietnamese leaders with Gorbachev, Marxism-Leninism in Vietnam was faced with the challenge of having to redefine itself.” David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.105.

important; however, the issues which needed to be concentrated on were economy and trade. Although, according to conservative voices within the VCP, these above notions, despite similarity, to certain extent, to VCP's accepted policy of repositioning the role of economic factor in national strategies, in their nature were the denying of the socialism foundation, or the obliteration of ideological boundary and basically they would vitally affect directly VCP's leadership foundation and socialism orientations pursued by Vietnam.¹⁷ However, with the awareness that the above mentioned viewpoints existed in minority and were still under the Party's control, General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh seemed to assume that Vietnam needed to accept a "socialist bourgeoisie" approach, to some extent, which was the vitality and necessity during the process of Vietnam's using capitalist "buffer-zone" towards socialism. The important issue, according to General Secretary Linh, was to ensure the control capacity within Vietnamese socialist framework. The acceptance at certain angle of rightist opportunist ideology and pragmatic notions affected Vietnam's diplomatic attitudes and thinkings and in fact was expressed in foreign policy orientations identified by the Seventh Party Congress later.

With the impacts of the 1989 incidents in Eastern Europe and China, as well as strategic moves by the Soviet Union and the United States, Vietnamese leaders were forced to reevaluate fundamental foundation which formed Vietnam's approach to the external world. Various arguments occurred in internal Party on Vietnam's diplomatic activities in late 1980s and early 1990s, and orientations to form new foreign policy at the Seventh Party Congress. One of the most fundamental issues was to identify what the biggest threat to Vietnam was, and where did it come from. Central Committee member and former Deputy Foreign Minister Tran Quang Co wrote in his memoirs, "There was a dispute about

¹⁷ See analyses about Party Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh and the struggle against rightist manifestations in Nguyen Van Linh, *Doi Moi, Tap Chi Cong San*, so.86, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Renovation, *Communist Review*, no.86, 2005]. The editorial board of *Communist Review* (undoubtedly on behalf of the VCP) stated that, "In this situation there emerged a rightist opportunist ideology that tried to find way out for the economy. They said that whether something was 'socialist' or 'capitalist' didn't make any difference for commerce-whatever you wanted to call it, its was all right as long as production increased and the livelihood of the people was improved."

whether the danger of peaceful evolution was greater than the danger of falling behind economically. From this came the idea that for a nation the strength of national defense and security was the key, not the social and economic strength of each country.”¹⁸ Moreover, as analyzed in the above section of the dissertation, the awareness of the threats and solutions to them would play a decisive role in the formation of strategic concepts of diplomacy and security. In Vietnam at that time, and even now, the nature of the identification of threats and challenges to the nation lied in the relations between ideological orthodoxy, regime survival and national interest, and economic development. It was notable that it was not a new issue in Vietnam’s politics. Since the Communist Party was established, with the anti-imperialist and fascist struggles for national independence, the elimination of colonial status, national unification war, Fatherland protection wars, parallel with the socialism construction course, Vietnam’s Communist Party has always had to handle the relation between ideology and national interest. The nature of this relation, as well as the evaluation and access approach has decided the development orientations of Vietnam’s modern history, which were the issue of whether socialism revolution or democratic national revolution in the past, or whether the communism or nationalism-patriotism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, these issues became the strategic questions of continuing to be associated with the ideological foundation or national interest and the people’s characteristics to form and implement new national strategies. In the Politburo Conference in May 1991 for the preparation of foreign relations and security-defense orientations prior to the June 1991 Seventh Party Congress, the above questions were raised in order to act as the basis for policy directions and consensus within the Central Committee.¹⁹ However, different viewpoints by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and the Party’s agencies resulted in VCP’s failure in obtaining consensus about fundamental issues

¹⁸ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co’s Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

¹⁹ Alexander L. Vuving, *The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam*, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project “*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)*,” German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

including: “friend-foe” identification, “peaceful evolution strategy,” and diplomatic maneuvers towards China. The political and ideological turmoils continued to dominate Vietnam’s political system at that time.

From 24 to 27 of June, 1991 in complicated socio-economic context, with various regional and international turmoils, the Soviet Union situation tended to get out of the control, the VCP organized the Seventh Party Congress. Despite numerous internal disagreements, the VCP, at the Congress, tried to unify and raise strategic orientations in order to affirm Vietnam’s commitment to both *Renovation* and Socialism. According to the VCP, the Vietnamese road toward socialism must be adapted to Vietnam’s situations and no longer as a dogmatic orthodoxy. The Congress identified 6 features of Vietnam’s socialism regime and 7 fundamental orientations to guide the process of building socialism during the transition to socialism.²⁰ Regarding foreign policy, the Seventh Congress’s missions were reorienting Vietnam’s diplomacy due to radical changes in the situation. Accordingly, foreign relation orientations from the Sixth Party Congress and following resolutions needed to be amended and redefined.

Leadership changes at the Seventh Party Congress

The Seventh Party Congress was organized in a complicated internal and external context. During the preparation process for the Congress, the VCP always closely kept track of political happenings in the Soviet Union, and immediately drew lessons for Vietnam’s Doi Moi process. In spite of being patient and cautious, VCP’s leaders also made internal and external Party’s warnings about too radical political trends in the Soviet Union. They showed concern about the signals of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party’s loss of control as well as communist’s retreat and helplessness. Only a few months after the Seventh Party Congress, the worst scenario which had been unexpected by Vietnam

²⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991]. See also, Nguyen Phu Trong, *Mot So Van De Ve Con Duong Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi o Nuoc Ta, Tap chi Cong san*, so.1, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Phu Trong, *Some Questions Concerning the Path toward Socialism in Our Country, Communist Review*, no.1, 2001].

occurred. Gorbachev's out of control renovation process and too late rescue efforts by the Soviet Union's communists led to chaos and then the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although the above incident had been predicted by various analysts, due to the developments of Gorbachev's renovation process, what happened was indeed a severe shock to Vietnam Communist Party. However, despite being confused and concerned about the existence of Vietnam, VCP's high-ranking officials, most of whom were trained during the two resistance wars and even more difficult situations-still confirmed their determination of being attached with the communist ideals and the socialist nation-state institution, the leadership power of Vietnam Communist Party could not be overthrown. They continued to assume that despite challenges and failures "But it doesn't mean that we will collapse also. Vietnam would not abandon its path even if it becomes the last Communist state on Earth;" and "there is no other way than socialism for defending our independence and development."²¹ Later, an article in the Party's magazine confirmed that, it was no doubt that this was VCP's official viewpoints to the happenings in East Europe and the Soviet Union, "it is hard to see what the Soviet Union will become, because the situation is evolving in a very complicated way, and often surpasses one's ability to predict. But one thing is for certain; whatever the direction that the Soviet Union evolves, you absolutely cannot say that socialism, as a theory and a political system has collapsed."²²

A few months earlier, by considering the personnel allocating results of the Seventh Party Congress, we could partly understand the VCP's rigid attitudes and viewpoints to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The VCP made important changes in leadership at the Seventh Party Congress. Those who attached with the ignition and implementation process of *Doi Moi* after the Sixth Party Congress withdrew from their positions whereas several new faces appeared. The Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh, who was closely associated with the *Doi Moi* course and considered to be the father of the *Renovation* process in

²¹ Thai Ninh and Tran Cong Man, quoted in William Branigan, Vietnam Reaffirms Fealty to Marxism; Hanoi Shocked by Defeat of Allies in Moscow, *Washington Post*, 6 September 1991.

²² Nguyen Trong Thu, Suc Song cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.12, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Trong Thu, The Living Strength of Socialism, *Communist Review*, no.12, 1991].

Vietnam officially retired and retreated from his official power-although his role and influence within the Party was still significant. The Seventh Party Congress also witnessed the withdrawal of a Politburo member, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Co Thach who was a talented diplomat and played a major role in forming Vietnam's diplomatic policies at the beginning stage of the *Doi Moi* process. The retreat of these two important figures were analyzed as Vietnam's one step back in the *Doi Moi* process, which reflected VCP's concern about bad happenings in East Europe and the Soviet Union. The loss of control and chaos within the Soviet Union's Perestroika, China's Renew forced the VCP to enhance its supervision over the *Doi Moi* course in Vietnam. Moreover, VCP's leadership structures after the Seventh Party Congress clearly showed VCP's priorities included the insurance of social stability, maintenance of socialist orientations and protection of the Party's leadership. Political stability was given top priority by VCP whereas economic development despite still being important, took the second position in the national strategy.²³ In VCP's power structure after the Seventh Party Congress, the first position-the Secretary General belonged to a figure who had both conservative and reformist viewpoints but not too radical-Do Muoi; the second position-the President (and also standing post in the Politburo, the post responsible for defense, security and foreign relations), was allocated to a top-ranking military official with conservative viewpoints-Le Duc Anh. The third position-the Prime Minister, Vo Van Kiet. He was not a new face. Kiet hold the post of Vice Premier previously and used to be considered a reformist figure with radical viewpoints and inclined to economic renovation.

Regarding diplomatic affairs, post-Seventh Party Congress personnel structure showed that the VCP tended to select the foreign relation policies which focused on China,

²³ Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012; Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)*," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008. "At its Eighth Plenum in March 1990, the VCP reached an agreement on advancing reforms while determining 'political stability' as the chief priority. The VCP emphasized that the task of the entire Party and people was to "speed up reform in all aspects." At the same time, the Party established that the necessary condition for fulfilling that task was to 'preserve political, economic, and social stability, above all political stability'."

regarded ideology as the foundation for the two country's relations, as well as the foundation for the shaping diplomatic guidelines. Those moves were understandable especially after the incidents in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Although the VCP still confirmed the foreign policies of multilateralization and diversification without distinguishing friend or foe, regardless differences in ideology and political system, in fact due to its concern about the survival of the socialist institution, more cautious diplomatic maneuvers were made by the VCP. That could be observed through the replacement of the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as the increase in power of the Politburo standing post and the role of the Central Committee External Relations Department. Nguyen Co Thach, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs who used to be regarded as an anti-China and realist-diplomacy supporter retired and replaced by Nguyen Manh Cam, the former Vietnam's ambassador to the Soviet Union, a talented diplomat with neural viewpoints. More importantly, Mr. Cam was a new face without widespread and deep influence within the Party and had certain experiences related to the renovation course in the Soviet Union which was considered to be extremely necessary to Vietnam.

The Seventh Party Congress also witnessed the increase in the number of members of the Politburo-the VCP's highest standing-power structure. There were 13 members of the Sixth Politburo (including 13 official members and 1 alternate member-who was promoted full member in 1988). Initially, in 1991, there were 13 members of the Seventh Politburo, with 2 supplementary members in 1993. The number of members was 17 by the middle-term Congress in 1994. The alternate membership was no longer available from the Seventh Congress. Only 3 members of the Politburo retired by the Sixth Congress whereas the number was 9 by the Seventh Congress. The increase in the number of full members, and the elimination of the alternate members showed VCP's certain difficulty in achieving consensus in the policy making process. The former often showed the trend of improving collective leadership role; however it seemed to be contradictory at the Seventh Congress which witnessed the major leadership roles of Do Muoi, Le Duc Anh and Vo Van Kiet,

especially Do Muoi. It was said that not only during his term of Secretary General in 1991-1997, but also during the whole 1990s decade and later on, Do Muoi made considerable influence on Vietnam's political orientations.²⁴ Other faces in the Politburo were mostly new members without as enough prestige and influence within the Party as their old cadres; as a result, their roles in the national policy decision-making process in general and foreign policy in particular were not very significant.

The Party's legitimacy

Another issue raised during VCP's preparation process for the Seventh Party Congress related to the Party's leadership legitimacy to the society and the peoples. During its formation and development history, the Vietnam Communist Party always confirmed that the Party was closely attached to the nation, and national interests were the Party's most fundamental mission. The VCP depended on two foundations for the establishment of its unique leadership position. The first was nationalist legacy base which was relied on by the VCP in the long-lasting struggle for independence to demand unquestioning obedience in carrying out its policies. The other was the so-called absolute soundness of Marxism-Leninism and the vitality of the communism goals, which were proved through social-economic practices in superior socialist countries. It was proved by the VCP that with the same theoretical system and the dependence upon successful models of socialist countries, policies and guidelines planned and directed by the Party were sound and relevant. By doing so, the VCP proved its legitimacy to ensure the absolute uniqueness leadership of the Party. Before the Seventh Party Congress, it seemed that these viewpoints had never been challenged, as well as the role of the Party had never been questioned.

In the late 1980s and especially during 1989-1991, with severe turmoils in Vietnam's society, the mistakes of the Soviet Union-type socialist model, the strategic deviation in Gorbachev's Perestroika, ideological and political confusions in the countries of Eastern

²⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.119.

Europe, social unrests and ideological crisis in China spring 1989, together with the fact that the two fundamental foundations which ensured the Party's absolute leadership started to shake. Various viewpoints questioned the Party's unique leadership position. As a result, the VCP was put in the situation which identified *Doi Moi* as the only and vital way to prevent Vietnam from crisis and collapse and proved the adaptability and the so-called pioneer of the Party's leadership. Concurrently, the VCP must ensure that despite conducting renovation, the strategic core of Vietnam was not separated from the ideals of socialism and national independence which led to the formation and insurance VCP's leadership power over the whole Vietnamese society. VCP's leaders and scholars argued that, the deviation from socialist orientations and Marxism-Leninism doctrine as Gorbachev did in the Soviet Union was not different from self-elimination of Party's legitimate existence and unique leadership power, and that was never accepted by the VCP.²⁵

Influence of Western political theories

Together with the new thinkings trend originated from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the uniqueness and domination of Marxism-Leninism were challenged in Vietnam by Western modern political theories such as the influences of realism, neoliberalism and constructivism thoughts. A typical example was the former member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, cum Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Co Thach who had relatively clear realism viewpoint when he frequently emphasized the issue of national interest in the foreign policy decision-making process.²⁶ Thach's diplomatic viewpoints, especially in handling the relation with China and the issue of Cambodia, always expressed spirit of

²⁵ Agence France-Presse, Do Muoi Vows Vietnam Will Stay Communist, October 23, 1991. VCP's newly elected General Secretary Do Muoi mentioned the demise of communism in the Soviet and Eastern Europe and admitted that, "Faced with this situation some people have worried about if our country could hold fast and continue to develop on the socialist path. Hostile forces are intensifying their offensive in order to suppress the remaining socialist countries. Our people are determined to defend the revolutionary gains and will let no force destroy them."

²⁶ Nguyen Co Thach, Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, All for Peace, National Independence and Development, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989]; Phan Doan Nam, Ket Hop Suc Manh Dan Toc voi Suc Manh Thoi Dai trong Giai Doan Cach Mang Moi, *Tap chi Cong San*, so.5, 1987, pp.53-57, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Combine the Strengths of the Nation and the Epoch in the Revolution's New Period, *Communist Review*, no.5, 1987, pp.53-57].

realpolitik calculation.²⁷ However, it did not mean Thach's refusal of Marxism-Leninism and the communist ideals; but for him, socialist orientations were Vietnam's future goals, to achieve them, it was important to correctly identify the national interests' connotations and meet their requirements. It was necessary for Vietnam to abandon the dogmatic dependence on the ideological viewpoints for shaping diplomacy, identifying partner and partnership, establishing diplomatic relations and executing diplomatic maneuvers.²⁸ The future of Vietnam's diplomacy depended upon foreign relations expansion, diversification form of relations, multilateralization of partner and partnership, concentration on making and maintaining normal diplomatic relations with the United States and Western countries to act as the counterpoise with China's increasing pressure.²⁹ He also advocated regionalism, supported Vietnam's rapid access in ASEAN and used ASEAN to protect Vietnam's national benefits facing America's and China's influences.³⁰ The logic of this policy approach was to ensure a free and independent space for Vietnam to implement diplomatic maneuvers, prevent itself from being put under compulsion of asymmetrical dependency on China. Nguyen Co Thach's approach of both realpolitik calculation and constructivism could be said to be too radical in comparison with his era, which led to VCP's hesitation.³¹ Not until

²⁷ In a Politburo meeting on 14 April 1987, Mr. Thach proposed an opinion which was opposed to opinions of the rest Politburo members. He argued that Cambodian conflict should be settled by using a comprehensive diplomatic maneuver which involving the Soviet Union, the United States and China. The idea of making bilateral negotiation with China would definitely lead to a devastated damage for Vietnamese diplomacy's prestige. Thach said, "If we only lock horns along one part with China, that is not correct." See Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

²⁸ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House].

²⁹ Regarding to Nguyen Co Thach's viewpoints, his fellow Tran Quang Co analyzed, in case, Vietnam was isolated from the non-communist world and abandoned by the Soviet Union's new grand strategy, "if we only looked at China, and if China saw that we were week and isolated, they would take a hardline with us. Precisely for this reason, China had forced us to make one concession after another." See, Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

³⁰ According to analyses of Nguyen Co Thach and some Vietnamese leaders, ASEAN countries have similar features like Vietnam including: socio-political-economic features. These countries could be considered as national capitalist and face the same threats from imperialism like Vietnam. See, Nguyen Co Thach, *Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta*, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings*, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

³¹ Due to the breakthrough and radical feature of these viewpoints, there were many conservative voices mistakenly considered they were new face of pragmatism and raised fears of Party and regime survival if the VCP accepted pragmatic approach of "what ever it takes," and avoided ideological foundation. See, Nguyen Van Linh, *Phat bieu Be mac Hoi nghi 7 cua Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang*, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 9 nam 1989, tr.5-12, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, *Speech at the Closure of the 7th Plenum of the Party Central Committee*, Communist review, September 1989, pp.5-12].

the mid-to-end of 1990s when pressure from China increased, ideological calculations were not brought into full play and opportunities to establish relations with the United States and ASEAN became clearer, did the VCP gradually publicly use Nguyen Co Thach's approach to adjust and restructure Vietnam's diplomacy for the new century.³²

6.1.2. Vietnamese-Sino normalization and impacts on foreign policy directions of the Seventh Party Congress

Together with the Soviet Union's global strategic changes, as well as Gorbachev's promotion of normalization with China, the VCP was under much pressure from its strategic ally-the Soviet Union in making adjustments in national strategies and foreign policy. In addition, internal socio-economic crisis became more and more serious. Vietnam seemed to reach a dead end. Regarding external relations, Vietnam got stuck in the issue of Cambodia, was isolated in diplomatic reality and stagnant in foreign policy orientation. Probably external pressure, internal requirement as well as new diplomatic contexts forced the VCP to make changes in its diplomatic viewpoints, firstly a change in the attitude towards China. At the Sixth Party Congress, the VCP made announcements on the amendment in important viewpoints and policies towards China. In its Political Report, the VCP said, "We hold that the time had come for the two sides to enter into negotiations to solve both immediate and long-term problems in the relations between the two countries. Once again we officially declare that Vietnam is ready to negotiate with China at any time, at any level and in any place to normalize the relations between the two countries."³³ This amendment was then specified in the Politburo Resolution No. 13 of 20 May 1988 namely, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*. It was important that this change showed a turning point in VCP's diplomatic viewpoints towards China, facing Gorbachev's

³² The idea of pursuing diplomatic maneuvers like Bismarckian diplomacy was firstly raised by Nguyen Co Thach after the Sixth Party Congress. He also asserted that, in the years to come the Soviet Union would no longer be a guarantor of Vietnam's international interest. His realpolitik viewpoints also argued, Vietnam's diplomacy needed an all new policy approach which was fitted with socialist strategic goals while could meet all the necessary requirements of nation-state interests.

³³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Bao cao chinh tri, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 6*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Su That, 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, Political Report, *Sixth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1986].

urge to reach an accommodation with China and a comprehensive settlement in Cambodian conflict. The Sixth Party Congress (see discussions in Chapter 5) was considered a reform Congress with crucial amendments in socio-economic policies, concurrently put the first prerequisites to a new foreign policy. At this Congress, the VCP made strategic adjustments related to viewpoints of diplomacy, security-defense, accordingly Vietnam would gradually have concessions with China³⁴ in exchange for continued support from the Soviet Union, normalization with China, opportunity to handle the Cambodian issue, as well as gradual wiping out of stagnation in Vietnam's diplomatic arguments and practices. It was analyzed by various scholars that this was the political move originated from the pro-China side within the VCP. They supported the viewpoint of allying to China when the Soviet Union was weaker and weaker and tended to strategically withdraw from the Asia region in general and Vietnam in particular.³⁵ Several other scholars held that Vietnam continued to obey diplomatic frame work which had been worked out by Gorbachev.³⁶ However, it could be analyzed that Vietnam's amendments in its foreign policy and diplomatic guideline were in much bigger strategic context, among which the policies with China despite being important, were only a part of. The VCP may have based on realism calculations to see that if the self-isolated, "one-sided-tilt" diplomacy, and policy of confrontation with China were continued, Vietnam would vitally be pushed to collapse, just like China's strategy of "let Vietnam bleed to death."³⁷ Vietnam's maintenance of independence and strong development largely depended upon Vietnam's relations with regional countries as well as regional and global powers. Previous strategy of "lean to one side," and following the socialist diplomatic framework was

³⁴ Since the Sixth Party Congress, the VCP has implemented non-provoked policy toward China. Vietnam also began to withdraw troops from Laos and Cambodia, demobilize regular forces and adopted a defensive national strategy and comprehensive security.

³⁵ David W. P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

³⁶ After Vladivostok statement, the Soviet Union proceeded diplomatic maneuvers to normalize relations with China. In May 1989, at Beijing summit, Sino-Soviet relations were normalized. As a strategic ally with the Soviet Union, Vietnam inevitably adjusted its policy to follow that paradigm.

³⁷ See economic data and analyzes in Nicholas Cummings-Bruce, Vietnam "Defeat" as Army Pull Out: No Glory in Hanoi's Troop Withdrawal, *The Guardian*, London, September 18, 1989.

probably suitable when Vietnam had to struggle for independence and unification; however it would not be relevant in new domestic and international context.³⁸ New diplomatic orientations allowed Vietnam not only to change attitude towards China but also create opportunities for Vietnam's diversification and multi-lateralization of its foreign relations, even reach rapprochement with the United States and Western countries. Signals from the VCP's Sixth Party Congress showed that Vietnam was willing to change its attitudes towards its ex-foes even China-which used to be considered the directest and most dangerous enemy.³⁹

Regarding the Cambodian conflict, the VCP experienced tense internal disputes on potential scenarios related to the questions about the nature of Vietnam-China's relation. Being urged and abandoned by Gorbachev,⁴⁰ Vietnam had to proceed conversations with China, which was accepted by China but it required that the negotiations would not be organized in Beijing and the figures with anti-China viewpoints like former Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Co Thach would not be allowed to participate in.⁴¹ This negotiation was held in Chengdu which was considered to be the starting point of normalization of Vietnam-China relation as well as process of tackling the Cambodia conflict. The results of this negotiation were evaluated differently by numerous viewpoints.⁴² In exchange for China's agreement of normalizing Vietnamese-Sino relations, Vietnam had to accept crucial concessions such as accepting the role of China and its Cambodian followers and being ready to support a comprehensive solution to the

³⁸ In his remarkable memoirs, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Tran Quang Co recalled, "For along time I often felt that we were in somewhat dependent position with the big brother Soviet Union and the second son China both in thought and in action, so that we had self imposed restrictions on our foreign policy actions in the world and in Southeast Asia." See, Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

³⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Bao cao chinh tri, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 5*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1982, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, Political Report, *Fifth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1982].

⁴⁰ As the leading diplomat on Vietnam-China negotiations, especially in the process of solving Cambodian conflict, Tran Quang Co revealed "On the other side, Gorbachev, because of his big power interest, whether intentionally or not, had pushed Vietnam into the box of 'having to resolve the Cambodian question with China.'" See Tran Quang Co, *ibid.*, 2003.

⁴¹ September 3-7, 1990, in Chengdu, China, the secret summit was held between the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng and the Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party Nguyen Van Linh, Premier Do Muoi and also the Advisor of the VCP, Mr. Pham Van Dong.

⁴² See analyses in Chapter 5; and also, Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]; and, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

Cambodian conflict under the framework and auspices of the United Nations. To attract Chinese attention and express Vietnam's will, the Vietnamese delegates even suggested "the Red Solution" to solve the problem on the basis of ideological consideration, which were later evaluated as a big mistake or even a stain in Vietnam's diplomacy.⁴³

The results of the Chengdu's negotiation and the above mentioned strategic concessions were welcomed in different ways in Vietnam. Tense disputes reoccurred within the VCP right during the preparation process for the document of the Seventh Congress which was organized in 1991. At the Tenth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee, on the draft of Political Report to the Seventh Congress, members of the Central Committee had intense arguments on Vietnam's recent diplomatic guidelines and maneuvers. They also could not reach consensus on the nature of China's strategy, its attitudes and ambition; and how Vietnam could react relevantly. Final conclusions were not made as none of the two sides really dominated, which was expressed in the Resolution No. 10 of the Sixth Central Committee on the Political Report Draft for the Seventh Congress, it stated that Vietnam should maintain and consolidate its strategic traditional relations with the Soviet Union, Laos and Cambodia while restore co-operation with the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China.⁴⁴ There were gradual changes at the Seventh Party Congress when the pro-China camp tended to dominate (see discussion in Chapter 5 about Nguyen Co Thach's stance and his expulsion from the Politburo, the Central Committee and other Government posts). After the Seventh Congress, the VCP's leaders not only promoted the normalization with China but also strengthened this process and hoped to recover the Vietnam-China's relation towards an alliance relationship. In parallel to the normalization of the two States, the Party-to-Party relation was also normalized step by step.⁴⁵ It was also

⁴³ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House].

⁴⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet 10 Ban Chap hanh trung uong khoa VI ve Du thao Bao cao chinh tri Dai hoi VII*, Ha Noi, thang 11 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, *The Sixth Central Committee Resolution No. 10 about Political Report for the Seventh National Party Congress*, Hanoi, November 1990].

⁴⁵ See Eleven-point joint communiqué, Vietnam-China summit, Beijing, November 1991. It set the principles governing bilateral relations and the agenda for normalization.

the moment that the pro-China camp hoped that the ideology would play an important role in the two countries' relation. They continued to support the "fraternal relationship" between the two comrade-parties and the two neighboring countries. Despite being supported by numerous people, these ideological illusions rapidly had to face with the reality when the Soviet Union collapses and Vietnam no longer played an important role in China's policy of constraining the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ While Vietnam clung on to ideological viewpoints, China seemed to be more realistic and pragmatic when frequently basing on national interest to formulate strategies and policies. The differences in world-views evaluation and the policy planning foundation between Vietnam and China during the deployment process of bilateral relation in early 1990s was concluded by the former Chinese Premier Lipeng as "comrades but not allies."⁴⁷

The evaluation of the adjustment process of Vietnam's foreign policy in the early 1990s, which were attached with the Seventh Congress's new policy orientations, could be seen through the consideration of the Vietnam-China's normalization. Accordingly, the reciprocal relationship between ideology and national interest needed to be analyzed, or if seen from the bureaucratic politics angle, it was the interaction between the ideological trend of the ruling Party and the realist trend of the executing Government. Vietnam's foreign policy decision-making process with China in particular, and Vietnam's grand diplomacy in general, in the early 1990s, was a combination of both ideology and national interest. Ideology dominated in the early stage; however, together with the situation development, the changes in regional and international order context, and new diplomatic practices developed realist notions of national interest came to force.⁴⁸ While conservatives of the Party maintained their viewpoints that ideology needed to be maintained as an important element in Vietnam's foreign policy planning and implementing process, the

⁴⁶ According to Vietnamese viewpoints, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led China abandon the idea of Asian Socialist Alliance; China did not want to raise the flag of socialism but focused on its own national interest.

⁴⁷ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]; and also, Lipeng in Vietnam, *Economist*, 5 December 1992.

⁴⁸ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Coping with China, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1994, p.355.

realist trend within the Party assumed that the normalization and development of the relation with China needed to be seen in a broader diplomatic strategy framework, including relations with the United States and Western powers, ASEAN countries and Russia. They did not completely eliminated ideological viewpoints and calculations but noted that they were necessary to be adjusted and used relevantly with Vietnam's national interest. In other words, realist viewpoints within the Party supported that Vietnam's foreign policy orientations and diplomatic guidelines should be based on the basis of clear identification of national interest within the framework of international relation norms and laws. Vietnam should develop relationship with countries all over the world, regardless of political-social institutions. Vietnam's foreign relations were necessary to be formulated on the basis of multilateral framework.

The year of 1992 started with important events to both factions and continued to raise disputes on the core issues of Vietnam's foreign relation orientations in general and policies with China in particular. China's expansion⁴⁹ in the South China Sea (or the so-called East Sea by Vietnam) raised questions on the nature of Vietnam-China relations, nature of China's policy and ambitions hidden behind Chinese's claims on peaceful and friendship announcements. What should be Vietnam's necessary attitudes towards China's activities, which-according to Thayer's analyses-increasingly appeared "traditional," and less like the actions of a socialist state on the basis of socialist solidarity and more like those of an imperial power.⁵⁰ Even after quarrelsome activities and invasion of Vietnam's territory, China used the card of the two countries' relations to restrict response activities of Vietnam. Realist supporters analyzed that the Vietnam-China relation history showed that China's strategic viewpoints and policies had always been two-sided feature, and now China has taken advantages of Vietnam's desire for peace, friendship and normalization to control and tight Vietnam. Moreover, there were evidences which have shown that China

⁴⁹ On the eve of Vietnamese-Sino normalization, 25 February 1992, China promulgated a law on territorial waters and reiterated its territorial claim to the whole South China Sea including Vietnamese claim archipelagos of Paracel and Spratly.

⁵⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Coping with China, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1994, p.356.

is using “socialism as a rope to tie Vietnam’s hands.”⁵¹ Evidences were taken such as the sea and island conflicts in February 1992 when Chinese navy occupied Da Ba Dau (Three-Headed Rock)-a desert-uninhabited rock belonging to the Truong Sa-Spratly islands which had been announced to be Vietnam’s undisputed-sovereignty territory without any previous conflict. In May 1992 in Tu Chinh bank located on Vietnam’s continental shelf, related to oil exploration and exploitation. A similar plot was also used by China to change a undisputed territory into a conflict one. After its assertiveness in Da Ba Dau and Tu Chinh bank, Chinese leaders urged Vietnam not to harm the new found friendship. The old-cunning card of friendship, socialist solidarity and mutual interest was used again to constrain Vietnam. Failure to achieve internal consensus in evaluating nature of China’s action and ambition, the VCP only had a weak diplomatic response, reminded China about the two countries’ agreement on solving disputes especially territorial disputes peacefully, refraining from moves which would complicate the situation.⁵²

At the Third Plenum of the Seventh Central Committee, realist voices clearly called the nature of China’s expansion, hegemony and territorial ambition. They emphasized once more time that as for China, national interests were the core of national strategies, the orientations for foreign policies, and the foundation for the survival of Chinese Communist Party.⁵³ Even Secretary General Do Muoi, who was considered to have pro-China viewpoints prior to the Seventh Party Congress,⁵⁴ and one of the people who played

⁵¹ Statement of an anonymous Vietnamese official, quoted in Murray Hiebert, *Unhealed World, Far Eastern Economic Reviews*, 16 July 1992, p.20.

⁵² According to Nguyen Hong Thach’s sources and analyses, through out the early 1990s, the major guideline for Vietnam’s policy toward China’s assertiveness was one of restrain. See, Nguyen Hong Thach, *Vietnam-China Ties: A New but Not Easy Era*, *Business Times*, Singapore, 31 December 1992. After the Third Plenum of the Central Committee, Vietnam implemented intensive diplomatic maneuvers to protest China’s assertive actions, even accused China of having “seriously violated Vietnam’s territorial sovereignty,” and hinted Vietnam would use force to protect its legitimate territorial right.

⁵³ Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam reported to the National Assembly in September 1992: “China desires to become one of the pivotal countries in the future. China is adopting a flexible foreign policy in order to become s superpower in the Asian-Pacific region by taking advantage of economic, military, scientific and technical weaknesses in the region, thus creating an image of China which can be judged by international standards-a China which is ready to establish cordial relationships with other countries, a China worthy of its position as a member of the UN Security Council. China has liberalized its foreign policies targeting in particular the United States and Western Europe. It will avoid confrontation with the US except in the direct interests of China.”

⁵⁴ Right after the Seventh Congress, as Mr. Do Muoi was elected as General Secretary, Mr. Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of CCP sent a congratulation letter to “comrade” Do Muoi. This was the first official, publicly relation between the two Parties after a long constrained history.

important role in the two countries' normalization, also had to call China "expansionist."⁵⁵ Meanwhile, those who supported ideology to be foundation of national strategies and foreign policy still persistently assumed that regarding strategy, China-like Vietnam had pursued common socialist interests, and also been on the way towards socialism. Vietnam was necessary to ally with China which was strategic grand interest, therefore small conflicts should be ignored. Vietnam's post-Seventh Congress political context tended to return to disputes at the beginning of *Doi Moi* period, which was attached with the new diplomatic guidelines in the Resolutions No. 32 and No. 13 of the Politburo. At this Third Plenum, the Seventh Central Committee faced the same problem and failed to work out the final consensus on the nature of China's strategic orientations and whether China had the ambition of expansion within the region or not. This contradiction showed that at the beginning of 1990s, despite certain changes in Vietnam's viewpoints attached with the Seventh Party Congress's new socio-economic orientations, it did not absolutely escaped from ideological constraint, nor did it completely have new and broader viewpoints on national security, nation-state interest and their relations with socialist strategic orientations.

The two viewpoints on Vietnam-China relation in early 1990s partly established diplomatic attitudes, and nuances of Vietnam's foreign policy. These two viewpoints concurrently expressed two trends within internal Party on the foundation of national strategy and foreign policy. The two contending schools of thought continued to debate about how Vietnam should define its relations with China; and therefore, how to manage the relations. The security-military official circles, who used to have conservative viewpoints to form policies based on ideology, plus concerns about America's "peaceful evolution" strategies, tended to incline to pro-China faction. They supported bilateral relation promotion and expansion not only in economy but also in security and defense dialogues.

⁵⁵ Since the *Renovation* course, Vietnam's senior officials ceased to use this phrase officially when mentioned of China, at least in official documents and statements of the Party and State.

Realist supporters as usual still appreciated the importance of national interest. They tended to be more cautious and objective as evaluating relations with China. They did not object to the development of relation with China and admitted that it was an important part in Vietnam's grand diplomatic strategy. However, they argued that the problem was how to adjust this relationship to avoid negative impacts on Vietnam's national interests; and Vietnam's diplomacy was in charge of developing relation with China and preventing the reappearance of disputes and stress, as well as avoiding the worst scenario that Vietnam to be controlled and became a tributary-state of China.⁵⁶ Pursuing a relative-gain foreign policy by leaning to China would lead to devastated consequences to Vietnam's security and sovereignty. Developing comprehensive relation with China was the strategic flexibility in the condition of Vietnam's limited foreign relations; however, the strategic goals of sovereignty, territory integrity and national security must be stably maintained.⁵⁷ To this end, according to realist analyses, it was necessary to work out new thinkings about diplomatic orientations and guidelines. Moreover, Vietnam needed to pursue an omni-directional foreign policy and establish harmonious, peaceful and friendly relationship with all countries in international community. By doing so, Vietnam would obtain the best insurance for its national security. Vietnam had to place its relations with China in the context of not only the two socialist countries but also the entire Southeast Asia region. Vietnam should look forward to absolute gains by prioritizing a balanced foreign policy.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam Coping with China, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1994, p.365. A Vietnamese official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that, "There are three possible ways of organizing our relations with China: (1) confrontation, (2) satellite status similar to North Korea, or (3) a median position between the two. Satellite status provides no guarantees. North Korea was sacrificed by China when it turned to South Korea. Also, even if Vietnam were to be a good satellite, China would not leave us alone. They will always pressure us and try to dominate Southeast Asia. We tried for a full year to forge new relations with China but we failed. Take its occupation of Bay Tu Chinh and the Crestone affair. Okay, we distrusted China but it was only with Bai Tu Chinh that we understood that China follows its national interest. That game is in the nature of international politics."

⁵⁷ Regarding to Vietnam-China bilateral relation, Nguyen Manh Cam wrote, "Since early 1992, normal relations have been restored with China after thirteen years of confrontation. However, we have to deal with complications in this relationship because of Chinese incursion into our territory and the agreements signed between our two countries in November 1991. In these circumstances, we have continued to advocate a solution to the problems through peaceful negotiation in order to gradually improve our relations with China. We have endeavored to maintain our relations with China but at the same time to defend our sovereignty and integrity. However, this has been a long and complicated process."

⁵⁸ Womack's analyses on asymmetric relationships, "despite the disparities in asymmetric relations and the resulting differences of perspective, in fact it is rare that a stronger state can simply coerce or eliminate a weaker one... The best example of the defensive strength of the weaker states is that of Vietnam in the past 50 years. The fact that Vietnam frustrated the attempts of France, the United States and China to control it is the most obvious evidence that relative power does not equal absolute power." Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry Theory and China's Concept of Multipolarity*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13(39), May 2004, p.361.

Regionalism and multilateralism might be the most appropriate choice for Vietnam to counter Beijing's pressure. In order to follow these orientations, Vietnam's diplomacy was necessary to develop a new viewpoint with the support of a new theoretical framework, to define and tackle issues related to socialist ideology and Vietnam's national interest.

6.1.3. New foreign policy approaches at the Seventh Party Congress

Former Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet once analyzed that, the Seventh Party Congress clarified the *Doi Moi* roadmap, and concretized theoretical orientations on *Renovation* worked out by the Sixth Party Congress. The VCP, according to him, gained a more sufficient awareness on economic renovation, as well as implementation methods in Vietnam's conditions, which helped clarify the difficulties during foreign policy decision-making process. He argued that by tackling obstacles in economic perspectives, the VCP could create more room for political-diplomatic thoughts. Mr. Kiet told the *Tuoi Tre* Newspaper after the Congress that, "We have the advantage of the fact that the Seventh Party Congress had laid down a policy line for *Doi Moi*, and we don't have to learn on the job as after the Sixth Party Congress. That means the road to take is clear even though it might not be the road to bliss, but we have enough confidence in it to move straight down this road."⁵⁹ It seemed that the VCP's leaders were more confident as they had found their own way and planned the roadmap to obtain the Party's strategic goals while still having enough tactical space to handle immediate issues.

Despite numerous disputes as mentioned above, the VCP, at the Seventh Party Congress still raised new diplomatic guidelines and foreign policy orientations in its Political Report, "With this unfavorable international condition unfolding, in June 1991, our party convened the Seventh Party Congress which set forth the external policy line of independence, sovereignty, openness, diversification, and multilateralization of international relations."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Vo Van Kiet, *Phong Van boi Tuoi Tre*, *Mot Gio voi Tan Chu Tich Hoi Dong Bo Truong Vo Van Kiet*, tháng 6 năm 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Interview by *Youth Newspaper*, An Hour with the New Premier Vo Van Kiet, June 1991].

⁶⁰ *Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, *Bao Cao Chinh Tri*, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Political Report, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

Nguyen Manh Cam, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, later codified those directions into diplomatic missions, “the mission of our external relations was to ‘preserve peace, expand friendly and cooperative relations and create favorable conditions for building socialism and protecting the Fatherland, while at the same time actively contributing to the common struggle of the peoples of the world for peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress’.”⁶¹ Despite still confirming the commitments in Vietnam’s multilateralization and diversification of international relations, it could be clearly seen that the common trend shown at the Seventh Party Congress was to promote the relation with China. This was the vitality, and the decision that the VCP must make when the Soviet Union collapsed and the relation with Western countries had not been improved yet. Moreover, it was notable that although the VCP considered the establishment of relation with China was essential, the relation expansion played an important role to Vietnam. The VCP continued to express its commitments, at least in theory and policy, on the multilateralization orientation of foreign relations which had been developed from early state of *Doi Moi* at the Sixth Party Congress. What had been expected was policy mechanisms specifying those strategic orientations into Vietnam’s practical diplomatic activities. The later Vietnam’s political-diplomatic maneuvers of comprehensive solution to the Cambodian conflict, approaching normalization of relations with ASEAN, rapprochement with the United States, approaching WTO’s membership and expansion diplomatic relations with Western countries have proved VCP’s implementation of its commitments.

National interest: The new approach of Vietnam’s realpolitik diplomacy

Vietnam’s decisions on withdrawing troops from Cambodia and seeking a peaceful political solution to the Cambodia conflict, as well as accepting various political and diplomatic concessions, including absolute solving of economic military and political

⁶¹ Nguyen Manh Cam, *Ngoai Giao Thoi Ky Doi Moi-Mot Giai Doan Phat Trien Quan Trong cu Nen Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Hien Dai*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.92, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, *Diplomacy During the Doi Moi Period-An Important Stage of Development in Contemporary Vietnamese Diplomacy*, *Communist Review*, no.92, 2005].

burden caused by the issue of Cambodia, normalizing relation with China, had been important steps in order to resume relations with ASEAN countries and more importantly, with the United States and Western countries. With important political and diplomatic concessions, the issue with China seemed to have been solved. ASEAN countries were more open as Vietnam's military threat was not directly present. However it was different with the United States. In order to facilitate normalization, according to the American side, the issue of Cambodia was only one of the prerequisites which had to be implemented by Vietnam (including issues of political institutions, market economy mechanism, democracy, human rights, religion freedom). These above movements could be seen as objective influences to Vietnam's new foreign policy.

Considering the subjective aspect of foreign policy decision-making process, by the Seventh Congress, Vietnam experienced seismic shock by witnessing the systematic collapse in Eastern European socialist countries, chaotic efforts for reform and later the collapse of the socialist regime in the Soviet Union. Vietnam was in a dilemma. Suddenly, the VCP found itself to be alone in the world where the socialist system was disintegrating whereas the capitalist system still considered it to be an enemy; old ideological fulcrums were disintegrating whereas the new ones had not been formed yet. Vietnam seemed to lose its direction in a certain period.⁶² The VCP's key leaders must reassure the peoples on the commitment of further *Doi Moi*, concurrently continued to confirm its close relations with allied socialist countries. Vietnam could not completely abandon its old world due to ideological and historical tights and in its people's minds about an ideal world of socialism. At the same time, in both present and the past, the legitimacy of the VCP depended upon its commitments on communism; and many Vietnamese sacrificed themselves in both war

⁶² Former VCP Politburo member, and powerful ideological figure, Mr. Nguyen Duc Binh experienced the collapses of socialism system in 1989 and 1991. Later in one of his articles in VCP ideological journal, Binh raised a bitter, rhetorical questions, *Do you accept socialism as defined by me or not?* and then asked, "After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the capitalists seized the majority of the world, the political map was fundamentally transformed. Was this the 'end of history' in that capitalism was the pinnacle of the civilization of humanity?" Nguyen Duc Binh, Tiep tục mot cach kien dinh va sang tao con duong xa hoi chu nghia, *Tap chi Cong San*, phan 2, 2006, tr.119, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Duc Binh, Resolute and creativity continuing along the socialist path, *Communist Review*, part 2, 2006, p.119].

and peace for that ideal. If the VCP immediately left that foundation, it meant the Party's existence foundation and fulcrum were destroyed by itself.⁶³ To tackle these above external and internal obstacles, it seemed that the VCP vitally need new approach.

In 1996, Premier Vo Van Kiet said, "The face of the world showed great changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Naturally in the case of countries that are still led by communist parties as well as in the national capitalist countries, the forces of imperialism will not leave them alone."⁶⁴ This viewpoint expressed several VCP's new policy implications. Firstly, it was the distinguishing of "national capitalist countries" and "imperialism," which showed that the VCP started to have more gentle viewpoints on the consideration and evaluation of regional and international contexts. New theoretical approaches were also used to explain its diplomatic moves. Secondly, external relation policies were necessary to be built on the basis of national interest rather than being attached with an ideologically constructed bloc. Countries' foreign relations needed to be decided based on features and deployed on the basis of each nation's specific conditions. The common model of foreign relation formation for the whole system was no long relevant and disappeared together with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc. Kiet stated, "In these conditions, bilateral and multilateral relations have a diverse character, and in the case of countries with different political regimes, all external relations are primarily dependent on the internal and external policies of each country. Precisely for this reason, although there were still four remaining socialist countries, Vietnam, China, Cuba, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it is not as though these countries had similar external policies. Apart from the goal of socialism, each of these countries has different

⁶³ Steven Erlanger reported a statement of a senior party member relating to this controversy, "How to cope with such economic strains, and how much they may require further economic changes or relations with the West, are fundamentally political and ideological questions. The leadership knows it must deal with the West. But if you go too far, you lose the respect of your people, whom you pushed to fight Western imperialism and the rule of the dollar. So you can't accept all the premises of either socialism or capitalism. And the situation just gets worse." Steven Erlanger, Vietnam Leaders Reported Deeply Divided, *The New York Times*, January 31, 1991.

⁶⁴ Truong Van Sau et.al., eds., *An Tuong Vo Van Kiet*, p.134, [Vo Van Kiet: Impression], *Tuoi Tre*, Cung Lam Cho Dan Giau Nuoc Manh Thi Se Tim Duoc Diem Tuong Dong, [Working With Each Other to Make the Country Rich and Powerful Will Creat Common Ground], interview with Vo Van Kiet, 1996]. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

national characteristic, and even path to socialism of each country is not completely similar.”⁶⁵ It must be noted that this is the escape from ideological tights in diplomatic theory and reality which was struggled by the VCP in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Several foreign scholars analyzed that in 1980s and 1990s, the ideological support to help sustain communism in Vietnam was more important than the conflict of national interest.⁶⁶ In other words, with the VCP’s concern about the Party’s leadership role, with the viewpoints of conservative trends about risks to the survival of socialist regime, the VCP made its own choice which was inclined to ideological perspective. This consideration was proved by the trend of normalization with China first. It should be noted that the VCP, to some extent, was also aware of threats to national interest. However, from its calculations on the basis of ideology related to the survival of the Party’s leadership regime, the VCP decided to be associated with the ideological foundation, and emphasized on the ideological element in the formulation of national strategy and foreign policy, whereas it still cautiously implemented renovation based on calculations for national interest. It was difficult to say whether this choice was relevant or not, as a later analysis stated that too long clinging on to the ideological viewpoints, too precaution resulted in Vietnam’s loss of valuable opportunities for economic development and social stability. However, it should also be noticed that the VCP was forced to make its choices in a more complicated context than it is now. At that time, Vietnam was isolated by Western countries, was put under pressure and threatened by China, was stagnant in Cambodia, was abandoned by the Soviet Union and lost directions by the incidents in East Europe and the Soviet Union. The VCP had its own reasons for concerning about its survival and choice of giving priorities to stability which meant increasing the Party’s control capacity over the *Doi Moi* course, adjusting potential deviations and restricting negative impacts brought

⁶⁵ Truong Van Sau et.al., eds., *An Tuong Vo Van Kiet*, p.134, [Vo Van Kiet: Impression], *Tuoi Tre*, Cung Lam Cho Dan Giau Nuoc Manh Thi Se Tim Duoc Diem Tuong Dong, [Working With Each Other to Make the Country Rich and Powerful Will Creat Common Ground], interview with Vo Van Kiet, 1996]. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

⁶⁶ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam’s Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.108.

about by efforts of too radical reformist moves. Steven Erlanger once reported this dilemma, “How to cope with such economic strains, and how much they may require further economic changes or relations with the West, are fundamentally political and ideological questions, a party member said. The leadership knows it must deal with the West. But if you go too far, you lose the respect of your people, whom you pushed to fight Western imperialism and the rule of the dollar. So you can't accept all the premises of either socialism or capitalism.”⁶⁷

This caution was only gradually reduced as the VCP was certain about the stability of the regime, the directions and development methods when initial achievements of *Doi Moi* encouraged Vietnamese people to believe in the Party and its strategic choices. It was the moment marking the shifting of viewpoint priority from socialist ideology to nation-state interest in the foundation of national strategy and foreign policy orientation.

When crises in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries exploded, concerning about the destiny of socialist regime and the Party’s leadership facing the threat of “peaceful evolution” brought by the United States and Western countries, the VCP appealed for the new “assemblages of forces”⁶⁸ among the remained socialist countries, accordingly hoped China would take the position of the Soviet Union and raise the flag of socialism. Originating from that awareness, Vietnam’s foreign relation orientations in the late 1980s and early 1990s did not escape completely from ideological tights yet, and national interest was given the second priority, all of which led to Vietnam’s diplomacy standstill as analyzed in Chapter 5. By the time of the Seventh Party Congress, with VCP’s confirmation that the peoples’ characteristics and national interest were the core of national policies, which dominated foreign policy decision-making process, and “even path to socialism.” Vietnam entered the new period of implementing

⁶⁷ Steven Erlanger, Vietnam Leaders Reported Deeply Divided, *The New York Times*, January 31, 1991.

⁶⁸ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House].

Doi Moi course more consistently and comprehensively (specific contents of this issue regarding to the role of “national interest” in Vietnam’s diplomacy were mentioned later in section 6.2. of this Chapter.)

Integration or assimilation into the world system

The post-Cold War world witnesses the domination of neoliberalism, with economic globalization trend towards expansion of international institution’s impacts, and gradual reduction of nation’s supreme sovereignty-the foundation for international relations. The world also witnesses new trends of international associations and alliance presenting the regionalization trend in which ASEAN is a typical successful example of Asia Pacific region. Facing those changes, it has been vital for Vietnam to access in the post-Cold War world system as it is a component of that world by itself, partly because Vietnam could not survive if continuing to be isolated and self-isolated. In order to handle crisis, avoid isolation and backwardness, Vietnam had no choices rather than actively and dynamically tied to the evolving post-Cold War international system accepted a new world order with new parameters and rules. The issue facing the VCP then was not whether it should access but how to access and how the roadmap should be implemented to ensure making full use of favorable conditions of international integration and economic development but still ensured the stability and maintained socialist orientations, the survival of the socialist regime and the Communist Party’s leadership. This caution was expressed right in the VCP’s viewpoints in using words to define Vietnam’s access in international community process.⁶⁹ Accordingly, Vietnam accessed in international community on the basis of accepting new regulations and laws, partners or even made commitments in certain concessions; meanwhile, national identity must be maintained, national interest must be ensured and more important, the survival of the socialist regime and the Communist

⁶⁹ *Hoa nhap*-Assimilation or *Hoi nhap*-Integration. For the VCP, *assimilation* contains negative implication and implicitly implies the possibility of being absorbed into a capitalist dominated system and losing Vietnamese identity and socialist orientation. Assimilation should be used with caution of maintaining full control, self-determination, proactive and holding firm to principles of peaceful coexistence. With all the meanings, assimilation should be replaced by integration.

Party's leadership must be guaranteed. Specific issues related to Vietnam's international integration are concretely presented in Chapter 7.

Friends not Foes: Strategic alliance framework in the post-Cold War world order

At the Seventh Party Congress, the VCP continued to maintain the viewpoints which had been mentioned previously at the Sixth Party Congress regarding the issue of identifying friends and foes, and abandoning the “two worlds, two camps,” “whom triumph over whom” viewpoints. At the Sixth Party Congress and the Politburo's specialized Resolutions on foreign relations later, the VCP initially formed new viewpoints on foreign relations, towards an openness diplomacy of multilateralization and diversification. However, theoretical outcomes and practical applications were still limited due to VCP's Ideology-Reality dilemma. Not until the Seventh Party Congress and later did the VCP specify the contents related to friends-foes, including partner, partnership and partnership framework in a new world order. Only basic contents these above concepts are mentioned in this section. Comprehensive analyses are presented later in Chapter 7.

An important issue in the formation process of Vietnam's external relation policy was the “assemblages of forces,” or partner identification and partnership establishment in modern Western political science language. On the basis of Marxism-Leninism theoretical foundation on the state building and social management, most of Vietnam's key policies were developed. Regarding the international relations theory of the Marxism-Leninism, the evaluation of the world-worldview, and consideration of force balance among countries and sides played an extremely important role. The concept of “assemblages of forces” in its original term was typical for the old viewpoint of “two worlds, two camps” distinction and friends-foes identification based on the ideology. Although Vietnam's post-Cold War's external relation policies were not too dependent on the ideological foundation, the concept of “assemblages of forces” were still used with new

connotations,⁷⁰ which allowed the VCP to explain its policy decisions on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proved its commitments on socialist orientations, concurrently approached modern viewpoints in international relation, and expressed Vietnam's determination of integration into international community in the new post-Cold War context. If seen from the primitive nature, the concepts of "assemblages of forces" and "finding strategic allies" were an old remnant of the Cold War which is still existed in Vietnam's politics. Accordingly, the basic fault line of Vietnam's national strategy and foreign policy was the relationship between ideology and reality-national interest. The use of the concept of "assemblages of forces" in the old meaning referred to the support of considering ideology to be the most fundamental foundation of the national strategies in general and foreign policies in particular. In the new context, the VCP tried to renovate this concept and supplemented connotations which allowed scale expansion of partnership relations, explained the viewpoint of "more friends-less foes" which were later developed into the multilateralization and diversification of the VCP's external relation. Even later when the VCP fundamentally accepted new contents of "assemblages of forces," accepted "open-door" policy, developed partner and partnership concepts and multilateralization of relations, there were still disputes within the VCP on how to deploy this concept and how to handle the relation between ideology versus reality-national interest. Tran Quang Co reported that controversy in his significant memoirs, "There was still controversy over assembling forces on the basis of ideological outlook or on the basis of national interest, or while saying the diversification, at the same time emphasizing ideological outlook and the necessity of seeking strategic allies."⁷¹

Regarding the issues of "assemblages of forces," distinguishing friends-foes, and identifying partner, partnership during the foreign policy decision-making process, the

⁷⁰ Phan Doan Nam, *Ket Hop Suc Manh Dan Toc voi Suc Manh Thoi Dai trong Giai Doan Cach Mang Moi*, *Tap chi Cong San*, so.5, 1987, tr.53-57, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, *Combine the Strengths of the Nation and the Epoch in the Revolution's New Period*, *Communist Review*, no.5, 1987, pp.53-57].

⁷¹ Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Hanoi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

VCP must clarify that whether Vietnam still needed strategic allies and strategic relations in the new context in terms of theoretical viewpoints and practical applications; and on which basis was that relation identification and building dependent on. These questions were also raised by Tran Quang Co in the hard time for Vietnam's diplomacy of the late 1980s, "Is concentrating on economic development the only way or the most effective way to reinforce stability and escape from the social economic crisis in the country and raise the international status of our country, and cope with 'Peaceful evolution'? Have we given a high enough priority to economic development?"⁷² That policy dilemma caused significant controversies and confusions among senior party members.

How to make choices to ensure handling both socio-economic issues and ideological bases-the foundation for the existence of the regime and Party's legitimacy, which was not an easy task. A typical example was the embarrassment about the normalization with China, identification of the relation features with China and put it in the regional and international environments under America's influences and the regionalism which was represented by ASEAN. It could be analyzed that the normalization with China in 1991, despite negative impacts on Vietnam's foreign relations, was both a pragmatic choice pursuing economic-trade benefits and an ideological choice towards certain insurance of the conservative's concerns about America's and Western countries' impacts and transformation. To certain extent, it was the VCP's tactical choice, Vietnam mostly did not have any other short-term choices while losing support from the Soviet Union, the normalization opportunity with America and ASEAN countries had not come yet as the issue of Cambodia was not tackled. However, as mentioned above, in various evaluations by domestic and international scholars, as well as in several VCP's documents, the disadvantages accepted by Vietnam to establish normal relations with China negatively affected Vietnam's diplomacy. That was one of the lessons and also the reasons for the

⁷² Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Hanoi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. Also quoted in David W.P. Elliott (2012).

VCP to be committed with the openness diplomatic guidelines and deployment of the multilateralization and diversification of foreign policy in late 1990s.

Concept of comprehensive security

The introduction of the concept “comprehensive security” to Vietnam in late 1980s and early 1990s, during the preparation process of the Seventh Congress seemed to receive the support from both the conservative and reformer sides. With the broadening of the concept, it reflected all contents expected by the conservative side, which included the continued acknowledgement of important roles of political, security and ideological contents. With this comprehensive security concept, the VCP also spent an important section mentioning threats and risks to national security, the survival of the country and the regime, specifically was “peaceful evolution,” apart from other socio-economic risks. Regarding the reformist side, the VCP with the development of the comprehensive security concept, publicly acknowledged the important role of socio-economic elements for the first time in the process of foreign policy decision-making process. It could be clearly seen through priority arrangement of risks and challenges to Vietnam’s security and development in the Political Report Draft to the Seventh Congress. With this comprehensive concept, the VCP assumed that defense-security elements still played an important role in national policies; however, they were necessary to be adjusted to be relevant with changes in the context. These elements, together with political-economic and socio-cultural elements would create an overall strength to help Vietnam achieve stability and development. The previous viewpoints that defense-security were cores and played a decisive roles to other elements could not be maintained. Facing internal and external changes, the VCP had adjusted the relations and its considerations of the roles of the component elements of the comprehensive security concept, one of the new foundation for Vietnam’s renovation diplomacy as one argument on *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* newspaper “National defense,

security, and foreign policy all belong to a political system designed to fulfill a common objective, namely building and defending the Fatherland.”⁷³

With the concept of “comprehensive security,” it could be seen once more time the common things and overlap between both conservative and reformer. As analyzed in earlier section, both of them despite having different viewpoints and approaches, share the most common goals of building socialism in Vietnam, ensuring the stability and development of Vietnam as well as the socialist regime and the Communist Party’s leadership. At this point, one confirmation by Secretary General Le Duan could be taken as an example which reflected the nature of Vietnam’s modern political nature, “This nation and socialism are one.”⁷⁴ As for Le Duan who always kept the orthodox, pro-Soviet viewpoints, this confirmation was of the conservative nature and emphasized the VCP’s vital leadership position as well as the absolute domination of Vietnam’s socialist regime and orientations. This Le Duan’s viewpoint was supported by numerous leaders as it ensured and explained for the existence of the socialist regime and the Communist Party’s leadership.

In the *Doi Moi* period, with fluctuations in socialist system, the above mentioned viewpoints were seen from the angle of the Vietnam’s nationalism relation with socialism or in other words, the relation between national interest and socialist ideology during the foreign policy decision-making process. It could be initially concluded that the VCP’s handling of the relation between socialism and nation-state have been dominating the direction, levels of *Doi Moi* and strategic orientations of Vietnam’s diplomacy.

Main stream of Vietnam’s foreign policy of 1990-1991 was analyzed as a shift in diplomatic pattern from the Soviet Union to China. Nevertheless, the declaration of the

⁷³ Xa luan, Tranh Luan trong Quan Doi ve Noi Dung Quoc Phong trong Du Thao Bao Cao Chinh Tri Dai Hoi 7, *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, 24 thang 1 nam 1991, (Vietnamese). [Editor’s Article, Quan Doi Nhan Dan Debate on Military Defense Chapter in The Seventh Party National Congress: Draft Political Report, *People Military Newspaper*, January 24, 1991].

⁷⁴ Le Duan, *Tuyen Tap (1975-1986)*, Tap 3, Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2009, (Vietnamese). [Le Duan, *Selected Works (1975-1986)*, vol.3, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2009]. See also, Tran Van Dinh, ed., *This Nation and Socialism are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*, Chicago Vanguard Books, 1st Edition, June 1977.

Seventh Party Congress also clearly recognized that normalizing relations with China was an essential but not sufficient step in responding to the changing extend environment. New foreign policy orientations which were raised by the Seventh Party Congress were the VCP's efforts to be adaptive to the changes in the world's order structure and the power balance in the Southeast Asia as well as its efforts in relocating Vietnam's diplomacy in the new period. In order to shape the above mentioned diplomatic orientations, the VCP experienced internal tense disputes, and overcame ideological obstacles and concerns about power challenges. Nevertheless, the difficulties lied in the deployment process of those orientations on diplomatic reality, which used to include major difficulties to the VCP. In a new context, it was necessary for the VCP to not only make adjustments to its thinkings but also to work out a specific and definitive roadmap to implement the new diplomacy.

6.2. National interest and realpolitik calculation: The struggle for foreign policy of strategic independence

Regarding the issue of national interests, now there exists several terminologies as follows, national interests, the people's interests, nation-state's interests, state's interests. Basically, with the current national-state model, through mobilization practices of the world's politics and Vietnam's typical features, it can be seen that there are not many differences between the connotations of these above terminologies. Therefore, it has been agreed that in this analysis, the above terms are used with common connotation.

The history of the shaping and formulating process of modern Vietnamese foreign policy has been the interaction between ideology and reality or in other word, ideology-national interests dilemma. The dominant factor will play the decisive role in the determining directions of foreign policy, which can be clearly seen through analyses and evaluations of Vietnam's important external relations. Parallel to each relation pairs, the factors of ideology and national interests can sometimes be on the same side, but also can

contradict each other, which may lead to a dilemma in the process of shaping and formulating foreign policy as well as the policies and the implementation of such policies. Vietnam's relationship with the United States during the Cold War was mainly dominated by the ideological factor, national interests were considered, by the VCP, to be part of the ideological struggle-the East-West ideological confrontation. VCP's diplomatic orientations towards the United States then therefore, was ideological driven.⁷⁵ The relationship with China at the beginning of *Doi Moi* period, especially in the process of tackling disputes and negotiating normalization seemed to be more complicated when there were common things between the two countries, both were dominated by the communist ideology.⁷⁶ Therefore, on the basis of the realpolitik viewpoints, the national interests seemed to play a dominant role in Vietnam's new foreign policy. However, the ideological dogma in perceiving and assessing domestic situation as well as regional context and international order, together with strategic fears about threats from Western countries through "Peaceful evolution," tightened VCP's diplomacy with China in the ideological vicious circle and lowered the priority status given to national interests (whereas China, in contrast, always considered national interests to be the foundation for shaping its foreign policy). That ideological misperception and illusion led to policy concessions and adjustments, which to some extent badly affected Vietnam's national interests.⁷⁷ Those ideological obstacles and diplomatic standstills could only be solved later as Vietnam gradually had succeeded in deploying multi-directional foreign policy of the Seventh Party Congress and diversifying its foreign relations in mid-to-late 1990s marking by Vietnam's participating ASEAN and normalizing relations with the United States.

⁷⁵ Mark Manyin, Vietnam: Focused Domestically, Adrift Internationally, in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wienczek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook*, New York, M.E.Sharpe, 2005.

⁷⁶ Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994. See also, Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Hanoi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

⁷⁷ See Nguyen Co Thach and Tran Quang Co's analyses on China's national strategy and diplomacy in the late 1980s in Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Hanoi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003]. See also, Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

It was not true that the VCP was not aware of the importance of national interests during the process of planning Vietnam's national strategy and shaping its foreign policy directions. For the VCP, national interests were crucial foundation for the survival of the nation and the stability of socio-economic development. The problem laid on questions of what is the nature of ideology-national interests relations; how to settle this relationship and which factor should play the decisive role and needed to be appreciated. That problem existed in VCP's working framework during process of shaping and implementing the new foreign policy of *Renovation*. Shortcomings and failure to clearly identify the contents of and boundary between these two factors may also lead to misleading policy choices and directions.⁷⁸ However, for a nation like Vietnam-with a communist single-party leadership institution, it is inevitability that there exist two paralleled interest systems, which are national interests associated with national practices and reality, and the Communist Party's interests associated with its socialist ideology. The VCP always tries to prove the similarity and unity between these two systems. According to it, national interest and ideological calculation are not dichotomous terms, some time they do overlap and coexist.⁷⁹ The problem was that in certain moments, these two interest systems might reveal differences and have different impacts on VCP's policy directions. VCP's mission is to handle and harmonize those differences and decide the most accurate policy directions for Vietnam.

After the Cold War, the ideological contradiction between the two world systems has not existed yet, at least in the global scale. However as for Vietnam's national scale, during its policy making process, the differences or even the contradictions between these two

⁷⁸ As policies towards the United States after 1975, the equation of the national interests with ideology, the shaping of external relation policies only based on ideology, failing to accurately identify requirements and contents of national interests led to shortcomings and deviation in policies, badly affected Vietnam's international relations. Regarding policies towards China, especially during the normalization process and solving the Cambodia conflict, overestimations of ideological goals revealed weak points which were under pressure and made full used of by China; as a result, causing strategic disadvantages to Vietnam's foreign affairs and badly affecting Vietnam's national prestige. See, Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Hanoi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

⁷⁹ Dang Cong san Vietnam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VI, VII, VIII*, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *VI, VII, VIII National Party Congress Official Documents*]. See also, Le Duan, *Tuyen Tap (1975-1986)*, Tap 3, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2009, (Vietnamese). [Le Duan, *Selected Works (1975-1986)*, vol.3, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2009], "this nation and socialism are one." And also, Tran Van Dinh, ed., *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*, Vanguard Book, July 1977.

factors of ideology and national interests increasingly became severe, and required comprehensive solutions from the VCP. Firstly, the necessity and inevitability of ideology needed to be proven, which was the decisive factor associated with VCP's legitimacy and leadership. Concurrently, the VCP also needed to explain about the increasingly powerful domination of national interests (reality), as well as to prove that the utilization of national interests factor was not the divergence and deviation from fundamental ideology orientations selected by the VCP. With such difficulties, the harmonious solution or neutral approach seemed not to be a relevant choice, at least in current moment. New context required the VCP to have a clear and definitive choice.⁸⁰

6.2.1. National interest and its role in foreign policy decision-making process: General perceptions

Regarding formulating foreign policy and maneuvering diplomatic affairs, the principle of “serving national interests” was increasingly acknowledged as the supreme principle in many countries including Vietnam.⁸¹ However, numerous viewpoints on how to apply this principle in organizing and maneuvering practical diplomatic affairs with questions related to the nature and content of the national interests concept and its practical role in shaping and implementing country's foreign policy. Accordingly, two issues needed to be addressed, as follows: (i) National interest was a concept with complex connotation. It could be interpreted into different contents when being associated with specific cases, which leads to the requirement for accurate definitions of those contents when planning and deploying one specific foreign policy. (ii) National interests are manifested in different extent with different priorities. In specific cases, requirements to the foreign affairs are to manage and tackle each facet of national interests conforming to national priorities and in accordance with international and regional political contexts. For Vietnam's case, and

⁸⁰ Several scholars assumed that the VCP has made its choices, indirectly, by determining that ideological identification would tackle strategic issue; regarding tactical issues, the VCP would work out policies based on national interests. The following analysis in this section aimed to this content.

⁸¹ Hong Ha, *Tinh Hinh The Gioi va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Chung Ta*, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 12 nam 1992, tr.12, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, *The World Situation and Our Diplomacy*, *Communist Review*, Dec 1992, p.12].

probably for some other similar countries, answers to the above mentioned issues depended largely upon political decisions which were associated with strategic perceptions and goals of the ruling political regime. Theoretically, approaching connotations of the national interests concept and identifying such connotations would be the basic framework for analyzing context, discussing nation's requirements, making policy decisions and organizing the implementation of that diplomacy in practice.

National interest was one of the study focuses of political science.⁸² Basically, major political schools were consistent with each other on basic contents of national interest concept, on the issue that each country always pursues its own national interests, and on the role of national interests in shaping national strategy and policy.⁸³ Despite their dialectical materialism standpoints, several Vietnamese scholars agreed with realist analyses about the connotations and roles of national interests in country's strategy and policy. They assumed that national interests were central and significant arguments of realism in political science.⁸⁴ Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and later Stephen Walt made profound analyses on this issue.⁸⁵ Later, in response to criticism by neoliberalism scholars regarding the failure of realism in describing, evaluating and forecasting about the new face of the world order and power structure after the Cold War, Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno also made some notable realist arguments on the basis of new awarenesses about nations, role and sovereignty of nation and national sovereignty right in the new world system.⁸⁶ Regarding the influence magnitude of national interests in the process of shaping one country's attitudes, different from realism, liberalism and constructivism assumed that, the pursuit for national interests could be harmonized and controlled; and

⁸² See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1979. Also, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

⁸³ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.67, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.67].

⁸⁴ Dang Dinh Quy, *ibid.*, 2011, p.67.

⁸⁵ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

⁸⁶ Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and States Strategies after the Cold War*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999.

therefore could not inevitably lead to interest conflicts as predicted by realism.⁸⁷ These were also remarks collected in studies by David A. Baldwin and Robert O. Keohane on realism, neorealism, liberalism and neoliberalism in the world context after the Cold War.⁸⁸

Despite receiving attention to and playing an important role in the theory system of political sciences, it seems that the issue of national interests has not been handled thoroughly. Not only it has not been consistent across different schools, but also within each school there has existed several different viewpoints on basic and specific contents of national interests. For example, despite the fundamental core of realism's arguments being established surrounding the issue of nation-state, national-state's interests and nation's absolute right to secure and execute these interests in an anarchic international environment, with frequent competitiveness of interests among nations, their leading scholars have also applied different opinions and approaches to the connotation of national interest concept. Hans Morgenthau did not produce clearness and consistence of this issue. Even some times, he considered the concept of national interests as national power.⁸⁹ Other key scholars of realism and later neorealism also faced several issues as they tried to address the issue of national interests. Especially when their predictions on the structure and restructuring trends of the new world order confronted practical obstacles in the post-Cold War power zone. Furthermore, various scholars also stated that realist argument assumptions and their depended practical explanations were outdated and failed to be adaptive. Realism, which had lost theoretical and practical supports as the Cold War ended and the new world order was established and operated following a different script from what had been predicted by most of the realist studies, has even been considered to reach its dead end.⁹⁰ Different schools of the realism and new realism also have counter-attacks

⁸⁷ Scott Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

⁸⁸ David A. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debates*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

⁸⁹ Hans Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1951. See also, Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.68, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.68].

⁹⁰ David A. Baldwin, ed., *ibid.*, 1993.

to prove their correctness and relevance when addressing the national interest issue in the new global context.

Despite delivering tense criticisms to realist viewpoints, leading scholars of the realism and neorealism, indeed, have not yet reached any breakthroughs in their analyses on national interests in comparison with realism.⁹¹ Their studies still wandered around basic argument frameworks of neorealism as well as theoretical supplements by Keohan and Nye on “complex interdependence,”⁹² “soft power,”⁹³ and later “smart power.” However, to some extent, such supplements made important contributions for neorealist think tanks to explain the movement trends of the post-Cold War world order. With such adjustments and supplements, neoliberalism has become the theoretical core for the United States’ and several Western countries’ foreign policies during the years of late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Despite obtaining initial achievements, global socio-political-economic crises in recent years have shown a fact that numerous theoretical issues of neorealism are not relevant and needed to be solved.

In spite of numerous efforts made by scholars, probably we have not found out the ultimate answer that could best solve the problem and satisfy both schools. The issue of national interests will continue to be the study focus of contemporary international relations theories. Vietnamese scholars, based on dialectical materialism with their policy approach being inclined to realism, basically assumed that, national interest have been the most supreme goal pursued by all countries, the origin of cooperation and competitiveness, peace and war in international relation;⁹⁴ and on the basis of such perception, they advocated their own approach when handling the issue of national interest in diplomatic

⁹¹ Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and States Strategies after the Cold War*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999.

⁹² Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1977, p.23.

⁹³ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affairs, 2004.

⁹⁴ Dang Dinh Quy, *Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.68, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.68].

maneuvers in accordance with Vietnam's conditions, and associated with strategic goals of building Vietnamese socialist regime.

6.2.2. National interest in the new foreign policy of Renovation: Vietnam's approach

Like other countries, Vietnam's diplomatic strategy is designed to serve national interest, at least in theory. National interests are identified by the VCP, the ruling power, on behalf of the people and the state. This fundamental principle has been formulated in the Constitution and executed in Vietnam's modern history. Over its establishment and existence process, the VCP has always tried to prove its legitimacy and ability of leading the state, ruling the society and representing the people's rights and interests.⁹⁵ However, with severe contemporary chaos in the world political structure, the rapid transformation of the interest dominated systems, the VCP itself has to develop new perceptions on road map and methods for Vietnam's development cause. Vietnam's society, by itself, made changes and adjustments in structure, components and mobility methods. VCP's new thinkings about economic mechanism, economic components, the relationship between socialist orientation and market economy, interests and interests implementation have led to the establishment and development of numerous social components and groups, the variety of interests, the complexity in managing and operating the socialist oriented market economy and its consequences.⁹⁶ All of these things have resulted in the foundation of a "new" society, with new characteristics, new operating procedures and new interest value systems. It is essential to redefine connotations of national interest concept-the foundation of strategic orientations for the development of Vietnam society in the future.

National interest in national strategy orientation is a broad issue, in this study, we focus on the Vietnam's viewpoints and approaches to the issue of national connotation, its relation with ideological domination, and its role in planning and deploying foreign policy.

⁹⁵ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3 (2010): 423-444.

⁹⁶ See more analyses in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

According to Vietnamese scholars, as well as VCP's official viewpoints, Vietnamese national interests in foreign affairs may be composed in two groups: survival interests group and, development interests group.⁹⁷ Vietnamese scholars assumed that the definition of connotation needs to be based on: (i) interests of the ruling class; (ii) comprehensive national power; and, (iii) international environment. These elements have impacted on the definition of national interest and the process of implementing those interests. The connotations of the vital/survival interests group cannot be compromised. If one of those interests is threatened, the survival of the country will be challenged. Effective implementation of these interests not only ensure the survival of the country but also consolidate ruling party's legitimacy and responsibility in front of the whole nation.⁹⁸ At this point, it is clearly seen that Vietnamese scientists have started to mention a rarely used concept in Vietnam political theoretical systems which is the "legitimacy" of the VCP.⁹⁹ Mentioning and analyzing this concept in the current context has shown that the VCP has made certain changes in its ruling role as well as leadership viewpoints in Vietnamese society. Such status was practically established by the VCP itself in leading the people's during national liberalization and reunification processes. Legally, this legitimacy was recognized by the Constitution and other legal documents. With the changes in situation, VCP's reconsidering and strengthening its legitimacy by meeting social requirements has proved its adaptable and adjustable abilities in shaping and implementing strategic policy orientation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

⁹⁸ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.80-82, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, pp.80-82].

⁹⁹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122, and also, Brian L. Job, The Insecurity Dilemma: National, Regime, and State Securities in the Third World, in Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1992.

¹⁰⁰ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010.

Vietnamese scholars in international relations field¹⁰¹ have agreed on the approach which considers foreign relations affairs to be the expansion of domestic affairs;¹⁰² despite the fact that this approach seems to be close to neoliberalism's argument framework, whereas basically Marxism-Leninism and realism have still held dominant role in Vietnam politics. This move can be analyzed as an academic effort to broaden Vietnam's theoretical diplomatic thinkings and an attempt to find a new theoretical approach to be adaptive to new realities of domestic affairs and external relations.

After a long time mainly depending upon Marxism-Leninism's viewpoints with continuous statements about the role of Party's unique legitimacy and the State-Party unification to establish the foundation of foreign policy making, (which to some extent is relatively close to the realism's viewpoint of *state-as-unitary-rational-actor*), there have emerged some remarkable changes in VCP's and Vietnamese scholars' awareness. Firstly, it is the awareness of the complexity of the national interest concept;¹⁰³ then it comes to the admission of the existence of different interest groups in the society as well as their impacts on the identification and implementation of national security interest in policy formulating activities.¹⁰⁴ The VCP has also indirectly admitted the emergence and existence of different viewpoint-groups within the VCP and the Government. To some extent, the VCP even has to recognized the fact that there also exists some influential groups in the society,¹⁰⁵ despite their trivial roles in Vietnam's policy making process. It

¹⁰¹ Dang Dinh Quy, *Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.69, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.69].

¹⁰² Helen V. Milner, *Interest, Institutions and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

¹⁰³ Dang Dinh Quy, *Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.68, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.68].

¹⁰⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VII, VIII, IX, X* (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *VII, VIII, IX, X National Party Congress Official Documents*].

¹⁰⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet ve chien luoc bao ve to quoc trong tinh hình moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001]; and, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 12-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 11, Ve Mot So Van De Cap Bach Trong Cong Tac Xay Dung Dang Hien Nay*, 16 thang 1 nam 2012, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, The Eleventh Central Committee's Resolution No. 12-NQ/TW, on *Some Urgent Issues of the Party Building Works at Present*, 16 January 2012].

looks like the VCP makes some compromises and accept to some extent the existence of pluralism in Vietnam society as long as those groups, trends or even theoretical factions do not intend to challenge the ruling role and legitimacy of the Party. That means the VCP tends to allow more room for political reforms maneuvers while still reserves its unchallengeable absolute leadership role. Theoretically, it can be evaluated that this is a significant step of VCP's awareness and stance on the role of national interest in external relations which used to be dominated by ideological considerations. Acceptances and compromises of the VCP regarding pluralism approach to socio-political affairs also prove this progress. However, we should not have such an illusion that the VCP has abandoned its fundamental foundation of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts which always assert the supreme and sole leadership role of the Party over the whole society. In fact, it could be interpreted as a tactical adaptation of the VCP to Vietnam's domestic practical changes and Socialism's theoretical transformations. The VCP considers this maneuver as the policy of one tactical step back to gain two strategical steps forward later in the process of tackling Vietnam's current ideology-reality dilemma.

Regarding discussions about national interests, different actors interact with each other in an institution framework with mechanisms (belonging to regime's hard structures) and ethic codes (belonging to regime's soft structures). Therefore, as for the foreign policy planning and deploying process of all countries, the identification of national interest's connotations in each specific case has always been a dilemma due to following reasons: (i) different interests of actors participating in the process of making and executing foreign policy decisions; (ii) different awarenesses about national interests and implementation methods of those interests in such certain case; and, (iii) the absence of consistence in regulations made by organizations related to the process of making and executing foreign policy decisions.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.69, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.69]; and, Helen V. Milner, *Interest, Institutions and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

Disagreements and difficulties in the clarification of national interest's connotations have originated from the variability of this concept. National interests are not invariability but depended upon specific cases and certain contexts.¹⁰⁷ Identifying national interest's connotations as well as setting priorities in the pursuit of different interests are the issue of political determination. Each country with its unique socio-political-economic features, therefore, will determine its own national interest's connotations different from the others'. Even with one certain country, for each specific policy making and executing process in certain context and conditions, the definition of national interest's connotation as well as determination of which is the most important connotation of its national interest is also different. This complicated theoretical and practical phenomenon causes numerous disputes and confrontations within the VCP as it struggles to formulate and implement reform policies and frameworks. It is also the so-called ideology-reality dilemma which constrains VCP's reformist efforts to tackle Vietnam's diplomatic obstacles and standstills in the first two stages of *Renovation*.

In Vietnam, when talking about the complexity of the national interest identification and impacts of this issue on the formulation process of foreign policy, Vietnamese scholars assumed that the first and foremost reason was the difference and diversification of interest. In other word, each actor has its own interest and interest consideration. Related activity chain from planning to deploying foreign policy can include internally local interests as follows: (i) individual interests of actors participating the planning and deploying process; (ii) group's interests of actors who directly or indirectly relating to the planning and deploying process; (iii) class' interests of actors who participating to the planning and deploying process (decided by class characteristics of the actors or party's policy guideline and-or internal relations within the party); (iv) national interests and; (v)

¹⁰⁷ Dang Dinh Quy, *Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi*, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.69, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, *About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period*, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.69].

international interests. In specific cases, these interests have not been always absolutely identical.¹⁰⁸

The second reason has been differences in the process and results of perception. Foreign policy and diplomatic activities are often characterized as diversification and multidirection; individuals and collectives participating in the planning and deploying process frequently hold different levels of knowledge and experience. Thirdly, non-identical points in operating regulations and manners of agencies participating in the policy planning and deploying process have also resulted in different understandings and decisions.¹⁰⁹

The operation of the above-mentioned reasons has made the identification and implementation process of national interests in Vietnam's foreign affairs extremely complicated, with overlapping relationships between ideological considerations and realpolitik calculations in the contexts with canvass and reciprocal impacts among interest groups. The identification of national interests using liberalism analysis framework has emphasized the role of actors within one country with a number of diversified interests and such country's political institution with its own features and dominant regulations that would dominate actors' behaviors. Awareness of national interests and measures to obtain them, therefore, are products of extremely dynamic and complicated interaction among actors within the political institution framework and between the actors and that political institution. The final product of this process is unpredictable, which is the corollary foundation of the uncertainty element in international relations in general and the struggle for national interests in particular.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.69-70, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, pp.69-70].

¹⁰⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VI, VII, VIII, IX, Phan Cong Tac Doi Ngoai*, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *VI, VI, VIII, IX National Party Congress Official Documents, Foreign Affairs Sections*]. See also, Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

¹¹⁰ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.70-71, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, pp.70-71].

According to Vietnamese scholars of international relations, the identification of national interests is complicated, but is essential for the foreign policy making and implementing process. To handle this issue, it is necessary for the VCP to recognize and address the relationship between ideology and reality, between socialism goals and Vietnam's current socio-economic realities, between socialist orientation and market economy with some contents of capitalist mode and relations of production. Only when finding relevant solutions, can the VCP work out applicable strategic orientations for Vietnamese foreign affairs in the new stage of national development. All Vietnamese researchers assumed that, the VCP needed to elaborate more a flexible explanation and implementation model for the framework of national security interest content and its impacts on Vietnam's foreign affairs towards 2020.¹¹¹

6.2.3. The relation between national interest and foreign affairs in VCP's documents and policies

So far, the VCP and Vietnamese Government have always affirmed that every Vietnam's foreign affairs has often been associated with and served for national interests which means such interests have been calculated and identified by the Party based on addressing ideological strategic goals and national development requirements. Theoretically, national interests have always been respected and implemented in strategic policy guidelines through Party's official documents. Regarding the practical nature, national interests in the Cold War environment was acknowledged and evaluated through ideological prism and therefore, it bore "red colors" and contents of socialist ideology which was associated with the Party's strategic goals. When the socialism was still a powerful world system, thoughts and models of practical socialism had not revealed their weak points and shortcomings; the VCP has had numerous advantages when identifying

¹¹¹ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.80, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.80].

Vietnam's national interests based on common paradigm patterns of the socialist systems.¹¹²

In *Doi Moi* period, especially when the socialism suffered from a depression, the issue of national interests has been raised urgently. It can be said that this is the change of VCP's priority framework in order to ensure Vietnam's development orientation and VCP's leadership over the nation when the socialism flag and socialist goals could not keep their role as a strategic orientation, an attractive perspective as well as a fundamental foundation to ensure VCP's leadership as they used to be.¹¹³ After 1986, the VCP in its strategic development orientation, has gradually put the issues of national interests and the people's rights in parallel with, even sometime higher than the pursuit of socialism's international interests.¹¹⁴ The reconsideration of socialism, and socialist mode of production to be one of the ways towards the guarantee of nation-state's interests¹¹⁵ was a notable change in VCP's awareness in its efforts to tackle the ideology and reality dilemma. In national strategy planning and deploying which included foreign policy, ideology was no longer the only, vital and indispensable issue depended upon and pursued by Vietnam; reality with innovative, reformist *New Thinkings* was put into a new status with high priority together with strategic ideological calculations.

The issue of national interests and the role of national interests in reform foreign policy were mentioned firstly by the VCP in the document of the Sixth Party Congress, the opening Congress for the official *Renovation* course in Vietnam. The Third Plenum of the

¹¹² Although later VCP itself admitted that, the mechanical application of outside viewpoints and observations led to mistakes and shortcomings in national strategies and foreign policies. See, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VII, VIII, Phan Cong Tac Doi Ngoai*, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, VII, VIII Party Congress Official Documents, Foreign Affairs Sections].

¹¹³ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3 (2010): 423-444.

¹¹⁴ Nguyen Co Thach, *Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung Ta*, trong *Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản The gioi, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *World Transitions and Our New thinkings*, in *Vietnamese Foreign Policy*, Hanoi, Global Publishing House, 2007]. See also, Nguyen Co Thach's analyses on realpolitik calculation over ideological consideration in Tran Quang Co, *Hoi ky Tran Quang Co*, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, *Tran Quang Co's Memoirs*, Hanoi, 2003].

¹¹⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi*, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991.]

Seventh Central Committee (in June 1992) clarified the role of the people's interests in diplomatic policy by following confirmations: The goals of peace and development would become the standard of Vietnam's international activities; and the standards for Vietnam's highest interests should have been "rapid escaping from crisis, maintaining and strengthening political stability, obtaining socio-economic development, making people wealthy and the nation powerful, protecting independence, sovereignty and freedom of the fatherland, serving for national benefit."¹¹⁶ Such above mentioned orientation of the VCP for the first time publicly admitted and considered reality to be in higher position than ideology in national strategy, the people's interests needed to be paid more attention to than ideology in foreign policy planning process. The VCP also initially distinguished the boundary between the people's interests and ideological interests. Although regarding the nature of Vietnamese internal politics, the ideological element still played a decisive role to VCP's strategic calculations, but the official admission of that boundary also expressed a change in VCP's theoretical awareness and practical maneuvers. Handling the relation between national interests and ideological calculations may also be similar to VCP's solution to relations between tactical steps and strategic goals. The adjustment of this orientation was expressed in the process of making foreign policy as follows: foreign affairs must serve for national interests, which was also the best way for the internationalism implementation in accordance with Vietnam's ability and the world's transformations; national interests were supreme and the most sacred.¹¹⁷ VCP's diplomatic guidelines in the early stage of *Renovation* theoretically were identified as "to ensure the true national interests."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Nguyen Manh Cam, Tren Duong Trien Khai Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Theo Dinh Huong Moi, *Doi Moi ve Doi Ngoai va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2009, tr.65, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, On the Road to Implement the New Foreign Policy Directions, *Renovation in Diplomacy and International Integration*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2009, p.65].

¹¹⁷ Hong Ha, Tinh Hinh The Gioi va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Chung Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 12 nam 1992, tr.12, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, The World Situation and Our Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, Dec 1992, p.12].

¹¹⁸ Bo Ngoai giao, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam 1945-2000*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2002, tr.326-327, (Vietnamese). [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Vietnamese Foreign Affairs 1945-2000*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2002, pp.326-327].

Despite VCP's dramatic efforts and changes in its awareness and actions, it could be seen that in the early stage of *Renovation*, practically the relation between ideology and reality had not been thoroughly handled by the VCP as there was overlapping between ideological consideration and national interest calculation, which led to obstacles and difficulties in deploying the reform diplomatic maneuvers. It was also proved by the standstill in Vietnam's foreign affairs during 1986-1996. In spite of achieving initial breakthroughs when implementing the reform diplomatic guidelines, such as basically handling the Cambodian conflict, facilitating normalization with China, participating ASEAN, restoring diplomatic relations with the United States, Vietnam diplomacy still faced with confusions, difficulties and failed to achieve international community's as well as regional countries' comprehensive confidence, nor did it thoroughly handle Vietnam's traditional contradictions with powers.¹¹⁹ What Vietnam diplomacy needed, was probably a more audacious strategy, a clearer commitment, a stronger commitment from the VCP in Vietnam's *Doi Moi* course.

Within VCP's internal apparatuses, the discussions about how to identify and specify concrete connotations of national interest had not completed. Those prolonged and intense discussions expressed the pulling about of the radical reformist trend with those moderate reformers or even conservatives who consistently advocated a gradual reform speed to ensure socio-political stability and VCP's controlling ability. Studies on VCP's official documents up to the second stage of *Doi Moi* showed that the connotations of national interest despite being developed and synthesized fully and openly had not been separated clearly into fields and had not been arranged following the priority order. The 1991 Platform for National Construction¹²⁰ set the following goals: for the development and

¹¹⁹ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Regional Integration: The Costs and Benefits of Multilateralism, Paper to conference on *Vietnam's Integration into the World and State Sovereignty Issue*, Paris France, 25 October 2004. See also David W.P. Elliott, Dilemma of Reform in Vietnam in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

¹²⁰ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991.]

insurance of independence, sovereignty and national interests; making full use of favorable international conditions for the industrialization and modernization, strengthening and improving Vietnam's status in the world.¹²¹ The Ninth Party Congress further identified: actively integrating into international and regional economy following the spirit of maximizing internal resources, improving international cooperation effectiveness; ensuring independence, sovereignty and socialist orientation, protecting national interests, consolidating national security, preserving the people's characteristics and natural environmental.¹²² The Resolution of Plenum No. 8, the Ninth Central Committee, on the fatherland protection strategies in the new situation worked out the goals as follows: (i) solid protection of independence, sovereignty, unification and territorial integrity; (ii) protection of the Party, the State, the peoples and the socialist regime; (iii) protection of *Doi Moi*, and national industrialization and modernization course; (iv) protection political security, social safety order and culture; (vi) maintenance of political stability and peaceful environment and socialist-oriented national development.¹²³

Putting aside theoretical propaganda policy terms, the hidden nature of the above mentioned VCP's orientations could be seen clearly as follows: the VCP tried to handle relation between national interests and socialist-orientations; and to ensure national interest development, concurrently maintain socialist orientations. The VCP consistently proved that the pursuit of socialist orientation was the only sound way to Vietnam-to guarantee national interests and the people's development. The overlapping of national interests and

¹²¹ See, more analyses in Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.78, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.78].

¹²² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2001, tr.43, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Ninth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001, p.43].

¹²³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet ve chien luoc bao ve to quoc trong tinh hình moi*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001.] See also, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Tu tuong-Van hoa Trung uong, *Tai lieu hoc tap Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu 8 Ban Chap hanh Trung uong khoa IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Central Committee Department of Ideology and Culture, *Guidance Document for the Study of the Eighth Plenum Resolution, the Ninth Central Committee*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005].

socialism ideals still existed as confirmed by VCP in that Resolution of Plenum No. 8, “We consistently determined on the maintenance of a peaceful and stable environment for socio-economic development, implementing socialist-oriented industrialization and modernization, which is the most supreme national interest.”¹²⁴ Together with the confirmation of the maxim “Ensure the true people’s interests,”¹²⁵ which highly appreciated the role of reality in policy planning, the VCP showed its acceptance of reality in which there witnessed the gradual reduction of ideological calculations, the depression of socialist ideals, and the collapse of practical socialist models. It was the inevitable and objective truth which could not be ignored or denied by the VCP. Instead, the VCP by its acceptance of reality and making renovation efforts, tried to adapt itself to domestic pressures and new international context, paid more attention to the needs originating from nation-state’s interests whereas continuing to make commitments on socialist pursuit and considering it the most supreme national interests. Regarding to this issue, Thayer had developed some significant analyses, “During the mid-to-late 1980s, a major transformation took place in how Vietnam’s policy elite conceptualized foreign policy. Vietnam turned from a foreign policy model heavily structured by ideological considerations to a foreign policy model that placed greater emphasis on national interest and *realpolitik*.”¹²⁶ It could be seen that the VCP tended to find a way to re-identify national interest with socialism in the new context. According to the VCP, Vietnam-with its socio-economic and historical conditions and features, did not have any other ways except the socialism one. This measure has been successfully used in Vietnam’s history, especially

¹²⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet ve chien luoc bao ve to quoc trong tinh hình moi*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001.] See also, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Ban Tu tuong-Van hoa Trung uong, Tai lieu hoc tap Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu 8 Ban Chap hanh Trung uong khoa IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Central Committee Department of Ideology and Culture, *Guidance Document for the Study of the Eighth Plenum Resolution, the Ninth Central Committee*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005].

¹²⁵ Bộ Ngoại giao, *Ngoại Giao Việt Nam 1945-2000*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002, tr.326-327, (Vietnamese). [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Vietnamese Foreign Affairs 1945-2000*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2002, pp.326-327].

¹²⁶ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam and ASEAN, *Conference on Vietnam in 2001: Prospect for Economic and Social Progress*, The Kenney Auditorium, Washington D.C. November 16-17, 2000.

in anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism resistance wars. However, probably in the next context, it was necessary for the VCP to find out a new formula, a new explanation direction for this vital relation although it was not an easy task. The question was when, how and on which specific fields did the VCP continue to deploy those tactical measures to the above-mentioned strategic issues.

With the nature of a communist Party with fundamental socialist ideological foundation, VCP's leadership role and legitimacy originated from and associated with socialist goals, it was vitally impossible for the VCP to make a break with strategic socialist ideological calculations. Concurrently, the VCP was also a political party originated from the patriotic movement, controlled by nationalism, and associated with goals of national liberalization. The issue of national interest insurance was therefore a core foundation for the survival of VCP's legitimacy and leadership role. As analyzed by David Elliott, that problem has existed and will exist in Vietnam's politics as "Dilemma of Reform."¹²⁷

Not only maintaining arguments within the Party's inner-cycle, but also did the VCP make full use of ideas from the researchers of national policies and international relations policies.¹²⁸ Vietnamese scholars now tend to focus on the so-called new forces of era such as: economic forces, impacts of the science and technology revolution to analyze global context. It seems that, Vietnam gradually move toward economic development and technology revolution over military aspect of power and when assessing regional and global balance.¹²⁹ Accordingly, Vu Khoan's approach to the connotation of national interests was paid attention to and agreed on by various scholars and policy makers. Vu

¹²⁷ David W.P. Elliott, Dilemmas of Reform in Vietnam in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, Westview Press, 1993.

¹²⁸ Hoang Tu, *Loi Ich Quoc Gia la Tren Het*, trong *Hoc vien Quan he quoc te, Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản The gioi, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Hoang Tu, National Interest is Above All, in International Relations Institute, *Vietnamese Foreign Policy*, Hanoi, Global Publishing House, 2007]; and, Vu Khoan, An ninh, Phat trien va Anh huong trong Quan he quoc te, trong *Bo Ngoai giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, Security, Development, and Influence in International Relations, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995].

¹²⁹ Nguyen Manh Cam, Gia tri lau ben va dinh huong nhat quan, trong *Bo Ngoai Giao, Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, tr.223-230, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, Long Lasting Value and Consistent Direction, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995, pp.223-230].

Khoan argued that, “foreign affairs of every country have the three major tasks including protecting national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity (security task), making full use of favorable international conditions and context for national construction and development (development task), and strengthening national influence and role in international arena (influence task).”¹³⁰ Vu Khoan is a well-known researcher in international relations theory and foreign policy; moreover, he used to be Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Trade and Deputy Prime Minister. Within the VCP’s power cycle, Vu Khoan used to be member of the Central Committee.¹³¹ His analyses not only showed orientation approach of a scholar, but also expressed VCP’s viewpoints. Although, the above-mentioned analyses basically clarified the connotation of national-people’s interests, but some points were not absolutely agreed on by other Vietnamese scholars.¹³² Their arguments could be summarized as follows, (i) not all major goals of diplomatic activities were the connotations of national interests. While the two tasks of “security” and “development” mainly coincided with national interests, the task of “influence” itself was not of national interest’s connotation but a tool for national interest implementation; (ii) priorities in each connotation group were not clarified clearly enough to provide appropriate thinking orientations for people who deal with issues related to national interest in each specific case of policy making and implementing process; (iii) in the context of globalization with rapid scientific and technological development and with Vietnam’s increasingly deeper and wider international integration, the above connotation groups became more and more diversified, flexibly intermingling and complicated and impossible to separate, which was a really huge challenge to the VCP in the next stage of

¹³⁰ Vu Khoan, Security, Development and Their Roles in Foreign Affairs, in International Relations Institute, *Vietnamese Foreign Policy*, Hanoi, Global Publishing House, 2007].

¹³¹ Vu Khoan is considered as a radical reformer with pro-Western stance. He was trained in the former Soviet Union about international relations. He also has relations with American politics. He used to be Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Trade and Vice Premier. Vu Khoan also is considered as one of the new Vietnamese diplomats whom have played important parts in Vietnam’s Renovation diplomacy.

¹³² Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.80, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.80].

Renovation. If the VCP could not develop a relevant model with relevant steps, it was concerned that Vietnam's foreign affairs would lose motivation, lack of theoretical foundations and, fail to obtain a stable strategy.

Chapter conclusion

Transparent and consistent policy environment is a crucial requirement to minimize difficulties in planning and implementing national strategy. During the years of *Renovation*, it could be evaluated that the Party and the State have made great efforts in implementing this task and although it could not be seen as “a breakthrough,” initial and notable results had been achieved. To that end, it was because firstly the VCP had made relevant strategic orientation adjustments based on the consideration of national interests to be the fundamental foundation of national strategy, as well as had abandoned the dogmatic pursuing and applying of Marxism-Leninism. For foreign policy formulating and deploying, the VCP step by step based on Vietnam's practical situation, requirements and capacity rather than mechanically applying diplomatic paradigms of the socialist system as previously. Such changes could be said to be a VCP's progress in the process of redefining and reconfirming itself to help recover the its sole unchallenged leadership role in Vietnam's political system.

From the evaluation and assessment of VCP's foreign policy formulation and implementation process based on national interests, several remarks could be drawn as follows:

Firstly, the VCP admitted there was complicated existence of interests and interest groups in Vietnamese society; positions and roles of those interests as well as it was vital to take into account the interaction of interest groups and system in the process of formulating national strategy in general and foreign policy in particular. Previously, the VCP only confirmed and acknowledged class interests and the people's interests were considered to be a content of the class interests. Other interests and interest groups either

were not acknowledged or were considered less important, which resulted in many obstacles in national strategy planning process, and later to the survival of VCP's legitimacy. Acknowledging the existence of interest system with its diversified characteristic, tactically managing and controlling it within the socialist framework, could help the VCP tackling existed theoretical and practical standstills, reaching consensus in the society and between the society and the Party. By asserting that, it was necessary to thoroughly handle five major interests in Vietnamese society: individuals, groups, classes, the people and international¹³³ the VCP could show its commitments to *Renovation* course, as well as consolidate and strengthen the Vietnam's confidence among international community.

Secondly, the relation between specific interests and overall interests needed to be thoroughly handled. The VCP assumed that, the identification and implementation of national interests in specific cases (such as planning and implementing diplomatic affairs with a nation, tackling a specific international dispute) must always be put in the general context of national interests. National interests should be always the decisive and supreme element of specific external relation interests.

Thirdly, the VCP should comprehensively solve in terms of theory, the relation between "immediate" (tactical) interests and "long-term" (strategic) interests. This theoretical issue has been already expressed in Vietnam's national development strategic orientations for *Renovation* course, but further analyses should be carried out. Accordingly, regarding to long-term interests, the VCP has confirmed its determination in pursuing the goal of building socialism in Vietnam, considering the element of market economy and several component elements of capitalist mode and relations of production to be "the transition road and method" to achieve that strategic goal of building Vietnamese socialism. The

¹³³ Dang Dinh Quy, Ban Them ve Loi Ich Quoc Gia Dan Toc trong Hoa Dong Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Giai Doan Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.83, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, About Nation-State Interest in Vietnam Foreign Affairs in the New Period, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.83].

identification and implementation of short-term interests, according to the VCP, needed to be calculated based on the relation with long-term interests without doing any harm to them, especially avoided “prerequisites” causing difficulties to the implementation of national interests in the future. This principle could allow us to observe politics maneuvers behind the scenes of VCP’s foreign policy planning process. Foreign policies and diplomatic maneuvers, apart from the purpose of serving and handling short-term external relations requirements with narrow scope and scale (such as bilateral trade, territorial disputes) needed to be designed to be harmonious with VCP’s long-term strategic goals of ensuring social stability, national development, fulfilling national interests and successfully building socialism in Vietnam.

Fourthly, it is necessary for Vietnam to develop a harmonious policy with the common global and regional trend. In the past, Vietnam used to formulate foreign policies and carry out diplomatic maneuvers based on VCP’s ideological perception and political, or follow diplomatic patterns of its big socialist brothers and pursue ultimate socialist international duties. Vietnam paid no or little attentions and calculations to common movement trend of regional countries and international community. Such ideological foreign affair directions had brought disadvantages to Vietnam, reducing its status, losing confidence from the international community. Typically, Vietnam’s unilateral military intervention and lengthy involvement in Cambodia, its approach to solve that conflict as well as Vietnam’s calculations and concessions during the normalization process with China, together with several other self-isolation policies, resulted in Vietnam’s nearly absolute socio-political-economic and diplomatic isolation during 1980s and made serious impacts on Vietnam’s development strategies.

Being well aware of the above-mentioned issue, with the viewpoints that Vietnam was a component of the international community not only the socialist system; and without proactively participating into as well as receiving acceptances, confidences and supports of

international community, Vietnam would fail to achieve its development goals. The VCP argued that, connotations of national interests as well as measures to implement those connotations have always been on the changing process that is dominated and controlled by forces of social and natural development laws.¹³⁴ It was vital to be aware and handle such interests relevant to the common trend, to international laws and practices. According to the VCP, Vietnam should pursue its own development goals; however, those goals and their implementation methods were not allowed to trespass against legitimate interests of other countries, nor they were against international laws and practices.¹³⁵ It can be seen that the impacts of this principle through Vietnam's current diplomatic moves with the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and European countries; and with multilateral organizations and institutions such as ASEAN, EU, APEC, ASEM. Vietnam's foreign affairs in *Doi Moi* course has made efforts in avoiding erroneous maneuvers in strategies of early 1980s by renovating its thinkings and integrating into the regional and international common trends while still clinging on to its existence and survival core of national interests and strategic ideological calculations.

¹³⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu IX*, Ha Noi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Ninth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2001].

¹³⁵ Pham Binh Minh, *Mot So Suy Nghi Ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den nam 2020*, Ha Noi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts about Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011].

CHAPTER 7:

VIETNAM'S OMNI-DIRECTIONAL DIPLOMACY: FOREIGN POLICY OF STRATEGIC INDEPENDENCE (2001-2011)

In the new international socio-political context, probably the most relevant policy choice for Vietnam is the Omni-directional diplomatic orientation, which is not only based on ideology but on realpolitik calculations on national interests in a new world order established and controlled by both hard and soft-powers of power countries and global organizations.¹ Vietnam's diplomatic realities during 2001-2011 expressed VCP's commitments following this diplomatic direction, through the gradual planning and deploying the foreign policy directions of independence, sovereignty, multilateralization and diversification; officially supporting the international integration viewpoint, handling the integration and independence-sovereignty relationship, actively defining partner, shaping partnership and building partnership framework.² The VCP also officially confirmed that national interest was the fundamental foundation to establish the new foreign policy, despite not absolutely escaping from the control of ideological element.³ VCP's diplomatic orientation in the new stage of *Renovation* was towards a balanced foreign policy associated with Vietnam's strategic independence goal, which are the major contents analyzed in this Chapter.

Independence and sovereignty are fundamental concepts associated with the emergence, existence and development of the national-state concept, which are associated with the world order established by Westphalian system.⁴ The emergence of independent nation-

¹ Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012, pp.32-52.

² Pham Quang Minh, *Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Doi Moi cua Viet Nam (1986-2010)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban The Gioi, 2012, (Vietnamese). [Pham Quang Minh, *Vietnam's New Renovation Foreign Policy (1986-2010)*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2012].

³ Nguyen Manh Cam, Tren Duong Trien Khai Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Theo Dinh Huong Moi, trong *Doi Moi ve Doi Ngoai va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2009, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, On the Way of Deploying External Relation Policies Following New Directions, *Reform in External Relations and International Integration*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2009]

⁴ David A. Lake, The State and International Relations, pp.41-61, in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

states with supreme sovereignty and territorial jurisdiction⁵ has also led to the needs of establishing and maintaining external relations among countries as well as the establishment of the international integration concept. In their nature and original causes, dependence, sovereignty and international integration all head for supreme national interests or national power.⁶ As for Vietnam, its historical, socio-economic and political institutional features have made the connotations of such concepts as independence, sovereignty and international integration have their own contents, which regulate the consideration process of foreign policy planning and deploying.⁷ Due to associating with a study subject-Vietnam, a country pursuing the goal of building socialist state institution under the leadership of the Communist Party, this Chapter mainly uses realism approach and dialectic materialism methodology to consider the following issues: international relation, nation, national sovereignty, and the relationship between independence, self-determination (self-reliance) and international integration. By using this approach, the author hopes to provide a new analysis on the dominant elements in Vietnam's foreign policy formulation and external relations deployment.

7.1. Locating Vietnam in a changing world: Continuing to renovate diplomatic thinkings and maneuvers

During the deployment process of external relation policies and implementation of diplomatic activities, indeed through the early stages of the *Doi Moi* process, the VCP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs evaluated by themselves that basically, strategic directions raised by the VCP could be possibly implemented and had brought about certain achievements to Vietnam's foreign affairs. Apart from that, through summarizing at the

⁵ David A. Lake, *The State and International Relations*, pp.49, in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp.31-37. "International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim." p.31.

⁷ Nguyen Co Thach, *Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta*, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản The gioi, 2007, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings*, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007].

Party Congresses on external relation work, the VCP has criticized itself as follows: there have still been various limitations in Vietnam's foreign policy directions in the *Doi Moi* process, which has caused difficulties to the practice of external relation deployment.⁸ Such limitations have included: (i) Vietnam's external relations despite being expanded have still been unstable and non-profound. Vietnam has not created a tight and interactive economic linkage with its neighboring countries in order to establish the materialistic foundations for stable and long-term relationships. Sometimes Vietnam, in its relationships with powers, especially the United States, China, is in passive position and its benefit interconnection with powers has still been limited. Vietnam's economic relationships with new strategic partners such as Russia and India have not met the requirements and needed new breakthroughs. (ii) International and regional status of Vietnam, despite being strengthened, hasn't been adequate with rich potential, advantage and increasingly strength of the nation. Bilateral and multilateral foreign affairs have not combined skillfully; the consolidation of Vietnam's role at international organizations in order to promote political-economic relations with its partners has still been limited. (iii) Vietnam has not been able to find solutions to tackle disputes and promote cooperations on islands and seas basically and long-lastingly. Struggles for democracy, human rights, and anti-“Peaceful evolution” need to have profound theoretical arguments and reasons and more effective practical measures; the collaboration between functional agencies in specific cases sometimes has not been close; several measures have not been completely flexible with technical shortcomings. (iv) Diplomatic activities serving for economy, in spite of being initially effective and making contributions to the export market, attracting new technology, several agencies have still been confused and failed to meet their task requirements. (v) There has not been high consensus on both awareness and action within the Party, the political system regarding several external relation issues. Vietnam's diplomatic affair has not been

⁸ Pham Binh Minh, *Mot So Suy Nghi ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi*, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.53-54, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts on Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.53-54].

defined in the right place. (vi) Strategy research and prediction on external relations have not been considerably invested in to meet the requirements of situations and missions.

Above-mentioned self-evaluations of the VCP have touched basic shortcomings of the process of formulating and implementing new foreign policy. Such shortcomings are related to the ideological entanglement which must be handled by the VCP during the process of deploying *Renovation* policy. Viewpoints and institutions have always been considered to be important elements in the policy making and implementing process including foreign policy. In the *Doi Moi* stage, these two issues have always been raised in VCP's working programs. Despite crucial changes, VCP's institutional structures and policy-making mechanisms need to be further amended and changed to be relevant with the new situation. It is necessary for the VCP to more clearly distinguish the roles and positions of the Government's agencies and the Party's branches in the process of formulating and implementing foreign policy. Regarding orientation perceptions, the VCP needs to handle definitively the relation between ideology and reality; officially identify that which content plays the major and fundamental foundation to formulate national strategy and foreign policy.

In the preparation process for the Eleventh Party Congress, several new ideas on external relations were raised, which were later officially expressed in VCP's diplomatic guideline documents.⁹ It has been assumed by the VCP that the sound identification of Vietnam in regional and international political chessboard is the first important step in the orientation of Vietnam's external relation strategies. It could be said that this conclusion is relatively crucial important, originated from the evaluation of previous diplomatic mistakes of the VCP. In the past, due to the influence of dogmatic ideological stricture and subjective voluntarism of Party's leaders, the VCP sometimes made wrong assumptions on

⁹ Phan Doan Nam, *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Sau 20 Nam Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.14 (760), thang 7 nam 2006, (Vietnamese). [Phan Doan Nam, Vietnam Diplomacy after 20 years of Renovation, *Communist Review*, no.14 (760), July 2006].

Vietnam's status in regional political structure and its geopolitical importance in global order. The Party also miscalculated the balance of powers in Southeast Asia as well as in global scale. These mistakes led to erroneous unsuitable diplomacy.¹⁰

Vietnam: A socialist ASEAN country

It has been identified by the VCP that with new thinkings, Vietnam “is a Southeast Asian country, a member of ASEAN.”¹¹ This is not the first time that the VCP has announced such assertion, but it is the first time the VCP used this identification to locate Vietnam not only geographically but economically and politically, and to act as the new foundation for the establishment of Vietnam's renovation foreign policy directions.¹² VCP's identification of Vietnam being a member of ASEAN and an “indigenous” actor of Southeast Asia has expressed new thinkings about ASEAN's roles in security and development of Vietnam, as well as Vietnam's responsibilities for making contributions to ASEAN's development. The VCP has also assumed that it is necessary to build up an image for Vietnam as an “active, dynamic, reliable and responsible actor in the regional and the world's community.”¹³ Building and consolidating confidence have been paid more attentions to by the VCP, especially when the entanglements, misunderstandings and unreliabilities previously existed between Vietnam and ASEAN countries. The strength of ASEAN is the solidarity and unity. Failure to obtain mutual confidence and responsibility, ASEAN will lose its fundamental core of establishing strength; members when lacking the common voice of consensus and collective strength will easily become separate and weak

¹⁰ Vu Khoan, Truong Phai Ngoai Giao Viet Nam, trong Bo Ngoai giao, *Hoi Nhap Quoc Te va Giu Vung Ban Sac*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vu Khoan, The School of Vietnamese Diplomacy, in Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Integrating Into the World and Preserving Our National Identity*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1995]. See also analysis on “The Quality of Diplomacy,” Hans J. Morganthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp.158-162.

¹¹ Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi: Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.55, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts on Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.55].

¹² Previously, the VCP used to considered Vietnam as an outpost of socialism, distinguished itself from other Southeast Asian countries and as an inevitable part of the international communist movement.

¹³ Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi: Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.55, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts on Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.55].

against regional and international powers which often maintain intensive attentions and strategic benefits in Southeast Asia.

In its politics nature, Vietnam is a socialist-oriented country, with separate political institutions and social development orientations, even to some extent, opposite to other ASEAN countries. Building confidence and consolidating responsibility from Vietnam to other ASEAN countries have been realized by the VCP to be extremely essential for Vietnam in the current development stage when both Vietnam and ASEAN must cope with dramatic pressure and challenges from China and off-region powers.¹⁴

VCP's clear identification of Vietnam as a "Southeast Asian country, a member of ASEAN" will play as a new element in Vietnam's external relation policies in the new period. As assumed by the VCP, Vietnam's joining ASEAN in 1995 and gradually becoming an important member in this Association have played a vital importance role in Vietnam's security and development as well as a breakthrough of Vietnam towards its strategic independence diplomacy.¹⁵ To confirm its determination, the VCP's Politburo has approved the national Project titled "Participating in ASEAN towards 2015," in which highlighting the motto "Proactive, dynamic and responsible participation."¹⁶ It can be said that the VCP has been aware of the important role of ASEAN to Vietnam's security and development. In the strategic context and environment with unpredictable changes towards 2020, the VCP has found a strategic external relation direction from ASEAN, which can be utilized as a direct security belt for Vietnam. By making full use of ASEAN's consensus foundation, Vietnam could achieve a vital important method to "multiply" its internal

¹⁴ Claire Sutherland, Reconciling Nation and Region: Vietnamese Nation Building and ASEAN Regionalism, *Political Studies*, vol.57 2009, pp.316–336; Nguyen Vu Tung, Testing the Institutional Approach Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN, in Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.51-70.

¹⁵ See more relevant analyses in Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam and ASEAN, *Conference on Vietnam in 2001: Prospect for Economic and Social Progress*, The Kenney Auditorium, Washington D.C. November 16-17, 2000; Allan E. Goodman, Vietnam and ASEAN: Who Would Have Thought it Possible?, *Asian Survey*, vol.36, no.6, Jun 1996, pp.592-600.

¹⁶ Nguyen Hung Son, Viet Nam sau 15 nam la Thanh Vien ASEAN: Huong Toi Mot Viet Nam "Chu Dong, Tich Cuc, va Co Trach Nhiem trong ASEAN," trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Hung Son, Vietnam after 15 years being a Member of ASEAN: Towards a "Proactive, Dynamic, and Responsibility Vietnam in ASEAN", in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

national power. Moreover, the role and position of Vietnam within ASEAN, as analyzed by the VCP, will create a “credibility status” in its external relations with other countries. However, according to VCP’s analyses in its resolutions, in order for the above-mentioned issues to become “the resource” for Vietnam’s external relations, the officially relocating Vietnam within ASEAN and expressing its commitments on building the ASEAN community are essential and necessary. As for ASEAN, Vietnam’s commitment will make contributions to increasing the Association’s common wealth and solidarity.¹⁷

It can be seen that, VCP’s change in locating Vietnam has aimed towards changing the world’s viewpoints on Vietnam.¹⁸ Historically, Vietnam was known by the world through ideological conflicts and struggles for independence and unification for a long time. There have still been international community’s various assessments and prejudices towards Vietnam and its policy orientations. Several assumed that Vietnam has still adhered to ideological strictures and dogmas and based on those to establish its national strategies and foreign policy strategic directions.¹⁹ At this point, there has emerged the so-called Vietnam’s dilemma relationships between ideology and reality. Some scholars even argued that there has been a paradox of Vietnam’s politics as the VCP always asserts its sole and absolute leadership and commit to lead Vietnam towards the socialist-oriented with the harsh reality in Vietnam and regional socio-political environment, as well as VCP’s market-oriented capitalism approach for securing Vietnam’s social crises and tackling economic development issues. This political-economic paradox-as we could name-has still been discussed intensively within VCP’s internal. The VCP officially argued that market economy development, and partly application of capitalist mode and relation of production should be considered as a temporarily tactical framework to serve for the ultimate cause of

¹⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam’s Relations with China and the United States, in Phan Quang Minh, ed., *The Role of Vietnam in the Asia-Pacific*, Hanoi, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam, 2011.

¹⁸ Hoang Anh Tuan, Why Hasn't Vietnam Gained ASEAN Membership?, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.15, no.3, December 1993, pp.280-291.

¹⁹ Alexander L. Vuving, The Two-Headed Grand Strategy: Vietnamese Foreign Policy since *Doi Moi*, paper of the conference, *Vietnam Update 2004: Strategic and Foreign Relations*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 25-26 November 2004.

socialist building in Vietnam in the transitional period. Therefore, despite whatever VCP's assertions on Vietnam's political and diplomatic redirections, the existence of a socialist-oriented and communist-ideological committed Vietnam among different political regimes of ASEAN community concurrently, and Vietnam's reintegrating into the international community while still maintaining communism indispensably have caused suspicions and vigilances from both sides.²⁰ Solving this problem has been determined by the VCP as the main tasks of Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy; and in its turn, the results will decide the next strategic steps of Vietnam's *Doi Moi* course.

As for the VCP, clearly locating Vietnam's position within ASEAN has helped identifying the operation framework for Vietnam's diplomacy, as well as expressed the "transparency" in its external relations, which has made contributions to the building of mutual confidence and an image of a reliable partner. In fact, with such locating maneuver, Vietnam has found a support within ASEAN with a diplomatic operation corridor based on ASEAN's common behavior standards and maneuver regulations. Operating within ASEAN framework, the VCP and Vietnam have found wider and more balanced external relation operation capacity. It can be said that this is a multilateral diplomacy approach which has been initially formulated since early stage of *Doi Moi* and actively and widely implemented in later stages by Vietnam. Moreover, by confirming itself as being a dynamic responsible member, operating within ASEAN framework, Vietnam has had opportunities to deploy its balanced foreign policy directions, and reduce risks of being won over, divided or forced to follow by powers in their strategic chess, the scenario which the VCP doesn't want to be repeated.

However, it is not an easy for the VCP to obtain the above decision at once. Even during the implementation process, there have been contradicting ideas within VCP's internal related to the foreign policy directions of multilateralization and the focus on ASEAN's

²⁰ JÖRN Dosch, Vietnam's ASEAN Membership Revisited: Golden Opportunity or Golden Cage?, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.28, no.2, August 2006, pp.234-258.

cooperation of diplomatic framework.²¹ Accordingly, those opposing ideas have emphasized on ASEAN's loose regulations, lack of strict commitments and ineffectiveness due to its consensus mechanism, which in its nature is both pros and cons of ASEAN. In reality, several members of ASEAN have still been under political-diplomatic and economic influences and controls of regional and global powers. Therefore, above ideas have reiterated that off-region powers and even hostile forces and unfriendly countries will take advantages of such weaknesses to control ASEAN, interfere into its internal issues and cause negative impacts on Vietnam's national security.²² They are inevitably originated from both VCP's ideological fears of "peaceful evolutions" and Balance of threat theoretical calculations.²³ Nevertheless, despite debates and objections, the dominance trend within the VCP has still been highly appreciated ASEAN's capacity and Vietnam's sound multilateral diplomatic policies associated with ASEAN. The VCP finally assumed that "in spite of shortcomings, theoretical arguments and realities have proved that ASEAN will continue to exist at least in two-to-three decades' time; whether the building of ASEAN is fast or slow, the prospective of ASEAN to become a more comprehensive community or even a political entity with increasingly important role is indispensable within the region."²⁴

7.2. International integration diplomacy: The relative relationship with independence and self-determination policy

By changing its thinkings and implementing *Renovation* policies, has the VCP advocated the expansion of diplomatic relations towards international integration. In

²¹ Melina Nathan, Vietnam: Is Globalization a Friend or a Foe?, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1999, pp.339-357; and, Nguyen Manh Hung, Vietnam: Facing the Challenge of Integration, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2004, pp.297-311.

²² This idea has been proved through various events on ASEAN's failure in handling disputes with intervention from powers, especially multilateral territorial disputes on the East Sea (or South China Sea). The most recent incident happened as the ASEAN's Minister of Foreign Affairs Conference failed to release a common announcement due to Cambodia's objections as this country hold the Chairperson post, a move which was interpreted by some observers as a tactical intervention of China.

²³ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

²⁴ Pham Binh Minh, Mot So Suy Nghi ve Dinh Hinh Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Moi, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.56-57, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, Thoughts on Shaping the New Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.56-57].

documents evaluating diplomatic activities,²⁵ it has been assumed by the VCP that Vietnam has step by step expanded its diplomatic relations as well as actively and thoroughly integrated into international community. Due to external impacts and influences as well as inner-Party's perceptions, the international integration process has been implemented gradually and under VCP's adjustment and control in order to prevent "risks of deviation from socialist orientations,"²⁶ to limit "external negative intervention,"²⁷ and to ensure the sustainable survival of the regime and the stability of the *Doi Moi* course. The VCP only accepts international integration on the basis of ensuring principles of sovereignty, independence and national-state self-determination, and concurrently, only when being assured that the integration process in certain economic-political and social context definitely excluding serious risks and without causing direct threats to the nation-state interests and the survival of the socialist state regime.²⁸ To some certain extent, in order to pursue strategic goals of social-economic development, the VCP could accept only some of the risks that can be controlled by the VCP within its capacity.

Under comprehensive evaluation, Vietnam's international integration process has been planned and deployed by the VCP in most of key fields including sensitive fields of politics and security. International integration has been part of the *Renovation* diplomacy deployed by the VCP. The planning and deploying process of integration foreign policy

²⁵ Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House].

²⁶ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet ve chien luoc bao ve to quoc trong tinh hình moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001.] See also, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Tu tuong-Van hoa Trung uong, *Tai lieu hoc tap Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu 8 Ban Chap hanh Trung uong khoa IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Central Committee Department of Ideology and Culture, *Guidance Document for the Study of the Eighth Plenum Resolution, the Ninth Central Committee*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005].

²⁷ Under VCP's viewpoints, external negative impacts are associated with plots of intervening, directing and overthrowing the socialist regime. See more in, Nguyen Lan Anh, *Chien luoc dien bien hoa binh cua de quoc My va cac the luc phan dong quoc te chong chu nghĩa xã hội và chong Viet Nam xã hội chủ nghĩa*, Ha Noi, Tong cuc 2, Bo Quoc phong, 1993, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Lan Anh, *Peaceful Evolution Strategy of the United States Imperialism and Hostile Forces against Socialism and Socialist Vietnam*, Hanoi, Second General Directorate, Department of Defense, 1993].

²⁸ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122; and, Do Muoi, Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghĩa Xã Hội, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan, *Nhan Dan*, 2 thang 9 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Continue the Task of Doi Moi, Unite to Advance for the Victory of Socialism, for the Well Being and Happiness of the People, *People*, September 2, 1990].

have also expressed intensive struggles within the internal VCP about new ideological thinkings and diplomatic viewpoints on how to carry out the *Renovation* diplomacy. These struggles have also been the concretization of VCP's Ideology-Reality dilemma at strategic-policy level.

7.2.1. Vietnam's international integration process: An overview

Firstly with the viewpoint of the “open-door” diplomacy, followed by the international integration policy, the VCP has step by step changed Vietnam's diplomacy paradigm to be relevant with movements of the *Doi Moi* course. International integration, according to the VCP, is “ways and means”²⁹ to increase the national resource for maintaining independence and sovereignty; in other words, to head for the strategic goals of insuring the national-state interests and increasing VCP's leadership status and powers. Even in the very first strategic orientation documents of the *Doi Moi* course, the VCP had raised the issue of international relation expansion, and take that change as a new strategic motto for Vietnam's diplomacy. The Resolution No. 13 by the Politburo³⁰ states that in order to facilitate for the implementation of the goals of independence maintenance and successful socialism building, apart from a powerful economy and a strong enough defense, it is necessary to expand international cooperation. The mention and assertion of international cooperation role to the implementation of strategic goals, in addition to the economy and defense elements, have proved a robust change in VCP's awareness and diplomatic thinkings. By acknowledging the role of expanded international community,³¹ and international cooperation, the VCP has indeed reestablished Vietnam's diplomacy

²⁹ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te*, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *Independence Sovereignty and International Integration*, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

³⁰ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

³¹ The VCP re-identifies and expands the concept of international community as including all countries and territories regardless of political institution. Unlike previously, the connotation of this concept was restricted within the socialism system and neutral countries who had not directly been hostile with Vietnam. See also, Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet ve chien luoc bao ve to quoc trong tinh hinh moi*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

paradigm from a unilateral and self-isolated diplomacy within the socialist block, to a new more expanded paradigm.³²

It can be said that despite changes, in the early stage of *Doi Moi*, together with VCP's common strategic orientations, international cooperation policy was mainly focused on economy. International cooperation in sensitive fields such as politics, security and defense was partly limited in scope and scale, or indirectly allowed but under VCP's tight control. This fact may be considered to be a feature of Vietnam's diplomacy in the early stages of *Doi Moi* period, where the radical viewpoints had gradually been piloted by the VCP, concurrently where the Party's hesitation and precaution had been shown on regulating the level and pace of *Renovation*. The VCP has committed to carry out *Doi Moi* course based on vital important principles of maintaining social stability and insuring its leadership role and legitimacy.³³ Right before the Sixth Party Congress period, in the Resolution No. 32, namely *New Opportunities and Possibilities to Consolidate and Develop the Economy*,³⁴ the Politburo confirmed VCP's trend and determination in continuing to go abreast with the Soviet Union when identifying goals of Vietnam's diplomacy of combining national strength with the era strength, making full use of favorable international conditions to build up socialism, protect the fatherland and actively transform to the peaceful coexistence era and make contributions to building the Southeast Asia into a peaceful, stable and cooperative region.³⁵

When studying Party's official documents, Party leaders' and State officials' announcements, if ignoring words of propaganda, it can be seen that the VCP has initially laid the thought foundation and prepared the viewpoints towards wider and deeper international integration, firstly into the ASEAN community. By accepting and

³² Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Regional Integration: The Costs and Benefits of Multilateralism, paper to conference on Vietnam's Integration into the World and State Sovereignty, Paris, 25 October 2004.

³³ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp. 423-444; Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

³⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 32-Bo Chinh tri, Cac Co Hoi va Kha Nang Cung Co va Phat Trien Kinh Te*, ngay 9 thang 7 nam 1986, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 32, *New Opportunities and Possibilities to Consolidate and Develop the Economy*, 9 July 1986].

³⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *ibid.*, 9 July 1986.

applying the viewpoint of peaceful coexistence and international cooperation in its diplomacy, the VCP has aimed to make full use of foreign countries' economic-technical supports to tackle domestic economic crisis, political strategy standstill and diplomatic isolation. This reorientation maneuver had probably been one of the most important and the most difficult strategic decisions which the VCP had made during its long and harsh leadership history.³⁶ Although it was not the first time that the VCP's legitimacy, leadership role and capability had to cope with challenges, but probably this was the first time that those challenges had originated from the inner-Party ideological debates and confrontations. And this critical situation had also been consequences of the strategic guideline and policy orientation depending mainly upon the ideological element which had been implemented by the VCP for a long time after the national reunification. Some scholars have even assumed that the VCP has met challenges from the foundation upon which it had depended, which are the issues of the working-peasantry class, the class struggle, and the socialist ideal pursuit.³⁷ The VCP has to struggle to redefine to meet the new requirements of the society and of itself.

In 1991, in the new *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism*,³⁸ the VCP reevaluated Vietnam's diplomacy in the early stage of *Renovation*, assessed the process of implementing foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification, analyzed results of international cooperation policy and withdrew lessons as follows: it was necessary to tightly combine the national element with the international element, actively proceed policy of expanding international relations, proactively find out

³⁶ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp. 423-444.

³⁷ Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008.

³⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991]. This was a socio-political-economic program designed and deployed by the VCP in order to reorient development strategies of Vietnam's Revolution. The Platforms of February 1930, October 1930 and February 1951 were the political programs for democratic national revolution, struggles for national independence and reunification. See also, Nguyen Thanh Tam, *Cac Cuong Linh cua Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Thanh Tam, National Platforms of Vietnam Communist Party]. At <http://tuyengiao.vn/Home/lyluanthuocientutuong/2010/1/17174.aspx>

the suitable steps, forms and measures to successfully build up the Vietnamese socialism.³⁹ It was assumed by several scholars that up to the Seventh Party Congress, Vietnam's *Renovation* course seemed to be slower, such fields which used to be promoted as external relations, international economy, were more tightly regulated,⁴⁰ expressing VCP's caution and skeptic in the face of critical situations in China, East European socialist countries and the Soviet Union. However, on the foundation of the awareness that it was a historical-social vitality, the *Renovation* diplomacy has still been implemented continuously and gradually by the VCP with certain adjustment to ensure the controlling capacity. The fact is that, for both reformist and conservative trends within the internal VCP, *Renovation* is vital for the existence of the Socialist Vietnam; moreover, international cooperation expansion, integration into the international community, making full use of international resources to help handle Vietnam's socio-economic issues is the only way and mean.

“International integration,” according to the VCP, is a higher advancement of both openness policy and international cooperation. The term “integration” was first used by the VCP in the official documents of the Eighth Party Congress.⁴¹ Following Party Congresses of the VCP all have emphasized this policy, as well as deployed it on socio-political reality through directing policies of Vietnam's external relation activities. Nevertheless, officially the VCP still kept some limits on the integration scale and levels. The Party's important documents from 1996 to prior to 2006 only officially mentioned international economic integration. This issue could be analyzed following two directions: (i) Firstly, the VCP wanted to ensure its control over Vietnam's participation and integration process into international community, to supervise the open-door foreign policy, and to eliminate

³⁹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu X*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2007, tr.51, 130, 134, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2007, pp.51, 130, 134].

⁴⁰ Alexander L. Vuving, *The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam*, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project “*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)*,” German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008; and, Alexander L. Vuving, *Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways*, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824; Nguyen Co Thach, *Tat ca vi Hoa Binh, Doc Lap Dan Toc va Phat Trien*, *Tap chi Cong San*, (1-8), thang 8 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *All for Peace, National Independence and Development*, *Communist Review*, (1-8), August 1989].

⁴¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VIII*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1996, tr.84-85, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Eighth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996, pp.84-85]. “Building an open, international and regional integration economy.”

negative impacts, under VCP's viewpoints, on Vietnam's socio-economic situation, as well as VCP's leadership power.⁴² (ii) Secondly, despite not being mentioned or acknowledged officially, the VCP step by step piloted and implemented international integration activities in other less critical fields. This move could be considered to be a VCP's trial-and-error tactic in order to ensure for the comprehensiveness of the integration process; and concurrently allowed the VCP to monitor and prevent potential negative impacts when expanding and facilitating the integration process in the so-called sensitive fields of politics, security and national defense.⁴³

In 2006 at the Tenth Party Congress, VCP's international integration policy was developed into the new level through the confirmation and commitment on establishing the diplomatic relations following the partnership framework, and identifying reliable partners in the process of shaping and executing diplomatic relations.⁴⁴ It was the first time that the VCP had officially mentioned the issue of international integration in other fields apart from international economic integration. As for several scholars, international cooperation or international integration was different only in words. However, as for the VCP, it was the change in policy's nature, expressing the Party's determination in renovating its foreign policy towards multilateralization and diversification diplomacy; escaping from the binding of a unilateral, unipolar and self-narrowed diplomatic viewpoints which were associated with and under the control of ideological strictures. Confirming and committing to the policy of comprehensive international integration was VCP's efforts when it faced with some assumptions that Vietnam's diplomacy was losing its initial reformist

⁴² Nguyen Vu Tung, *Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies*, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122; and, Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

⁴³ According to the VCP, sensitive fields in international integration also included: security, politics, national defense, legislation, democratic, human rights, religion freedom. See also, Carlyle A. Thayer, *One-Party Rule and the Challenge of Political Civil Society in Vietnam*, paper to Seminar of the Like-Minded Donor Countries, Hanoi, 3 December 2008.

⁴⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu X*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2007, tr.112, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2007, p.112]. "Consistently implement the foreign policy guidelines of independence, sovereignty, peace, cooperation and development; and openness, multilateralization and diversification diplomacy. Actively and dynamically integrating into international economy, concurrently expanding international cooperation in other fields. Vietnam is a reliable friend and partner of the countries within the international community, actively participating in regional and international cooperation process."

motivation, lacking a strategic vision capable of long-term direction in new external relation situation and context.⁴⁵

7.2.2. Vietnam's international integration in politics and security-defense fields

Publicly and officially, the VCP did not raise any policies of politics-security integration. Nonetheless, this activity had been implemented right on the early days of renovation foreign policy in the form of practical diplomatic maneuvers. The nature of Vietnam's international integration in politics, security-defense fields were VCP's active participation in regional and international political realities, stopping the self-isolation period, abandoning unilateral and uni-polar diplomacy. In other words, the VCP, with its new perceptions on multilateral context and vital requirements for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, accepted the diplomatic paradigm of multilateralization and diversification even on politics, security-defense fields. The VCP accepted to open "the door," executed foreign policy of bilateral and multilateral cooperation at certain level in politics, security-defense fields; accepted to some extent the participation of the international community in handling political-security issues which used to be restricted strictly before as being considered internal issues of Vietnam or a bilateral issues between Vietnam and another country. A typical example was Vietnam's policies and behaviors changes in handling the Cambodian issue during the late 1980s and early 1990s; Vietnam's multilateral approach and viewpoints in tackling the territorial disputes on the East Sea (or South China Sea); Vietnam's policy of participating in multilateral political-security mechanisms, taking over international missions originated from such participations within the framework of Vietnam's capacity and conditions; as well as Vietnam's viewpoints about the re-presence of the United States and its allies in the Southeast Asia.⁴⁶ Vietnamese scholars assumed

⁴⁵ Brantly Womack, Reform in Vietnam Backwards Towards the Future, in *The Crisis of Marxism-Leninism, Government and Opposition*, vol.27, issue.2, pp.177-189, April 1992; and, Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on "*Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond*," Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

⁴⁶ Frederick Z. Brown, Rapprochement Between Vietnam and the United States, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.32, no.3, 2010, pp.317-342. See also, Phung Quang Thanh, Responding to New Maritime Security Threats, Remarks by Minister of Defense, S.R. Viet Nam at the 10th Shangri-La Dialogue Singapore, 5 June 2011.

that the core of international integration in politics, security-defense fields was the active participation in the cooperation and struggle process on issues related to security, sovereignty and the status of Vietnam with regional and international objects-of-struggle and partners. Politics, security-defense integration, therefore has been also an opportunity for Vietnam to build up and confirm mutual confidence in the international and regional community, which has always been one strategic goal of Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy.⁴⁷

Politics, security-defense integration, despite being paid attention to and deployed by the VCP together with Vietnam's *Renovation* and international economic integration process,⁴⁸ there was viewpoint that it was VCP's precaution when not officially formulated into policy this issue that led to shortcomings and inconsistencies in Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy, which in its turn, restricted to some extent, Vietnam's integration in common affairs of the international community.⁴⁹ Vietnam's unofficially mentioning politics, security-defense integration, despite its practical diplomatic maneuvers, caused certain suspicions from partner countries. Vietnam had not yet reached mutual confidence status in the international and regional community as the VCP itself still maintained vigilance and suspicion in policies. That fact vitally led to limitation and ineffectiveness of the Vietnam's integration diplomacy itself.⁵⁰ It could be analyzed that shortcomings and limits within Vietnam's international integration process in general and politics, security-defense integration in particular originated from entanglements in VCP's strategic policy decision-making thinkings. Or following the Bureaucratic Politics model's analyses, this existed

⁴⁷ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te*, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.133, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Sovereignty and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p. 133].

⁴⁸ Vietnam accepted international participation in handling the issue of Cambodia, and multilateral approach in tackling territorial disputes. Vietnam has also carried out initial cooperation activities in security with ASEAN countries whether bilateral or multilateral mechanism. It has also looked towards to establish security relations with America and Western countries.

⁴⁹ Melina Nathan, Vietnam: Is Globalization a Friend or a Foe?, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1999, pp.339-357; Nguyen Manh Hung, Vietnam: Facing the Challenge of Integration, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2004, pp.297-311..

⁵⁰ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *ibid.*, 2011.

situation was due to the contradictions between the two opposite institutional trends within the VCP on integration scale, level and pace. They were also the different viewpoints on opportunities and challenges for Vietnam in the context of carrying out actual international integration moves.⁵¹

As mentioned above, Vietnam had implemented to some limited extent, politics, security-defense integration moves at the very beginning of the *Doi Moi* period⁵² but failed to achieve transparency and clearness in policy, as least from the outside observing angle. The main reasons for this situation may be: (i) The clinging of ideological element. Several viewpoint channels within the internal VCP assumed that: globalization (international integration is just a specific form of that greater global-scale movement) which was characterized as of capitalism nature, controlled by capitalist countries and acted as their tools to transform the socialism regime.⁵³ It was even assumed further as analyzing that in its nature, globalization and international integration prove the victory of the capitalism model of development. All countries, when participating in international integration, must abandon their own characteristics and follow the development laws of capitalism.⁵⁴ Integration, accordingly, is a convergence status where all models tend to follow the development laws of capitalism.⁵⁵ With this viewpoint, a section of the VCP maintained its suspicion and vigilances of international integration, required to apply some restrictions on the “open-door” policy and consolidate ideological controls of the Party on international

⁵¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp. 107-122; and, Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1987.

⁵² The VCP Politburo's policy on tackling the Cambodian conflict politically and diplomatically was an inevitable example. See more in Chapter 5 for the details of this policy.

⁵³ Nguyen Van Linh, Phat bieu Be mac Hoi nghi 7 cua Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 9 nam 1989, tr.5-12, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Speech at the Closure of the 7th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, Communist review, September 1989, pp.5-12; and, Hoi nghi lan thu tam Ban chap hanh Trung uong Dang Cong san Viet Nam (Khoa VI), *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 4 nam 1990, tr.1-4, (Vietnamese). [The Eighth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of the Vietnam Communist Party, April 1990, pp.1-4].

⁵⁴ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.133, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Sovereignty and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p. 133].

⁵⁵ Francis Fukuyama, The End of History, *Foreign Affairs*, Autumn-Winter, 1992.

integration diplomacy, especially on politics, security-defense fields. Chaos in China and the Soviet Union in late years of the Cold War seemed to further strengthen this current of viewpoints, partly inhibited Vietnam's diplomacy determination of robust radical reform as well as deeper and wider international integration. (ii) Secondly, lack of comprehensive understanding about strategic and tactical intentions of capitalist countries. It is necessary to be seen that for whatever countries with whatever political institutions, the issue of nation-state interests always played a decisive role to the national strategies. Globalization and international integration point out that capitalist countries are willing to establish relationship with socialist countries for economic-cultural, political-social benefits. It is unnecessary for that relationship and its promotion to aim to eliminating socialist countries. The biased awareness which was characterized as imputative and ideological dogmatist about strategic goals of capitalist countries may lead to Vietnam's loss of integration opportunities into the global trends of economic development, social stability and political-security insurance. Evaluating this issue, the reformist former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, Nguyen Co Thach wrote, "The history of over 70 years has shown that each empire whether German fascism, Japanese militarism or British, American imperialism was not necessary to spend all their efforts annihilating communism. That was not their top priority interest although they could not coexist with communism regarding ideological aspect."⁵⁶ That Vietnam and other socialist countries had overestimated the issue of ideological struggles and accused capitalist countries of frequently implementing anti-socialism policies led to the situation that the national strategy decision-making process, the foreign policy formulating and executing process were not suitable and had some negative impacts on the course of building and advancing to the practical socialism in Vietnam.

It could be seen that, in the *Doi Moi* period, the VCP itself has been trying to harmonize the ideological consideration and requirements of the reality. It was the efforts towards

⁵⁶ Nguyen Co Thach, *Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta*, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản The gioi, 2007, tr.37-38, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings*, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007, pp.37-38].

Vietnam's strategic adaptability in the new international context. The VCP considered international integration to be both opportunities and challenges to its stability and development. Vo Van Kiet, the former Vietnamese Premier, consistently argued in the Politburo and Cabinet that the Vietnamese "are living in a region surrounded by tigers and a dragon; the continued backwardness of the country is the biggest security threat to the nation." Therefore, integration, according to him, should be considered as an inevitable choice. He continued his analyses "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."⁵⁷ However, to handle existing issues and confirm its commitments on active and comprehensive international integration, the VCP has to definitively tackle the entanglements of ideology and escape itself from ideological binding which used to dominate the politics, security-defense fields. Facing realistic requirements of a new world order, together with the requirements of the nation-building and development course, the VCP would have to work out a relevant formula for the relation between international integration and independence, sovereignty.

7.2.3. Independence, self-determination and international integration: VCP's viewpoints and approaches

Independence, self-determination and international integration: Vietnamese scholars' general theoretical analyses

Independence and self-determination are two separate concepts, originated from the formation of the concepts of nation-state, nation-state's rights, nation-state territory and sovereignty within international relations system and contemporary international laws.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Vo Van Kiet, *Thu Gui Bo Chinh Tri Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, 1995, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Memorandum for Consideration by Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee Politburo, 1995]; and, Vo Van Kiet, *Dong Gop Y Kien vao Bao cao Tong ket Ly luan va Thuc tien 20 nam Doi Moi*, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Vo Van Kiet, Suggestions to the Concluding Report on Theory and Practice of 20 years of Renovation, 2005].

⁵⁸ Nguyen Khac Hung and Hoang Khac Nam, *Quan he quoc te-Nhung khia canh ly thuyet va van de*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 2006, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Khac Hung and Hoang Khac Nam, *International Relations-Theoretical Aspects and Issues*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006].

Independence was related to the nation's material state, territory, territorial rights, and jurisdiction rights on nation-state-territory.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, self-determination expressed political, cultural and economic sovereignty rights of the nation-state during the formulation, administration, and management of its development strategies.⁶⁰ Under Vietnamese scholars' dialectic materialism viewpoints, independence will provide vital conditions for obtaining self-determination; and vice versa, self-determination will indicate independence status. Independence, self-determination are also related to the two "closely dialectical facet of the national supreme sovereignty rights"⁶¹: (i) the title aspect of the self-determination rights: rights and duties of a nation-in relations with other countries-about the title it should have, and (ii) the essence aspect of the obtaining and executing nation-state power-in its internal politics context.⁶² Accordingly, independence, self-determination are the most supreme nation-state rights due to independence and self-determination being related to the nation-state sovereignty; therefore, they are goals of national strategies and major cores of nation-state interests.⁶³ Countries in the contemporary international system⁶⁴ consider national independence and sovereignty to be the most supreme goals of its policy. National independence is the root based on which countries obtain their policy goals of security, development and influence.⁶⁵ Independence and self-determination do not mean isolation or advocating isolationism but in contrast, the emergence of independent-sovereignty countries-of the essence subjects of international relation-mean the strengthening of international relations, in other words, promoting

⁵⁹ Duong Xuan Ngoc, va Luu Van An, *Giao trinh quan he quoc te*. Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Duong Xuan Ngoc, and Luu Van An, *International Relations Handbook*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2008].

⁶⁰ Duong Xuan Ngoc, and Luu Van An, *ibid.*, 2008.

⁶¹ Trinh Muu, va Nguyen Hoang Giap, *Quan he quoc te va Chinh sach doi ngoai Viet Nam hien nay*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Ly luan chinh tri, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Trinh Muu, and Nguyen Hoang Giap, *International Relations and Vietnamese Foreign Policy Today*, Hanoi, Political Theory Publishing House, 2008].

⁶² Practical capacities of nation-state which could ensure to implement such rights and duties. Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.125-156, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Sovereignty and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, pp.125-156].

⁶³ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *ibid.*, 2011, p.135.

⁶⁴ Westphalian Nation-State System of 1648.

⁶⁵ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *ibid.*, 2011, p.155.

international integration. The minimization or maximization of one country's foreign relations are not criteria to identify whether that country has sovereignty or not; however, it was the self-determination in the formation, expansion or narrowing international relations on the basis of national interest. In other words, the satisfaction of national interest in each specific historical period would be the evaluation criterion for the international integration process of that country.

International integration has been proved to be the vital important requirement for contemporary countries in the current world order system. Globalization and internationalization trends have also been the evidence for this conclusion.⁶⁶ Despite being an objective requirement, the integration policy is a subjective process; the decision on whether to integrate or not expresses subjective calculations of each country; scope and fields of integration depending country's policy choice on certain historical context, specific political, economic and cultural conditions. Therefore, in order to evaluate on the international integration process of each country, there are two policy issues that need to be analyzed including integration scope and the activeness levels in integration.

From the policy decision-making angle and on the basis of realist viewpoints, Vietnamese scholars assumed that the relations between independence, self-determination and international integration are the relations between targets and measures; and (i) Independence, self-determination decide international integration.⁶⁷ Independence, self-determination are closely related to nation-state interest, and are the goals of national strategies, which helps form diplomacy's tasks. International integration is aimed to serve for the goals of independence, self-determination associated with the execution of diplomacy's tasks. In its essence, international integration belongs to group of policy tools.

⁶⁶ Vu Duong Huan, Nhan to lam thay doi va xu the phat trien cuc dien the gioi hien nay, *Tap chi Nghien cuu quoc te*, so. 75, Ha Noi, 2008, (Vietnamese). [Vu Duong Huan, Factoring in Changes and Current World Situation, *International Studies*, vol.75, Hanoi, 2008].

⁶⁷ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.137, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Sovereignty and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p. 137].

Based on the dialectic materialism approach, Vietnamese scholars and policy makers continue to analyze, (ii) Independence and self-determination not only play the decisive role but also are the prerequisite of international integration. Independence and self-determination will lead to fair international integration and eliminate the risks of being controlled, abused and becoming the “playground”⁶⁸ for international economic and political forces.⁶⁹ (iii) Independence and self-determination decide on international integration level, scope and processes. Vietnamese scholars have assumed that subjective elements⁷⁰ always play the returning role facing the influences of objective elements.⁷¹ National sovereignty is supreme; each country has its rights to formulate and execute policies related to its integration process on the basis of country’s specific conditions, situation and national benefits.⁷² (iv) International integration also makes reverse influences in independence and self-determination, which in nature is the dialectic relation between the two system of concepts and the consideration of objective roles of international integration, influences by external elements in country’s foreign policy decision-making process. Trends and international integration requirements have helped reduce the absolutization of independence and self-determination; as well as reduce the phenomena of isolationism and self-isolationism in nation’s diplomacy. International integration has also forced countries to bear responsibilities for their behaviors and to bind those behaviors in relevant bounds of international relations. International integration has in turn created new ties, forcing countries to adjust their domestic and foreign policies, and even has to re-identify their perceptions on independence and self-determination.

⁶⁸ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.138, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Sovereignty and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p. 138].

⁶⁹ VCP’s term for capitalist states and institutions who see international integration as ways and means to obtain their political and economic influence world wide as well as to intervene into socialist country.

⁷⁰ Independence, self-determination, national power.

⁷¹ Epoch, globalization trend, international integration requirement. Several foreign scholars share the same viewpoints when studying the policy reorienting process. See also, Randall B. Ripley and James M. Lindsay, U.S Foreign Policy in a Changing World, in Randall B. Ripley and James M. Lindsay, eds., *U.S Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2002, p.9.

⁷² Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *ibid.*, 2011, p.139.

VCP's viewpoints and approaches

From Vietnam's contemporary thought foundation and political institutions, the VCP specially appreciates independence and self-determination and the interaction of these concepts with international integration. Vietnam cannot achieve socio-political stability and economic development if it continues to self-isolate and be isolated like it used to be during the Cold War. It is necessary for Vietnam to implement the "open-door" policy and international integration. However, how will the integration be, and at which level and scope in order to not influence the socialist orientations, nor decline the Party's leadership power, an issue which has always been paid special attention to by the VCP.⁷³

The VCP has been extremely cautious on the international integration diplomacy decision-making process. Concerns about the impacts of international integration on independence, self-determination, the extremely sensitive issue in Vietnam, and on the legitimacy of VCP's leadership regime have been clearly expressed through the ups and downs of new foreign policy towards international integration. What has made the VCP concerned the most about has been international integration including capacity which may increase status of country dependence upon others.⁷⁴ This situation could lead to the weakening leadership power of the Party and the increasing interference from hostile forces in the Party's internal affairs and the socialist regime structures.⁷⁵ International integration has also led to social division and formation of different benefit systems, benefit groups and diversification of perception on national interest, which is the least expected scenario by the VCP. In fact in Vietnam over the past twenty-five years of *Doi Moi* and integration, there have been considerable changes in

⁷³ Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Hanoi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

⁷⁴ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet ve chien luoc bao ve to quoc trong tinh hình moi*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

⁷⁵ Risks of socialist deviation and capitalist interference from international integration. Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Security Challenges: Hanoi's New Approach to National Security and Implications to Defense and Foreign Policies, The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, Joint Research Series No. 5, 2010, pp.107-122.

Vietnam's society structure with the formation of diversified economic components and different benefit groups.⁷⁶ Group benefits, and the diversification of economic components, according to the VCP, will indispensably lead to different approaches to the contents and implementation measures of national interest, which the VCP always struggles to evade as it could directly threaten the social harmony and consensus as well as VCP's sole leadership role.

According to the VCP, independence and self-determination are directly related to nation-state interests, specifically the nation-state sovereignty right-the most supreme right in international relations, which has also been defined as one of Vietnam's supreme strategic goals and one the two strategic missions of the VCP.⁷⁷ Nation-state sovereignty is also the basis for the legitimacy of VCP's leadership.⁷⁸ The VCP has also emphasized supreme principles of the modern international relations, accordingly countries have participated in the international relations as independent nation-state with sovereignty and self-determination rights; and it is not allowed to interfere in other countries' internal affairs. Consolidating independence and self-determination have always been the highest interest of nation-state, the consistent principle in handling relationships with international integration, and concurrently controlled the identification of goals, missions and organizing modes of Vietnam's diplomacy.⁷⁹

In order to facilitate policy planning, organizing and deploying of international integration activities on diplomatic reality, the VCP has assumed that independence and

⁷⁶ Before the Eleventh Party Congress (2011), the VCP did not officially admit the existence of different benefit groups in the society despite having admitted the multi-component of the economy since the Seventh Party Congress; and acknowledged it in the 1992 Constitution.

⁷⁷ President Ho Chi Minh, founder of modern Vietnam once stated that: "*Nothing more precious than independence and freedom.*" That statement later became the fundamental core of all Vietnamese Communist Party policies and national strategies. Ho Chi Minh, *Loi Keu Goi Dong Bao va Chien Sy Ca Nuoc*, Ha Noi, 17 thang 7 nam 1966, trong *Lich Su Dang Cong San Viet Nam*, tap 3 (1955-1975), Ha Noi, Sach Giao Khoa Mac-Lenin, 1979, (Vietnamese). [Ho Chi Minh, *Call to the People and Soldiers Nationwide*, Hanoi, 17 July 1966, in *History of Vietnamese Communist Party*, vol.3 (1955-1975), Hanoi, Mac-Lenin Text Book, 1979].

⁷⁸ Thaveeporn Vasavakul, Vietnam's one-Party Rule and Socialist Democracy?, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.36, no.37, 15-21 Sep 2001, pp.3518-3524.

⁷⁹ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

self-determination have always played the fundamental and foundation role.⁸⁰ Effective diplomacy cannot be obtained to meet the national interests without being closely associated with independence and self-determination principles. It can be seen that the assertion of this issue has expressed VCP's viewpoints and measures in organizing Vietnam's diplomatic activities in accordance with the general framework of the *Doi Moi* course. The VCP has advocated promoting reform and economic development, tackling social crisis but must ensure socio-political stability, as well as VCP's control capacity and leadership. Integration must not affect national independence and self-determination; actively executing "open-door" policy without allowing foreign intervention in Vietnam's internal affairs which are considered by the VCP to be sensitive and related to national interests and the survival of socialist political institution.⁸¹ Some scholars argued that, it is VCP's above mentioned cautions have restricted the outcomes of Vietnam's *Renovation*, slowed down Vietnam's integration pace and development speed. These too cautioned approaches have also restricted initial motivations which used to promote the establishment and development of Vietnam's new diplomacy in the early stage of *Renovation*.⁸² Once more time, the strong domination of the relation between Ideology and Reality to Vietnam's diplomacy can be clearly seen.

It is necessary to repeat that despite always emphasizing independence and self-determination as they are closely related to Party's legitimacy and leadership power, the VCP have been aware of the vital importance of international integration and identified

⁸⁰ "International relation expansion must be based on maintaining independence, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefits; implementing multilateralization and diversification of external relations; respecting and promoting traditional values." Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VIII*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1996, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Eighth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996].

⁸¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, thang 8 nam 2003, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, *On Protecting National Security in the New Context*, August 2003]. In this Resolution, the VCP raised the guideline viewpoints on foreign affairs "maintaining independence, sovereignty and self-determination together with expanding foreign relations," and "To strengthen peaceful and stable international environment to serve for the building and protection of the Fatherland. It is necessary to raise the flag of Nation-State's independence and socialism, actively implement diplomatic activities based on the foundations of independence, sovereignty, multilateralization, diversification, implementing regional and international integration."

⁸² Adam Fforde, Contemporary Vietnam: Political Opportunities, Conservative Formal Politics, and Patterns of Radical Change, *Asian Politics & Policy*, vol.3, no.2, 2011, pp.165–184.

that independence and self-determination are not similar to separation or isolation.⁸³ The VCP has advocated strengthening integration process and used such phrases as: taking advantage of the robust development of scientific-technological revolution and highly internationalized trend of world economy;⁸⁴ combining nation-state strength with the epoch, domestic strength and international strength.⁸⁵ The above phrases are used by the VCP to explain for international integration policies, and acted as an intermediary approach to Vietnam's diplomacy to avoid mentioning Ideology or Reality and their relation. The VCP has not directly mentioned either capitalism or socialism development mode but using the common phrases of "the era's development trend," or "mankind's values."⁸⁶ This tactical move has allowed the VCP to continue its international integration policies for *Renovation* course, while temporarily satisfied fundamentalist cadres who have still maintained ideological faithfulness and concerned about foreign interventions through the "opening-door" or threat of deviation from socialism if the VCP promotes comprehensive integration. However, it can be analyzed that despite this tactfulness to make favorable conditions for the VCP in terms of time, it has not been a comprehensive and drastic measure to the contradiction between Ideology and Reality. If the VCP fails to find out a comprehensive strategic solution in time, negative impacts on Vietnam's development pace and VCP's commitment on *Doi Moi* will definitely emerge.

⁸³ Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doc lap tu chu va hoi nhap quoc te*, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh huong chien luoc doi ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.143, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Sovereignty and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p. 143].

⁸⁴ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyết số 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngày 20 tháng 5 năm 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

⁸⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Cuong linh xay dung dat nuoc trong thoi ky qua do di len chu nghia xa hoi, Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Su That, 1991, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Platform for National Construction in the Period of Transition to Socialism, Seventh National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991].

⁸⁶ *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VIII*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1996, tr.74 (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Eighth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996, p.74]. "Our people's *Doi Moi* course has been relevant with the era's development trends and has been supported by peoples in other countries. Together with bringing 'self-reliance for self-improvement' will into full play, and internal resource encouragement, it is necessary to effectively exploit new favorable conditions in external relations, expand friendship and cooperation relations with countries for peace, independence and development.. to serve for the national building and protection course."

7.3. Partner and partnership framework in Vietnam's Renovation foreign policy: The Vietnamese adaptation to foreign policy of strategic independence

During the Cold War, international relations literature was strongly dominated by the realism and liberalism, together with the domination of world superpowers. Post-Cold War international relations reality with new world order structure, new powers has led to changes in relations and cooperation frameworks between countries. We have witnessed robust changes in international relations theoretical system with the emergence of various theoretical models on the formation of nation-state's diplomacy. Vietnam's diplomacy in the *Doi Moi* period have been evaluated as being relatively radical changed.⁸⁷ Accordingly, Vietnam has identified and emphasized the concepts of partner and partnership model. It has been asserted by the VCP that concepts of partner and partnership model in Vietnam's diplomacy have been established on the basis of Vietnam's socio-political-economic practices, associated with the requirements of the *Doi Moi* course and relevant with the common viewpoints and trends in international relations.⁸⁸ The two newly established concepts also reflects strategic changes of Vietnam's diplomacy in later stages of the *Doi Moi* period.

7.3.1. Partner and partnership framework in foreign relations: Fundamental issues

Numerous theoretical models have been used for shaping, describing and analyzing a country's external relations, of which the partnership model has been popular to some extend in contemporary international relations theory. This is the specific expression of cooperation strengthening in international relations. This model has played a role as product of cooperation determination.⁸⁹ In order to explain the partnership model,

⁸⁷ Stéphanie Balme and Mark Sidel, eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; and, Nguyen Co Thach, *The Gioi trong 50 nam qua (1945-1995) va The Gioi trong 25 nam toi (1995-2020)*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị Quốc gia, 1998, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, *The World in the Past Fifty Years (1945-1995) and the World in the Coming Twenty-five Years (1995-2020)*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1998]; Claire Sutherland, Reconciling Nation and Region: Vietnamese Nation Building and ASEAN Regionalism, *Political Studies*, vol.57, 2009, pp.316–336.

⁸⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyết về chiến lược bảo vệ tổ quốc trong tình hình mới*, Ha Noi: Nha Xuất bản chính trị quốc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2001].

⁸⁹ Nguyen Vu Tung, *Đôi Tác và Khuôn Khó Quan Hệ Đôi Tác trong Chính sách Đối Ngoại Việt Nam*, in Pham Binh Minh, chủ biên, *Định Hướng Chiến Lược Đối Ngoại Việt Nam đến 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2011, tr.174, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, *Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy*, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.174].

approaches from almost major international relations theories can be used.⁹⁰ According to Vietnamese scholars, the partnership model, when being established and deployed stably will create essential conditions on confidence and specific cooperation mechanisms; satisfying specific benefits through which either parties can improve their cooperation relations to higher level.⁹¹ The post-Cold War world order reality, with the absence of a supreme power, together with the emergence of various power centers, and the rising up of small and medium-sized nation-states in international relations, as well as the confirmation of vital status of multilateral mechanisms and international institutions, has led to the fact that countries highly appreciate the roles of partners and partnerships as well as partnerships model in their foreign policy decision-making process, and Vietnam is not an exception.

David Lehman says that the only limit to strategic partnerships relations is the imagination of the participants.⁹² In terms of form, the partnership model is extremely flexible, (i) being limitless in terms of space and time; (ii) non-restrictions on applied actors; (iii) non-restrictions on partnership fields; (iv) being unnecessary to bear the security-military contents.⁹³ Together with the *Renovation* in VCP's strategic thinkings, Vietnamese scholars in international relations have been encouraged to conduct studies in partners, partnership relations and partnership models and; to apply those study findings for the formation and concretization of VCP's strategic development viewpoints into Vietnam's foreign policy decision-making and diplomatic maneuvering processes. By using the concept of partner and partnerships model, the VCP has aimed to a new approach

⁹⁰ Nguyen Vu Tung, va Hoang Anh Tuan, *Quan he doi tac chien luoc trong quan he quoc te: Tu ly thuyet den thuc tien*, Hoc vien Quan he quoc te, Ha Noi, 2008, tr.153, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, and Hoang Anh Tuan, *Strategic Partnership in International Relations: From Theory to Reality*, Diplomatic Academy, Hanoi, 2008, p.153].

⁹¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, *ibid.*, 2011, p.175.

⁹² David Lehman, Strategic Partnership: Problem and Solution quoted in Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.175, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.175].

⁹³ Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.175, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.175].

in foreign policy planning, working out a theoretical-practical solution to the Ideology and Reality relation, as well as the domination of the fundamentalist “two camps” viewpoint which used to formed the partners and partnership on the basis of ideology. By asserting this new theoretical approach, the VCP has expressed its desire and will towards the essence of integration in regional and international community.

7.3.2. Partner, partnership, and partnership framework and the concretization in Vietnam’s Renovation foreign policy

Vietnam’s *Doi Moi* course started in the context of social-economic and ideological crisis in Vietnam reaching its pinnacle. Vietnam was isolated from the outside world, its diplomatic activities were almost in standstill and Vietnam became an isolated “wasteland,” with lagged economy, backward industry right in the most dynamic development region in the world. *Doi Moi* was planned and implemented in Vietnam firstly to handle social-economic crisis and obtain social stability as well as to consolidate VCP’s power and leadership role. *Renovation* policies were also aimed at identifying and tackling contradictions and existing problems in theory and reality within the internal nation-state structure, the socialist regime and find out the way to build the Vietnamese socialism, and solving ideology crisis due to the failures and collapse of the practical socialist models in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries.

Vietnam’s new *Renovation* diplomacy also originated from the needs of breaking down the isolated context, broadening international relations in general and facilitating partnership with specific actors, making favorable conditions for Vietnam’s development. It is necessary for the VCP to develop a new theoretical foundation for its foreign policy decision-making process which is strong enough to meet the requirements of practice and to explain for the strategic policy selection and to ensure VCP’s leadership legitimacy. This transformation has been expressed first and foremost through the emergence of the concepts of partner and partnerships model themselves in VCP’s documents and the Vietnamese Government’s foreign policies.

Partner and partnership model: VCP's viewpoints

Despite the term of partner being used now and then in VCP's documents,⁹⁴ the concept of partner and the principles of partnership identification have just been clearly defined by the VCP on the Central Committee Resolution No. 8 on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context.⁹⁵ By considering these principles, it can be seen that apart from the above mentioned issues such as: activeness, partnership expansion, desire for building mutual confidence, the VCP has not directly mentioned and emphasized the issue of ideology and socialism, abandoned the concepts of "two camps," "who will triumph over whom." The most important content in identifying partner (Doi tac) and object of struggle (Doi tuong),⁹⁶ according to the VCP, has been whether such relations respects Vietnam's national interest or not.⁹⁷ Those concepts can be considered to be a robust change in VCP's viewpoints with a practical and realist approach.⁹⁸ By directly confirming the identification criteria of partners, objects of struggle and building partnership on the basis of national interest with realpolitik calculations, has the VCP implemented practical steps compatible with regional and international common trends.

By applying dialectic and flexible viewpoints on outside actor of the partnership, according to the VCP, a partner in the partnership relations with Vietnam may also be an object of struggle in other partnership. In contrast, an object of struggle in a struggling

⁹⁴ During the Cold War, the VCP limited the concept of partner, strategic friends within the socialism bloc. When conducting *Doi Moi*, the VCP with new thinkings in national strategies and foreign policies, has widened this concept and initially mentioned the idea of partner associated with the international cooperation process which has been the international integration later. However, it has only been limited in certain fields with the concepts of economy, trade and science partners.

⁹⁵ Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001; and, Vietnam Communist Party, Central Committee Resolution No. 8, *On Protecting National Security in the New Context*, August 2003. "- Those who advocate respecting independence and sovereignty, establishing and expanding friendship and equal partnership and mutual benefit with Vietnam are all our partners. - Every force with intentions of and activities of destroying our goals of building the Fatherland and protecting the country are all objects of struggle. - In each object of struggle there has still existed aspect which needs to be made full use of and cooperated; several partners may have different aspects and contradictory to ours."

⁹⁶ "Friend or Foe" as the older term. See, Chapter 5's analyses on the Politburo Resolution No. 13, regarding to VCP's policy of "more friend, less foe." See also, Nguyen Phu Trong, *Mot So Van De Ve Con Duong Di Len Chu Nghia Xa Hoi o Nuoc Ta*, *Tap chi Cong san*, so.1, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Phu Trong, Some Questions Concerning the Path toward Socialism in Our Country, *Communist Review*, no.1, 2001].

⁹⁷ Vietnam's national interests in VCP's terms also means the Party and socialist regime interests. See more analyses in Chapter 6.

⁹⁸ Unlike previous policy announcements which were mainly dogmatic theories as the VCP merely mentioned the policies of pursuing peace, prosperity, development and establishment of mutual benefit relations following the five principles-peaceful coexistence model of the socialist bloc.

relation may still develop a partnership relation with Vietnam in other fields.⁹⁹ This extended principle has allowed the VCP to be more flexible in forming and establishing diplomatic relations, to ensure the diplomatic guidelines of multilateralization and diversification, and expand international cooperation for Vietnam's development. Concurrently, it can be seen that this is VCP's tactical tactfulness and strategical calculations in handling the issue of Ideology and Reality.¹⁰⁰ Through applying the above partnership principles, the VCP has explained to Vietnamese people, with the conservative trends within the Party on its policies of establishing normal relations with the United States, European countries and ASEAN countries, whereas confirming the ultimate goals of socialism. The Party also could explain the trend of increasingly strengthening relation with China.¹⁰¹

Defining the concept of partner and also expanding its connotation have allowed the VCP to Vietnam's foreign relations by gradually lifting restriction framework of countries and fields for establishing partnership. Until the Ninth Party Congress, VCP's official documents only defined Vietnam as the partner with countries in the context of international economic integration.¹⁰² This assertion indirectly admitted that Vietnam maybe the partner to countries only on economic field. Politics, security-defense which were sensitive points and the core of contradiction among factions within the VCP were separated as a mild and stable solution.¹⁰³ Up to the Eighth Plenum of the Central

⁹⁹ Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.185, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.185].

¹⁰⁰ Thayer, Carlyle A., Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6 Jun 1994, p.528, "The ambivalence in Vietnam's China policy reflects the tension that occasionally arises when ideology and national interest cannot be reconciled."

¹⁰¹ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824; and, Thayer, Carlyle A., Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6 Jun 1994.

¹⁰² Mai Hoai Anh, Nhung thanh tuu co ban trong qua trinh thuc hien chinh sach doi ngoai cua Dai hoi IX, trong Trinh Muu, eds., *Qua trinh trien khai thuc hien chinh sach doi ngoai cua Dai hoi IX Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, Nha xuat ban Ly luan chinh tri, Ha Noi, 2005, tr.129, (Vietnamese). [Mai Hoai Anh, Fundamental Achievements in the Implementation Process of Foreign Policy Guideline of the Ninth Party Congress, in Trinh Muu, eds, *The Implementation Process of Foreign Policy of the Ninth Party Congress of Vietnamese Communist Party*, Political Theoretical Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005, p.129].

¹⁰³ Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam in 2000: Toward the Ninth Party Congress, *Asian Survey*, vol.41, no.1, January/February 2001, pp.181-188.

Committee,¹⁰⁴ the VCP has obtained certain consensus about the concept of partner, and expanded the partnerships framework through indirectly acknowledging that all countries may become partners of Vietnam, and on all fields. Regarding to partnership issue, the VCP aimed to actors who respect independence and sovereignty of Vietnam, establish and expand friendship and facilitate equal and mutual benefit-partnership with Vietnam.¹⁰⁵ This awareness seemed to be closer to the reality of international relations when it was extremely difficult to distinguish political-security elements in economic-trade relations and vice versa. With this awareness of the VCP, Vietnam has established a more stable foundation when developing relations with several countries which still had various entanglements with Vietnam, even on the fields that used to be considered to be too sensitive.¹⁰⁶

In addition to radical changes in perceptions of partners and building partnerships, the VCP continued to maintain certain “policy tools” to ensure the leadership status of the Party and commit on socialist orientations, the foundation of Party’s survival and power.¹⁰⁷ At the Third Plenum of the Central Committee,¹⁰⁸ the VCP raised four foreign policy mottos and emphasized the requirement of “thoroughly understanding of the two facet of cooperation and struggle in partnership with every actor and object of struggle.”¹⁰⁹ These mottos were a change in diplomacy thinkings,¹¹⁰ marking VCP’s initially leaving the old viewpoint of “friend or foe” in the context of rapid changing international relations when

¹⁰⁴ Of the Ninth Party Congress term, August 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, thang 8 nam 2003, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, *On Protecting National Security in the New Context*, August 2003].

¹⁰⁶ Frederick Z. Brown, Rapprochement Between Vietnam and the United States, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.32, no.3, 2010, pp.317-342.

¹⁰⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp.423-444.

¹⁰⁸ Of the Seventh Party Congress term, 1992.

¹⁰⁹ Hong Ha, Tinh Hinh The Gioi va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Cua Chung Ta, *Tap chi Cong san*, thang 12 nam 1992, tr.20, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, The World Situation and Our Diplomacy, *Communist Review*, Dec 1992, p.20].

¹¹⁰ Nguyen Vu Tung, Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.190,(Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.190].

the Soviet Union and the “socialist camp” no longer existed.¹¹¹ Those mottos were further developed at the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee,¹¹² accordingly the VCP admitted that the intersection between various cooperation and struggle fields in both partnership relations and struggle relations with one certain actor led to the fact that cooperation and struggle became inevitable. On the other hand, the acknowledgement of the inevitable existence of struggle beside cooperation proved that, to certain extent, the VCP still considered the potential that other countries could take advantage of partnership to interfere in Vietnam’s internal affairs, violate Vietnam’s national interest, weaken VCP’s leadership and sabotage the socialist regime.¹¹³ Therefore, according to the VCP, cooperation and struggle had to be concurrently implemented; unidirectional cooperation or struggle had to be avoided as these two methods would lead to disadvantageous scenarios to Vietnam.¹¹⁴

Two stages of concretization of international integration policy in partnership model

From the viewpoint of the “two camps,” “friend or foe” to the viewpoint of “more friends, less foes” and “Vietnam wants to be friends of every country”

Originating from the standstill in Vietnam’s diplomatic reality during the Cold War, since the Sixth Party Congress, the VCP has designed a new diplomacy strategy orientation with adjustments in diplomatic guidelines to be adaptive to the global and regional situations, and directly served for Vietnam’s national interests. It can be seen that there has

¹¹¹ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Chap hanh Trung uong, Ban Chi dao tong ket ly luan, *Bao cao tong ket mot so van de ly luan-thuc tien qua 20 nam doi moi*, Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, Hà Nội, 2005, tr.95, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, The Central Committee, The Steering Committee on theoretical issue synthesizing, *Summary Report on Several theoretical-practical issues over 20 years of Doi Moi*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005, p. 95].

¹¹² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, tháng 8 năm 2003, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, *On Protecting National Security in the New Context*, August 2003].

¹¹³ Vietnamese Communist Party Politburo secret Resolution No. 2 entitled *On Strengthening National Defence in the New Revolutionary Stage*, 1987; See also, Carlyle A. Thayer, Upholding State Sovereignty through Global Integration-The Remaking of Vietnamese National Security Policy, paper presented to Workshop on “Vietnam, East Asia and Beyond,” Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong, December 11-12, 2008.

¹¹⁴ Hong Ha, *Ve doi tac cua ta*, Tham luan tai toa dam khoa học *Khuon kho doi tac trong quan he doi ngoai cua Viet Nam: Thuc trang va trien vong*, Hoc vien Quan he quoc te, Hà Nội, 27 tháng 12 năm 2005, (Vietnamese). [Hong Ha, Regarding Our Partners, Speech at the Scientific discussion on *Partnership Framework in Vietnam’s Foreign Relations: Reality and Perspectives*, Diplomatic Academy, Hanoi, 27 December 2005].

been a major change in VCP's strategic approach by indirectly¹¹⁵ renouncing its fundamentalist viewpoints on internationalism, proletarian international duties, and the two camps perception. Facing changes in situation, the VCP analyzed that the persistence on the old viewpoint of "friend or foe" identification based on the ideological criteria was no longer relevant, even dangerous to Vietnam's existence and may eliminate Vietnam's opportunity and possibility to reintegrate into the international community and participate in the waves of growth of Asia Pacific. Ideology had to step down to Reality's vital requirements. It was evaluated by several scholars that this was VCP's radical adjustment, which proved the dominance of reformist trend within the Party. However, others held that the VCP considered those adjustments and concessions to be tactical backward steps, in order to prepare for the ultimate strategic goal of building the communism regime in Vietnam.¹¹⁶ In fact, in Vietnam, the VCP still asserted socialism orientation as its strategic goal; market economy was only the mode to achieve this goal.¹¹⁷ As analyzed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, forward and backward steps in Vietnam's *Renovation* grand strategy could also be seen as the results of thinkings struggles within the VCP on ways and levels to carry out the *Doi Moi* course. Although basically since 1986, the VCP has obtained consensus on the grand strategy of carrying out *Renovation*, there have still been various disagreements and confrontations about the way, mean, level, scope and field of reform. The radical reformist trend insisted that *Renovation* took place too slowly, and the existence of crisis was due to the Party's delay and hesitation to carry out comprehensive reforms. Meanwhile, the conservative trend assumed that *Renovation* course needed to be in control in order to ensure stability and to avoid collapse and turmoil like what had

¹¹⁵ In official documents, the VCP did not directly mention these concepts as previously; nor did it directly continue to consider the above contents to be the foundation for new national strategies.

¹¹⁶ Nguyen Dy Nien, *Chinh Sach va Hoat Dong Doi Ngoai Trong Thoi ky Doi Moi*, *Tap Chi Cong San*, so.90, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Dy Nien, Foreign Policies and Activities During the Doi Moi Period, *Communist Review*, no.90, 2005]; and, Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

¹¹⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, vol.38, no.3, 2010, pp.423-444.

happened in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist countries. Since 1986, neither trend has really dominated Vietnam's foreign policy decision-making process.¹¹⁸

Starting the *Renovation* course, the VCP advocated building a new diplomacy for the international relation expansion period and decided “more friends, less foes”¹¹⁹ to be Vietnam's diplomatic guiding orientation. As mentioned above, it was the need of a historical period during which Vietnam needed to form new foreign policy and implement essential diplomatic maneuvers to escape from status of being politically blockaded, diplomatically isolated and economically embargoed. This was VCP's reorientation effort to establish and reestablish official and meaningful diplomatic relations with countries outside the socialist block, while Vietnam's traditional foreign relations with socialist countries tended to decline due to social-economic crises and ideological set-backs within the socialist system.

However, it could be seen that VCP's above mentioned initial policy efforts were still of unilateral manner in terms of form and of political-security manner in terms of content, when the VCP still maintained the clause “less foes,” rather than completely eliminating this concept in the goals dominating Vietnam's foreign policy. This evidence revealed existing suspicions and vigilances within the VCP that Western capitalist countries may still maintain the goal of eliminating Vietnam socialist regime as what used to happen in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European socialist countries.¹²⁰ A section within the VCP assumed that despite numerous improvements in relations and Vietnam's policy adjustments, several countries still maintained hostile attitudes towards Vietnam. It also raised concern about the foreign interventions in internal affairs when Vietnam widely

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 5 for more detailed analyses.

¹¹⁹ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988]. See also, Nguyen Co Thach, Nhung Chuyen Bien Tren The Gioi va Tu Duy Moi cua Chung ta, trong *Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất bản Thế giới, 2007, tr. 37-38, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Co Thach, Changes in the World and Our New Thinkings, in *Vietnam's External Relation Policies*, Hanoi, World Publishing House, 2007, pp.37-38].

¹²⁰ Nguyen Van Linh, Cung Co Hoa Binh De Cao Canh Giac, Phat Huy Suc Manh Tong Hop De Bao Ve To Quoc, *Nhan Dan*, 15 thang 12 nam 1989, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Van Linh, Consolidate peace, raise vigilance, develop comprehensive strength to defend the Fatherland, *People*, December 15, 1989].

implemented “open-door” policy and expanded partnership relations framework.¹²¹ These conservative-Cold War attitudes could be explained both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, in spite of certain reform adjustments, the VCP basically has still depended upon Marxism-Leninism doctrine and Ho Chi Minh’s thoughts. The perceptions about the world order, and assessments about the context of international relations basically based on the ideological “prism” of the communism.¹²² Practically, Vietnam faced many difficulties during the early stage of *Renovation*, Vietnam’s social-economic situations were on the brink of collapse; the Vietnamese socialist regime and VCP’s leadership power had never been challenged like that in Vietnam’s long and harsh contemporary history of struggling for independence, unification and socialism. Series of shocking events like the collapse of Eastern European socialist countries, the Tiananmen square incident in China, the disintegration of the Soviet Union were a dead-blow to the VCP and directly affected the *Renovation* orientations and guidelines. When analyzing such situations, the VCP assumed that besides mistakes in guidelines, institutional mechanisms and implementation methods, the collapse of the socialist system, the unstableness of China and Vietnam were also due to devious aims and hostile activities by Western countries headed by the United States.¹²³ Therefore, in spite of VCP’s commitment on further renovation and foreign relations expansion, they had been just initial exploratory steps which aimed at breaking down the isolated status when the vigilant and suspicious psychology still dominated a major section within the VCP.

Solving the Cambodian issue may be considered to be the first major diplomatic activity of Vietnam following the motto of “more friends, less foes;” which eliminated a huge obstacle in Vietnam’s process of finding measures to tackle isolated status and expand its

¹²¹ The United States’ Strategy after Normalization, see analyses in Nguyen Lan Anh, *Chien luoc dien bien hoa binh cua de quoc My va cac the luc phan dong quoc te chong chu nghia xa hoi va chong Viet Nam xa hoi chu nghia*, Ha Noi: Tong cuc 2, Bo Quoc phong, 1993, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Lan Anh, *Peaceful Evolution Strategy of the United States Imperialism and Hostile Forces against Socialism and Socialist Vietnam*, Hanoi: Second General Directorate, Department of Defense, 1993].

¹²² The 1992 Constitution of Vietnam.

¹²³ Nguyen Lan Anh, *ibid.*, 1993.

foreign relations towards international integration.¹²⁴ This step brought about huge opportunities to Vietnam's diplomacy, creating motivation for the strong development of Vietnam's foreign relations in the following stages of the *Doi Moi* course. After 1991, despite having less foes, Vietnam's new friendships establishment was just at initial stage and needed further improvement.¹²⁵ Together with commitment to continue *Renovation*, the expanded trend of foreign policy continued to be confirmed by the VCP on its Political Report at the Seventh Party Congress: "Vietnam wants to become friend with all countries in the international community, making efforts for peace, independence and development."¹²⁶ The VCP not only set the goal of "more friends, less foes" but also headed for "wants to be friend with all countries." This move showed that in spite of socio-economic difficulties and internal concerns about "peaceful evolution" strategy of the United States and Western countries, as well as hesitant voices to slow down the reform process, in the later stage of *Doi Moi*,¹²⁷ the VCP realized that the vitality and necessity for Vietnam and VCP's legitimacy depended upon whether Vietnam would absolutely escape from being blockaded and isolated, and whether its international relations could be expanded or not.¹²⁸ It was thought by the VCP that regarding Vietnam's conditions, the persistent pursuit "closing door" and "self-isolation" policy meant self-destruction.¹²⁹ That inevitable fact supported the radical reformist trend, and concurrently forced the conservative within the VCP to accept further reforms.

¹²⁴ Premier Do Muoi, *Tiep Tuc Su Nghiep Doi Moi*, Doan Ket Tien Len Vi Su Thang Loi Cua Chu Nghia Xa Hoi, Vi Am No Hanh Phuc Cua Nhan Dan, *Nhan Dan*, 2 thang 9 nam 1990, (Vietnamese). [Do Muoi, Continue the task of Doi Moi, unite to advance for the victory of socialism, for the well being and happiness of the people, *People*, September 2, 1990].

¹²⁵ Nguyen Vu Tung, *Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam*, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.178,(Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.178].

¹²⁶ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VII*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuất ban Su that, 1991, tr. 147, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Seventh Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, Truth Publishing House, 1991, p.147].

¹²⁷ 1991-2001.

¹²⁸ Thayer, Carlyle A., Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994, p.518.

¹²⁹ Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012, pp.31-52.

By reviewing Vietnam's diplomatic reality during 1991-1995, it could be seen that the VCP obtained certain agreement within the Party for stronger, deeper and wider implementation of the multilateralization and diversification foreign policy. Although it was thought by several foreign scholars that Vietnam's *Renovation* speed gradually slowed down and,¹³⁰ there were some evidences showing objections from the conservative faction, especially within security-defense group became more intense.¹³¹ As for the VCP and Vietnamese scholars, they assumed that the above expressions resulted from disadvantageous impacts of world situation to Vietnam, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to unexpected influences on the guideline and strategy of *Doi Moi*.¹³² Moreover, after the five-year implementation of the *Doi Moi* commitments associated with the Sixth Party Congress term (1986-1991), it took time for the VCP to conduct self-evaluation and self-criticism to re-identify its policy orientations and implementations. In other words, it meant VCP's seeking agreement within the Party, finding out reconciliatory solutions to the dilemma of ideology and reality during its term of the Seventh Party Congress (1991-1996).¹³³ Vietnam's diplomatic efforts towards normalization with China during this period, as analyzed in Chapter 6, also expressed VCP's difficulties in handling the relation between ideology and reality (national interest).¹³⁴ Sometimes, this relation became so intense that the VCP had to choose between ideology or reality (national interest). According to several analysts, harsh internal socio-political reality as well as China's, the United States' and Western countries' policy orientations and the world order context from mid-to-late 1990s forced the VCP to decide on pursuing national interest and implementing

¹³⁰ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹³¹ Alexander L. Vuving, Strategy and Evolution of Vietnam's China Policy: A Changing Mixture of Pathways, *Asian Survey*, vol.46, no.6 (November/December 2006), pp.805-824.

¹³² Luong Ngoc Thanh, Vietnam in the Post-Cold-War era: New Foreign Policy Directions, *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol.18, no.3, 2012, pp.31-52.

¹³³ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp.116-121.

¹³⁴ Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994, pp.513-528.

realpolitik diplomacy instead of ideological based foreign policy in the late 1980s to early 1990s. As analyzed by Thayer, “In coming to grips with the post-Cold War era, in which there is no identifiable socialist camp, Vietnamese policy makers are now stressing definition of their ‘national interests’ on the basis of material considerations, such as economic relations.”¹³⁵ Vietnam facilitated diplomatic relations expansion and pursued the foreign policy of multilateralization and diversification not only to break down the isolated status, but also to counterbalance its relations with China. As one Vietnamese official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained: “Sino-Vietnamese relations will be meshed within the much larger regional network of interlocking economic and political interests. It is an arrangement whereby anybody wanting to violate Vietnam’s sovereignty would be violating the interests of other countries as well. This is the ideal strategic option for Vietnam. It is also the most practical.”¹³⁶ Until the term of the Eighth Party Congress (1996-2001), these policy orientations were still confirmed by the VCP, but not any breakthrough changes in content were made.¹³⁷

The foreign policy of “being reliable friend and partner”: Vietnam’s efforts towards balanced diplomacy

This policy was connected with the Ninth Party Congress. During the preparation process, the VCP evaluated that previous foreign policies, despite obtaining the goals, initially contributing to foreign relations expansion, tackling blockade and isolated status, planning policies based on national interest, the achievements were still limited, diplomatic activities had not helped Vietnam to become a reliable partner of regional and international communities. There were still various suspicions about Vietnam’s commitment on the

¹³⁵ Carlyle A. Thayer, Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994, pp.513-528. p.527.

¹³⁶ Nguyen Hong Thach, Vietnam-China Ties: A New but Not Easy Era, *Business Times* (Singapore), December 31, 1992.

¹³⁷ The Eighth Party Congress set external relation missions, “Continue to implement the external relations of independence, sovereignty, openness, multilateralization and diversification with the spirit that Vietnam wants to be a friend of all countries in the international community, for peace, independence and development.” Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu VIII*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1996, tr.120, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Eighth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1996, p.120].

Renovation course as well as on regional common economic-security benefits.¹³⁸ To address those limits, the VCP raised the concept “partner”¹³⁹ for the first time in Vietnam’s external relations and policies. It could be said that with this concept, Vietnam’s diplomacy expressed its commitment on pursuing national security interest, and considered them to be the foundation and basis for every diplomatic activities. Accepting the viewpoint that national interest is in the nature of international politics. It was the first time that Ideology had taken lower position in the process of foreign policy decision-making.

Firstly, there was a change from “wants to be friend” to “willing to be friend.” The VCP showed its more activeness in diplomacy and foreign relations; willing to be a reliable partner of other countries, seriously implements every rule and common commitment when establishing partnership. It seemed that initial concerns about foreign interventions when implementing the “open-door,” policy as well as negative impacts due to relation expansion no longer dominated within the VCP. Certain backward steps during the Seventh Party Congress, was recovered by the VCP; and renovation efforts continued to be confirmed. The VCP seemed to find out a measure to harmonize Ideology and Reality relation. Activeness contributed to Vietnam’s higher status in regional and international forum. Vietnam initially raised several multilateralization diplomatic initiatives, took responsibilities at international organizations, and hosted several important international conferences and fora. It seemed that Vietnam has escaped from its own previous “shadow” of unilateral foreign policy which called for pursuing narrowed-meaning national interest under the domination of the ideological viewpoints.

Secondly, by formulating foreign policy based on the concept of “a reliable partner,” Vietnam had identified that it should take more responsibility in international relations.

¹³⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Ninth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

¹³⁹ VCP confirmed, “Consistently implement the external relation of independence, sovereignty, opening, multilateralization and diversification of external relations. Vietnam is willing to be a friend and a reliable partner of all countries in the international community, and Vietnam made efforts for peace, independence and development.” Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi Dai bieu toan quoc lan thu IX*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, tr. 119, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Ninth Party Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001, p.119].

Formulating foreign policy, apart from depending upon legitimate national interest, has been necessary and vital to pay attention to partners' interests associated with the diplomatic viewpoints under the partnership models. Previously, the Cold War and the contradictions in the socialist system forced Vietnam to make choice, and irrelevant selection could lead to irrelevant policy shaping.¹⁴⁰ In addition, Vietnam's foreign policy with the old and dogmatic model of decision-making process, depending upon ideological viewpoint and unilaterally pursuing national benefits in a narrow meaning, keeping vigilance and avoiding to establish broaden partnership led to Vietnam's blockade and isolation and social-economic crisis. Although the VCP always confirmed its execution of "win-win" formula and "mutual benefits" principle in the process of making and implementing foreign policy, probably until the Ninth Party Congress, together with identifying the concept "a reliable partner" and establishing foreign relations following partnership models, could the above formula and principle be realized the most clearly in VCP's diplomatic guideline and reality.

Thirdly, different from the Eighth Party Congress, the selectivity in foreign relations development was focused on by the VCP in strategic orientations at the Ninth Party Congress. In the foreign affairs section of this Congress's documents, the VCP changed the slogan of the two previous Congresses (the Seventh and Eighth) from "being a friend of all countries" to "being a friend and partner of countries" within the international community. This adjustment showed that the VCP had left the spreading diplomatic viewpoints without clear focus and priority order in the early years of *Renovation*. According to VCP's evaluations, with its limited resources, Vietnam needs to focus on key relations and partners which are related to the most essential Vietnamese nation-state interest.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Thayer's interview with Vietnamese policy makers: "These officials argue that the Cold War forced Vietnam to take sides, and they privately blame Le Duan, party secretary from 1960-1986, for Vietnam's pro-Soviet tilt. They say that Vietnam should have sided neither with Beijing nor Moscow during the Sino-Soviet dispute." quoted in Thayer, Carlyle A., Sino-Vietnamese Relations: The Interplay of Ideology and National Interest, *Asian Survey*, vol.34, no.6, Jun 1994, p. 527; See also, Alexander L. Vuving, The Impact of China on Governance Structures in Vietnam, Discussion Paper for the DIE Research Project "*The Impact of Russia, India and China on Governance Structures in their Regional Environment (RICGOV)*," German Development Institute, Bonn, 2008; for Vietnam's "one-sided-tilt" foreign policy.

¹⁴¹ Nguyen Vu Tung, Doi Tac va Khuon Kho Quan He Doi Tac trong Chinh sach Doi Ngoai Viet Nam, in Pham Binh Minh, chu bien, *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, tr.185, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Vu Tung, Partner and Partnership Framework in Vietnam Foreign Policy, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011, p.185].

Concurrently, the identification of strategic focus and priority order in shaping and deploying foreign relations also helps strengthening trust and building mutual confidence among partners, and creates the foundation for the partnership development in both scope and scale level.

In general, VCP's acceptance and development of the partner concept, building partnership model, executing foreign relation on the basis of partnership framework, considering this approach to be one of the cores of *Renovation* diplomacy have proved that the VCP has been more practical in its perspective on the context and nature of contemporary international relations. The VCP has accepted the decisive domination of Reality by using the concept of nation-state interest during the foreign policy decision-making process. With openness viewpoints on partner and partnership models, the VCP seems to abandon its fundamentalist approach of shaping of Vietnam's foreign relations based on the ideological viewpoint. It no longer maintains the idea of discriminating political system when establishing and deploying foreign relations. Nation-state interests are of the vital essence and continue to dominate the formation of Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy. However, it do not mean that the VCP has abandoned socialism, and its communist ideology, but it should be recognized that in the *Renovation* period with changes in the context and nature of international relations as well as Vietnam's internal situation, the VCP has to accept a more practical approach in its policy planning process.

Chapter conclusion

Together with *Doi Moi* policy and in order to implement that policy, the VCP has raised and implemented *Renovation* diplomacy, as well as considered "open-door" and "integration" to be diplomatic guidelines, regarded multilateralization and diversification to be foreign policy directions which all associated with the ultimate goal of serving nation-state interests. *Renovation* diplomacy has helped Vietnam to handle the blockaded and isolated situation and established favorable conditions for ensuring Vietnam's economic development and social stability.

Self assessing its foreign policy decision-making process and diplomatic maneuvers towards direction of expanding international integration, the VCP has pointed out several shortcomings which need to be handled, including, (i) international integration has not developed foreign relations towards quality but has still depended on quantity; (ii) integration deployment has not been active and creative; suspicious and passive attitudes have still been remained, looking forward to the leadership from the superiors have still been observed; (iii) there has been a shortage of consistence and flexibility in policy evaluation and implementation with some important countries; (iv) there has been a shortage of deep relationship with various countries, new relationships have not been established whereas existing ones have not been fully exploited based on the win-win benefits; and there have been evidences of increased dependence on other countries;¹⁴² (v) the combination between “cooperation” and “struggle” have not been that smooth; the handling between the requirement of ensuring internal stability and expanding foreign relation has been sometime confused; deep and stable cooperation relations with other countries have not been obtained; economic and political diplomacy have not really connected; shortcomings have still been existed in specific situations; the construction of united diplomatic management mechanism have still been slow.¹⁴³

In order to implement *Renovation* diplomacy with international integration policy, the VCP has to find out solution to the relation between independence, sovereignty and international integration. It could not be stated that the VCP has found the best solution to the above relationship, but Vietnam’s diplomacy in the *Renovation* period has also proved that the Party has made great efforts and achieved the consensus, to some extent, within its internal apparatuses. Contradictions, struggles on thoughts and viewpoints have still vitally existed whereas the socialist Vietnam has still to cope with the market economy and commits deeper and wider relations with capitalist countries.

¹⁴² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet so 8-Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Khoa 8, Ve Bao Ve An Ninh Quoc Gia Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, thang 8 nam 2003, tr.36, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, the Eighth Central Committee Resolution No. 8, *On Protecting National Security in the New Context*, August 2003, p.36].

¹⁴³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi Quyet ve Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, tr.58-59 (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001, pp.58-59].

International integration will certainly be the vital choice; however, integration orientations and implementation levels have not been able to be identified yet when ideological contradictions-in whatever form-have still existed in international relations and caused suspicions within the VCP on real intentions of capitalist countries to Vietnam. Such suspicions have been considered by the VCP to be objective challenges to Vietnam's security and development. The Party also uses them as the brakes for stability or the ideological counterpoise to regulate and control reality element during the process of formulating and executing Vietnam's new diplomacy.

CONCLUSIONS

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’s 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.

The end of the Cold War eliminated the so-called twin-threat of superpower intervention and involvement, and communist revolution in Southeast Asia. Hostile attitude seemed no longer dominate intra-regional political relations. Instead, the region has witnessed the emergence of economic concerns and the decline of ideological confrontations. The uncertainties of newly establishing international system have also encouraged Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam to engage into regional multilateral discussions which led, to some extent, the rapid changing dynamism of Asian security environment. As other regional countries in the context of the new world order right after the Cold War, Vietnam had to face off with several newly security issues such as: rearming trend, territorial disputes, terrorism as well as potential insecurity and instability which are caused partly from the decline of security role of the United States in Southeast Asia and the rise of China with its hegemonic ambition. Departing into a new world order with almost no friends, no allies in a hostile political-security environment after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Vietnam scrambled for an appropriate position and strategy. Changes in

international posture had also forced Vietnam to be more accommodating toward its traditional and ideological concerns such as fears of “Peaceful evolution” from the West and hegemonic influence from the North. Several diplomatic efforts had been carried out basing on different approaches either ideological foundation or realpolitik calculation. But with the China’s turn down Vietnamese request for an alliance in 1991, and America’s refuse to engage and offer a balancing strategy with Vietnam against China’s strategic ambition later, it seemed that Vietnam had almost no choice but to play the enmeshment strategy. In the words of the VCP, that meant Vietnam should embrace regionalism and multilateralism to enter multilateral discussions with its Asian neighbors and take advantage of the interdependence trend. Vietnam should consider itself as an Asian-Pacific country and undivided part of ASEAN. In fact, Vietnam’s national strategy and foreign policy since the very first stage of *Renovation* has initially followed this way. Vietnam has made great efforts to shift its Cold War strict defense posture and ideological-security concerns to diplomatic maneuvers of integration and reconciliation.

Vietnam’s foreign policy reorientations in the later period of the first stage of *Renovation*, with the focus of normalization with China, were strongly controlled by the ideological viewpoints. However, it also needed to be objectively seen that there were realpolitik elements in such Vietnam’s diplomatic calculations. It could also be said that normalization with China was a midway approach in order to ensure the ideological element (to protect the socialist regime in Vietnam from the systemic collapse), as well as to meet realpolitik calculations to some extent when bringing a more powerful partner to Vietnam (which could potentially compensate for the losses brought about by the Soviet Union’s withdrawal and collapse) and to make favorable conditions for Vietnam to improve its regional strategic position. Although these realpolitik calculations were not really as thorough as the suggestions by Nguyen Co Thach and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (to promote a realist diplomatic approach and reestablish normal relations with the United States and the West in order to create a counterpoise to that of China’s pressure) but

to some extent they made contributions to improvements in Vietnam's domestic socio-political situation and lifted diplomatic pressures. Normalization with China also made favorable situations for the VCP to handle the Cambodian conflict and create new opportunities for Vietnam's foreign affairs.

China's increasing influences 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. In its new diplomatic strategy, Vietnam considers and wants to be considered by its neighboring Southeast Asian not only important economic allies for trade and development of region but also political and security ties to serve as a counterbalance to Chinese hegemonic ambition as well as the powers and influences of Japan and the United States. This cooperative strategic paradigm plays a decisive important to Vietnam's security and ASEAN's stability as there exists number of potential armed hostilities in the region in accordance with territorial disputes, separation and division among ASEAN member due to Chinese diplomatic maneuvers and national interest collisions. 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.

In the second stages of *Renovation*, the identification of the biggest risks to Vietnam, the confirmation that Vietnam's revolution based on the "assemblages of forces" foundation of either socialist ideology or nation-state interests would decide policy direction selections, as well as the definition of Vietnam's strategic partnership and special partnership. Economic cooperation and integration has also an effective strategic solution

for Vietnam to strengthen its newly developed relations with AESAN, Japan and the West. The VCP finally concluded that only through multilateralization and diversification foreign policy can Vietnam provide security and opportunity for its own strategic survival and development goal. Despite the fact that, it had initially originated from the early stage of *Renovation*, the wide acceptance and thorough implementation of this conclusion only came after the Seventh Party Congress of the VCP as the reformist trend gained a certain advantages by pointing out the real nature of Chinese strategic ambition and its realpolitik diplomatic calculation over the conservative faction. The nature of the selection among China, ASEAN, the United States and Western countries was the decision on whether ideology or nation-state interests being the foundation of Vietnam's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. In other words, it was the question of regime survival or state survival. In the new context, Vietnam needed new theoretical guidelines in order to explain its selection and shape its new national strategy and foreign policy. Such theoretical foundations seemed to be an infant in the early stage of *Renovation* through the Politburo Resolution No. 32, the Sixth Party Congress's documents, and the Politburo Resolution No. 13, also through practical diplomatic experiences in the negotiations with China, and both the political losses and achievements of solving the Cambodia conflict. The VCP would need stronger tools to meet rapid and robust changes in global and regional context.

Regarding to Vietnam's foreign policy of international integration in the later stage of *Renovation*, several leading Vietnamese scholars on international relations have evaluated as follows, "International integration has indeed the more and more important resource to consolidate independence and self-determination. Vice versa, independence and self-determination have also been the crucial basis for international integration. The reality has shown that the more deeply we integrate, the more firmly independence and self-determination have been maintained which has in turn led to deeper integration."¹ The above

¹ Dang Dinh Quy, va Nguyen Vu Tung, Doc Lap Tu Chu va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te, trong Pham Binh Minh, chu bien., *Dinh Huong Chien Luoc Doi Ngoai Viet Nam den 2020*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2011, (Vietnamese). [Dang Dinh Quy, and Nguyen Vu Tung, Independence Self-Reliance and International Integration, in Pham Binh Minh, eds., *Directions of Vietnamese Diplomatic Strategy Toward 2020*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2011].

optimistic and dialectic materialism-expressed evaluation has clearly shown VCP's official viewpoints on the vitality of international integration, and commitment, at least on theoretical argument, by the VCP on the "open-door" foreign policy and moreover the comprehensive international integration diplomacy. However, after twenty-five years of *Doi Moi-Renovation*, changes in international, regional context and Vietnam's situation, and evaluations on the lack of new motivation of Vietnam's diplomacy may lead to the need for the VCP to reevaluate and reestablish the strategic guidelines for foreign policy decision-making process, which were designed at the very beginning of the *Renovation* period.

The contents of Vietnam's foreign policy directions and guidelines have been worked out based on VCP's development strategies and viewpoints as well as evaluation on regional and international world order context, associated with Vietnam's core national interests. In the *Renovation* course, these contents have always been paid attention to and amended, supplemented at each Party Congress. To certain extent, that process reflected changes in VCP's awareness about the way and goals of the *Renovation* course itself. Diplomacy is an important field under the comprehensive and absolute leadership by the Communist Party. Foreign policy directions and diplomatic guidelines reflect awareness directions and leadership factions within the Party about process, level and pace of the *Renovation* course. Several scholars also assumed that changes in the contents of diplomatic guidelines and foreign policy directions reflect the struggle within internal VCP between the reformist trend and the conservative trend. In other words, there always exists inner-party debates between supporters of promoting radical realpolitik-based foreign policy and those who advocate the persistent of social stability, the survival of socialist institutions and regime as well as the leadership role of the Party based on the so-called fundamentalist viewpoints which originated from ideological calculations. Whatever the contents of the renovation foreign policy directions and guidelines are, they have been continuously amended and complemented by the VCP on each of its Party Congress.²

² From the Sixth to the Eleventh Party National Congress (1986-2011).

Through analyses and evaluations on the post-Cold War formulating and implementing process of Vietnam's new foreign policy, there are several notable issues as follows:

1. **National interests and socialist objectives.** Vietnam's Communist Party started to emphasize the vital importance of "national interests," and considered it the core issue in every diplomatic activity; diplomatic task was assigned to implement nation-state's benefit at maximum level. This was not the first time that the issue of national interest had been mentioned but to put it on top and confirm to be the core of the foreign policy directions and guidelines, showing evidence of awareness changing and strategic thinkings adjustment of the VCP, although the Party had not abandoned its strategic choice of socialism and continued to assert that "nation independence and socialism are fundamental goals of the revolution and also fundamental interest of the nation."³ That identifying national interest plays a decisive role in foreign policy orientations was not a new issue in the world; however, as for a socialist country, foreign policy orientations and diplomatic guidelines were frequently planned and calculated based on the fundamental socialist ideology and associated with commitments on internationalism, international obligations and proletarian class's missions. The confirmation that national interest played a vital important role proved that the VCP has been more practical in its policy making process. Although it is maybe too early to make the conclusion that the Party has gradually left socialism's arguments as evaluated by several researchers.⁴ However, for a country like Vietnam where the Party's leadership depended on its capacity and role which could be implemented by itself to the society and the nation,⁵ paying attention to and confirming the leading mission of pursuing and ensuring national interest was a good way for the VCP to

³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Tu tuong-Van hoa Trung uong, *Tai lieu hoc tap Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu 8 Ban Chap hanh Trung uong khoa IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005, tr.14, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Central Committee Department of Ideology and Culture, *Guidance Document for the Study of the Eighth Plenum Resolution*, the Ninth Central Committee, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005, p.14].

⁴ Brantly Womack, Political Reform and Political Change in Communist Countries: Implications for Vietnam, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism: Doi Moi in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993, pp.277-305; See also David W.P. Elliott, Dilemma of Reform in Vietnam, in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., *ibid.*, pp.53-94.

⁵ See more analyses in Carlyle A. Thayer, Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response, *Politics & Policy*, Volume 38, No. 3 (2010), pp.423-444.

guarantee its legitimacy, leadership role, as well as the Party's commitments on national interests and the people's benefits.

It could be seen that the deviating from the viewpoints of the two-pole world and two systems, and the asserting that national interest to be central have played a decisive role to determine orientations of national strategy in general and foreign policy directions in particular and partly handled VCP's hesitations and obstacles in ideology and leading thoughts. In the past, despite VCP's obeying and implementing the Soviet Union's and socialist countries' strategic orientation frameworks in formulating Vietnam's foreign policies, by nature, in a certain strategic moment, the VCP also based on its own vital nation-state interests to make changes, adjustments or even formulate its own way.⁶ VCP's consistent pursuit of the national liberation struggle and national reunification course, increase in its influence in Indochina, intervention into Cambodia at grand strategy approach showed the so-called "two-worlds," "two-camps" ideological confrontation, the struggle for strategic influence, as well as contradictions of the two major pairs the Soviet Union-United States, the Soviet Union-China. However, at national strategy approach, it was VCP's strategic choice based on analyses and evaluations on the world's political order structure and regional geopolitics, from which relevant foreign policy directions and diplomatic guidelines could be formed.

The issue here was not only whether national-state benefits were based on to formulating foreign policy and executing diplomatic maneuver, but also on awareness and implementation of the connotations of that national-state benefits. During early years of 1980s, with the strict and rigid domination of socialist strategic viewpoint, under the impacts of the two camps thinking, as well as the dogma in ideological content awareness, the VCP made ideological choices serving for strategic ideological objectives. Moreover, although foreign policies prior to 1986 was planned on the basis of people's benefits,

⁶ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012. See also Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

according to the VCP, and associated with the goal of pursuing and implementing nation-state interests; however, the awareness of that nation-state interests' connotation was probably dominated by dogmatic ideological thinkings. Vietnam's national interests at that time were aware, defined and calculated through the communist ideological prism by the VCP. With the above mentioned reasons, the formulating and planning foundation of Vietnam's foreign policy directions and diplomatic guidelines prior to the *Renovation* was basically on the ideological strategic viewpoint. Inaccurate consideration and evaluation of the essential contents of national-state interests in those years inevitably led to irrelevant policy decisions in the early years of 1980s. That "erroneous" policy choice, to some extent, weakened Vietnam's legitimate and diplomatic status and created conditions for the Western and regional countries to isolate and blockade Vietnam, which led to serious socio-political-economic crises and diplomatic stalemate period. Vietnam was on the brink of social-economic stagnancies, security-defense dilemma, and ideological demise and faced risks directly threatening the nation-state survival and VCP's leadership legitimacy. *Renovation* policies, including changes and adjustments in foreign affairs strategy were the utmost end and vital choice if the VCP still wanted to maintain its leadership and the survival of socialist regime. The lesson which was evaluated and tested in practice, and may be costly, was the combination of national interests and socialism in which the connotation of national interest must be correctly aware and distinguished with socialist goals, the relation between Vietnam's nation-state interests and its socialist orientations must be clarified. The formula for this combination must be found out by the VCP "being persistent with the goals of nation-state independence associated with socialism, facilitating socio-economic development based on peaceful environment maintenance and stability, and implementing socialist-oriented industrialization and modernization are the most supreme benefit of the Fatherland."⁷

⁷ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Tu tuong-Van hoa Trung uong, *Tai lieu hoc tap Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu 8 Ban Chap hanh Trung uong khoa IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuất ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005, tr.46-47, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Central Committee Department of Ideology and Culture, *Guidance Document for the Study of the Eighth Plenum Resolution*, the Ninth Central Committee, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005, pp.46-47].

2. The missions of Vietnam's diplomatic affairs. Unlike pre-*Renovation* period, the new missions of Vietnam diplomatic affairs which had been identified by the VCP at the Sixth Party Congress and, re-identified since the Seventh Party Congress, including (i) Maintaining a peaceful environment; (ii) Creating and making full use of favorable international conditions for the *Renovation* course, national industrialization and modernization, Fatherland's construction and protection; (iii) Making active contribution to the common struggle of the world's peoples for peace and national independence, democracy and social progress.⁸

Basically, there have not been any remarkable changes in determining these missions since the Seventh Party Congress, which shows VCP's commitment on *Renovation* policies in diplomatic field. In general, these missions have not shown any breakthrough in thoughts or arguments, but in policy and diplomatic stance angles, the VCP is seen to pay attention to creating and taking advantage of a stable and favorable regional and international environment for Vietnam's survival and development. Putting aside or at least temporarily stopping its strategic pursuits of ideological confrontations, class struggle; no longer classifying states by political and ideological foundations; and even abandoning past and present contradictions and disputes, the VCP saw the necessity of stability and peace to Vietnam's survival and development, a country which experienced devastated wars and is struggling with social-economic crises for existence whereas neighboring countries are enjoying fruitful achievements of economic growth.⁹

3. Vietnamese diplomatic management mechanism: the Party's unified leadership, the State's concentrated management towards foreign policy and diplomatic activities. The Party's leadership legitimacy is regarded as the supreme principle, which

⁸ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu X*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2006, tr.112, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Tenth National Congress Official Documents*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2006, p.112].

⁹ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012. See also Nguyen Vu Tung, Vietnam's Membership of ASEAN: A Constructivist Interpretation, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.29, no.3, 2007. And, Carlyle A. Thayer, Vietnam's Regional Integration: The Cost and Benefit of Multilateralism, Paper to conference on *Vietnam's Integration into the World and State Sovereignty Issue*, Paris France, 25 October 2004.

has been acknowledged in the Constitution¹⁰ as follows: the Party implements absolute and comprehensive leadership in every aspect of social life, and the VCP has been doing everything to maintain and ensure such leadership ability. On the other hand, being aware of the difficulties which may arise if the Party intervenes too deep into social life and interferes in specific management functions and tasks of the State's structure, the VCP has been gradually implementing steps to clearly identify its role and functions in social leadership, distinguish leadership and management which is the State's function by nature, reaffirm leadership power and limit such power in making strategic policy. Obviously, with leadership appointment mechanisms and personnel allocation structures, the VCP by nature has still been in the leadership of the whole society. Changes if any have been in the fact that VCP's highest power organizations as the Politburo and the Central Committee would restrict their power and responsible for strategic policy planning without deeply intervening in specific policies which inherently are the Government's tasks and functions. These changes have also been clearly seen in diplomatic realities, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been given more freedom to maneuver diplomatic activities, in larger policy scales and therefore, has obtained a more important role in foreign policy planning process. These progresses could be clearly seen through Vietnam's recent diplomatic moves in handling the territorial disputes in the East Sea (the South China Sea), the issues of the ASEAN intra-region partnership, bilateral diplomatic activities with the United States, Russia and extra-region powers, multilateral diplomatic activities within ASEAN, APEC, ASEM, TPP frameworks.

Furthermore, with the confirmation of the Party's decisive leadership role in foreign affairs, Vietnam's diplomacy at whatever levels is still the tool for the VCP to implement its strategic orientations of promoting socio-economic development, ensuring defense-security stability and building socialism in Vietnam. Thus in the future, inner-Party's trends will continue to play a decisive role in the strategic orientations of Vietnam's diplomacy.

¹⁰ The Constitution of Vietnam (1992), Article 4.

Being aware of the domination of the above-mentioned issues allows us to explain to some extent, at least in terms of theory, Vietnam's process of foreign policy making and implementing; as well as explain the contents of those policies in the relation with Vietnam's national strategies. However, foreign policy making and diplomatic maneuvers deployment is a complex process, which is under the control of not only theoretical principles but also political power elements. This fact happens in every country as it is in the nature of power politics and related to the origin of modern Westphalian nation-state system. In a country with one communist party leadership like Vietnam, power politics and political power orientations has played an increasingly important role. The reorientation and restructuring of Vietnamese foreign policy could be concluded as the interplay of the old fundamental anti-imperialism strategy and the newly realist-developed modernization and adaptation strategy of Vietnamese nationalism. In other words, the interplay of ideology and reality will inevitably exist and continue to dominate Vietnam's politics and national strategy including foreign policy. Tackling this dilemma may be the perpetual task of the VCP in its duo-strategic goals of developing the nation and keeping the Party's absolute supreme leadership.

Due to VCP's frequently considering itself a social leading force, to guarantee its leadership in diplomatic field, the Party identified leading thoughts, viewpoints and guidelines from which orientations for the government in specific foreign policy formulating and deploying process were made, which was called the insurance of the Party's absolute and comprehensive leadership in every key-field of the society. Policy orienting thoughts and diplomatic affairs viewpoints were frequently worked out in VCP's specialized resolutions due to their features and vital importance to the country. Resolutions such as the Resolution No. 13 of the Politburo,¹¹ the Central Committee

¹¹ Dang Cong San Viet Nam, Nghi quyet so 13-Bo Chinh tri, *Ve Nhiem Vu va Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, ngay 20 thang 5 nam 1988, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Politburo Resolution No. 13, *On the External Mission and Policy in the New Situation*, 20 May 1988].

Resolution No. 3 of the Seventh Party Congress,¹² the Central Committee Resolution No. 8 of the Ninth Party Congress¹³ indeed shifted Vietnam's post-Cold War foreign policy, created a breakthrough in Vietnam's diplomacy, contributed to the development and stability of Vietnamese society in the *Renovation* period. Basically, contents of these resolutions were the specifications of VCP's *Renovation* strategy in the diplomatic field and showed VCP's new awareness and evaluation on regional and international political structure and power context, as well as development trends, advantages and challenges to Vietnam in the new development phase.

Vietnam's *Renovation* course was not easy and convenient. Arguments and disagreements on *Renovation*'s directions, contents and level within the internal VCP itself and Vietnamese society, which reflected different viewpoints and awareness on fundamental contents of *Renovation* and approach toward national construction and development. The same problem happened with foreign policy leading thoughts and diplomatic guidelines as they were not really consistent and favorable within the VCP's apparatuses and foreign affairs agencies, which can be seen by evaluating Vietnam's foreign affairs reality at the first stage of *Renovation*, especially in handling the Cambodia conflict, normalizing relationship with China, joining ASEAN, rapprochement with the United States, assessing WTO's mechanisms and other multilateral international economic-political-security institutions. As evaluated by several scholars, the struggles between the radical trend which wished to further promote the *Renovation* course and the conservative trend which always appreciated the stability and concerned about the foreign intervention existed during the formation process of foreign policy leading thoughts and diplomatic guidelines.

¹² Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet Hoi nghi trung uong 3 khoa 7*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 1992, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Central Committee Third Plenum Resolution*, Seventh National Congress, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 1992].

¹³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi Quyet ve Chien Luoc Bao Ve To Quoc trong Tinh Hinh Moi*, Ha Noi, Nha Xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2001, (Vietnamese). [Vietnam Communist Party, *Resolution on the Strategy of Protecting our Fatherland in the new Context*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2001].

The identification of foreign policy leading thoughts and diplomatic guidelines in Vietnam was also under influences of various internal VCP's political power structures and state's agencies. Publicly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the state agency which is responsible for formulating foreign policy, planning and deploying diplomatic affairs. However, with the identification of VCP's absolute leadership power, foreign policies were decided by the Party's powerful agencies and their deployments were assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Those agencies included the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Party in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a weaker voice than other powerful ministries like Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Public Security. The infrequently presence of high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Party's most supreme power structures like the Politburo, the Central Committee, the Standing Secretary Board regardless of its importance,¹⁴ according to foreign scholars, was the evidence of asymmetric power balance within the VCP, of which one could observe the domination of conservative trend over the more reformist Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

However, basically as it was always confirmed by the VCP that the leading thoughts of Vietnam's foreign policy officially included the following issues: maintaining the principles of for independence, unity and socialism, concurrently being extremely active, creative, flexible and relevant to Vietnam's position, conditions and specific situations, as well as regional and international happenings relevant with the features of each actor with whom Vietnam has relations with. The guidelines of diplomatic affairs were being persistent with the goal of national independence associated with socialism; being fully aware strategic guidelines of independent, self-reliance and persistently with foreign policies of openness, multilateralization and diversification, both cooperation and struggle, increasing cooperation, avoiding conflicts, confrontation, being isolated and dependent;

¹⁴ David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012. See also, Carlyle A. Thayer, *One Party Rule and the Challenge of Political Civil Society in Vietnam, Presentation to Seminar on the Like-Minded Donor Countries*, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Hanoi, 3 December 2008.

implementing socio-economic development based on peaceful and stable environment, which was the most supreme Fatherland's interests.¹⁵

These thoughts and viewpoints, by nature, were the balance between the needs of promoting *Renovation* and the requirements for insuring social stability; between the deeper and stronger integration viewpoint and the independence and sovereignty appreciation and intervention objection considerations. That approach also reflected VCP's policy of "being friend with every country regardless political institutions," applying more radical notions of defining "partner and object of struggle," "cooperation and struggle" in Vietnam's *Renovation* diplomacy. Some scholars argued that, such wise policy choosing could help Vietnam ensure the scope, scale and pace of *Renovation*, as well as avoid social unstableness at the beginning of the *Renovation* period. However, it was also said that the vigilance and caution of that VCP's policy approach had its negative aspect as it gradually diminished proactive motivation of *Renovation* policy when Vietnam entered the next stage of the *Renovation* course. And it was the time for Vietnam to work out a new strategic diplomatic orientation in order to open new opportunities, forming new motivation, to handle new obstacles from China and new challenges with ASEAN's role over security and development, as well as Vietnam's position in this organization. Even Vietnamese scholars themselves and several high-ranking officials realized that *Renovation* was a long-term, complicated and difficult process which required the VCP to have frequent changes, adjustments and renewals to be relevant to new situation requirements in an increasingly complicated world, where states' interests were always interactive, overlapping and under the domination of powers.¹⁶ Building new strategic thinkings for the

¹⁵ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Ban Tu tuong-Van hoa Trung uong, *Tai lieu hoc tap Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu 8 Ban Chap hanh Trung uong khoa IX*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005, tr.46-47, (Vietnamese). [Vietnamese Communist Party, Central Committee Department of Ideology and Culture, *Guidance Document for the Study of the Eighth Plenum Resolution*, the Ninth Central Committee, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2005, pp.46-47].

¹⁶ Nguyen Manh Cam, Tren Duong Trien Khai Chinh Sach Doi Ngoai Theo Dinh Huong Moi, trong *Doi Moi ve Doi Ngoai va Hoi Nhap Quoc Te*, Ha Noi, Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2009, tr.65, (Vietnamese). [Nguyen Manh Cam, *On the Way of Deploying External Relation Policies Following New Directions, Reform in External Relations and International Integration*, Hanoi, National Political Publishing House, 2009, p.65.]

formation of Vietnam's strategic foreign policy orientations in the new period was the urgent and vital requirements for the VCP and Vietnam's foreign affairs agencies.

4. Diplomatic strategy of active and proactive international economic integration, concurrently deploying international cooperation in other sensitive fields. Although since the very beginning after the war, the VCP has been aware that it is impossible to recover from the war consequences, rebuild the economy and develop the country unless financial, technological-technical support and assistance are received from overseas. However, the United State's refusal to war compensation, plus the Soviet Union-China tension, the intense "two-camps" ideological confrontation, as well as rigid fundamentalist awareness of VCP's leaders, led to Vietnam's one-side strategy of absolute dependence on the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries' development paradigms.¹⁷ That policy move resulted in China's objections, the United States's and the West's policy of imposing isolation on Vietnam by a comprehensive embargo order and, also neighboring countries' vigilance and neglect. Vietnam was mostly isolated from the outside world. The opportunities for international economic integration and international cooperation expansion did not almost exist. There was moment when Vietnam's diplomacy fell into deadlock situation. Vietnam's intervention into Cambodia, the border war with China led to the pinnacle of isolation for Vietnam's diplomacy.

Obstacles and confusions in strategic orientations with China originated from Vietnam's embarrassment in handling its relations between the two socialist big brothers. Those moves directly reflected contradictions and disputes within the internal VCP on post-war development orientations for Vietnam. Western scholars assumed that period (and even prior to that) the internal VCP was divided due to pro-China and pro-Soviet Union "factions"; as well as different stances and evaluations on China's strategic viewpoints, and

¹⁷ Tran Quang Co, Hoi ky Tran Quang Co, Ha Noi, 2003, (Vietnamese). [Tran Quang Co, Tran Quang Co's Memoirs, Hanoi, 2003]; See also, David W.P. Elliott, *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

the core foundations on which Vietnam's strategic decisions depended. National strategic orientations in general, foreign policy orientations in particular would be decided on the basis of these internal dispute-outcomes.

Ideology dominance and self-isolation in development orientations also played a decisive role in VCP's identification of international economic integration. Being isolated by the West and neighboring countries; however, Vietnam itself at that time isolated its international relations within socialist countries, and economic relations within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Vietnam focused on its strategic alliance with the Soviet Union. It was considered by the VCP that Western imperialist countries leading by the United States had not abandoned their "devious aims" of eliminating the socialism regime in Vietnam and eradicating VCP's leadership, which was implemented mainly through globalization and international economic integration.

Suffering the deadlock in development orientations, Vietnam's economy was on the brink of collapse; its international relations were isolated; its ideological basis was shaky when the Eastern European socialist countries and the Soviet Union faced with crises. Vietnam seemed to foresee its gloomy future. It was decided by the VCP that there was no other way but the *Renovation* one; however, what *Renovation* was, how to implement it and at which levels and speed were controversial issues. *Renovation*, in fact, was not a new issue in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War there were currents of ideas within the Party mentioning *Renovation* in thinkings and management mechanism; also models and methods of building socialism in Vietnam. After the War, these issues were mentioned again especially when China started its *Reform* and Soviet's *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* really became a robust reformist thinkings trend in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist countries. The hesitation and conservative viewpoints of VCP's highest-ranking officials then (in the early 1980s) slowed down Vietnam's *Renovation* process until mid-to-late 1980s. Vietnam's *Renovation*, despite starting late and being considered to

adapt renovation models and frameworks of its big socialist brothers, also had its own features. It could be said that *Renovation* in Vietnam did not completely repeat the steps and processes like those in China and the Soviet Union, which partly created the stability for Vietnam's society and made contributions to Vietnam's socio-economic development achievements in the *Renovation* period. Moreover, the ups and downs of the *Renovation* process also reflected arguments on viewpoints and thoughts within the internal VCP, between the radical reformist trend wishing to promote *Renovation* speed and levels and the conservative trend wishing to continue Party's control and leadership over the *Renovation* course and ensure social-political stability.

The recent diplomatic maneuvers of Vietnam, such as: actively and proactively taking part, contributing to multinational organizations and mechanisms, using them to achieve its diplomatic goals; tactically approaching the United States and Western powers, while making effort to balance and ease China's concerns, dominating its own passions and avoiding any reason which could provoke China and lead to Chinese diplomatic and economic retaliations..., raised the question of whether it could be seen as a definitely break with the policy direction based on ideological foundation and socialist orientation and a comprehensively transformation toward reality-based policy of internal socio-political-economic situation and international political structure; or just a tactical redirection and adaptation, a cunning movement to implement the omni-directional and balanced diplomacy toward the strategic socialist-oriented goal. The answer may lie deeply in the nature of Vietnamese politics which could be seen as the interplay of socialism and nationalism or in other words the interplay of ideology and reality. In order to tackle this issue, the VCP has returned to Ho Chi Minh's thoughts and made full use of his mottos of "From an unchanging stance, respond to ten thousand changes," a strategic guideline which creates a tactically flexible maneuvering room for Vietnamese foreign affairs while keeping regime and nation's strategic goals. Regarding to policy aspect, this guideline allows Vietnamese communist leaders explain policy reorientation and adjustment in short

term. The most distinctive feature of this guideline is the flexibility in tactic and the consistency in strategy. It might be the feature that Vietnamese diplomacy once had but lost and now need to rebuild. Not only being considered an oriented guideline for the implementation of diplomatic activities, the adage of “From an unchanging stance, respond to ten thousand changes,” in some certain cases could become the core basis which holds decisive role in the process of restructuring and redefining fundamental concepts of Vietnamese foreign affairs. The open and flexible diplomatic viewpoints at the Sixth Party Congress, in the Politburo Resolution No. 32, No. 13 and No. 08, and other policy developments later have been evidences of the role of the above guideline in Vietnamese Renovation foreign affairs. In the language of Western international relations theories, the application of this guideline to Vietnamese *Renovation* diplomacy, in its nature, could be seen as the combination of dialectical methodology on the basis of a realist worldview and a non-ideological approach to international relations. Therefore, by reconfirming and reapplying this guideline in Vietnam’s diplomatic theory and practice, the VCP has approached closer to realpolitik viewpoints in its policy decision-making and implementing process; or in other words, in the interplay of ideology and reality, the balance seems to be tilted to reality.¹⁸

¹⁸ Truong Giang Long, *Suc Manh Sang Tao cua Cach Mang Thang Tam*, *Tap chi Cong San*, so 89, 2005, (Vietnamese). [Truong Giang Long, *The Creative Power of the August Revolution*, *Communist Review*, vol.89, 2005. “On the basis of ‘from an unchanging stance, respond to thousand changes,’ the party must find its own path, consistent with the reality of the country. This path manifests faithfulness to the past, but isn’t bound by the past.”

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