

ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสหรัฐอเมริกาและเวียดนามในช่วงปี ค.ศ.1975 – 2011

The United States and Vietnam Relations: 1975 - 2011

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บทคัดย่อ

ระหว่างปี ค.ศ.1975 - 2011 สหรัฐอเมริกาและเวียดนาม ได้พัฒนาความสัมพันธ์จากการเป็นฝ่ายตรงข้ามกัน จนกลายมาเป็นมิตรกันในปีล่าสุด คำถามที่เกิดขึ้นคือ เกิดอะไรขึ้นกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสองประเทศในระยะเวลาสามสิบห้าปีที่ผ่านมา งานวิจัยนี้จึงได้ทำการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ฯ ในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าว ทั้งนี้ เนื่องจากมีระยะเวลาของเหตุการณ์ที่ยาวนาน งานวิจัยจึงได้มุ่งเน้นศึกษาทางสหรัฐอเมริกาเพียงด้านเดียว โดยวิเคราะห์นโยบายต่างประเทศของประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐอเมริกาแต่ละท่านที่มีต่อเวียดนามเพื่อหาปัจจัยสำคัญที่มีผลต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสองประเทศ เนื่องจากในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าว ระบบการเมืองโลกมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างเห็นได้ชัด ทั้งการเปลี่ยนแปลงจากระบบชีวอำนาจจากสองชีวอำนาจเป็นระบบชีวอำนาจเดี่ยว และความแตกต่างของระบอบการปกครองของสองประเทศ งานวิจัยจึงได้แบ่งช่วงเวลาเป็นออกเป็น ช่วงหลังสงครามเวียดนาม (ค.ศ.1975 - 1989) และช่วงหลังสงครามเย็น (ค.ศ.1989 - 2011) โดยจะนำปัจจัยสำคัญที่มีผลต่อความสัมพันธ์ฯ มาใช้เป็นหลักเกณฑ์ในการทำนายแนวทางความสัมพันธ์ฯ ที่จะเกิดขึ้นในอนาคต จากการศึกษาพบว่า ข้อจำกัดสำหรับความสัมพันธ์ฯ ในช่วงหลังสงครามเวียดนาม ไม่ได้เกิดจากแรงกดดันของรัฐบาลสหรัฐฯ และความคิดเห็นของประชาชนที่หวาดกลัวผลลัพธ์จากสงครามเวียดนามเท่านั้น แต่ยังเกิดจากนโยบายผ่อนคลายนความตึงเครียด (détente) และระบอบการปกครองที่มีความแตกต่างกันด้วย สำหรับช่วงหลังสงครามเย็น ปัญหาเชลยศึกและทหารอเมริกันที่สูญหายในสงครามเวียดนาม (POW/MIA) เป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการฟื้นฟูความสัมพันธ์ฯ ในขณะที่ผลประโยชน์ทางเศรษฐกิจ และความมั่นคงของสหรัฐฯ ในภูมิภาคได้รับความสำคัญมากขึ้นในภายหลัง โดยงานวิจัยทำนายว่าความสัมพันธ์ฯ ในอนาคตจะขึ้นอยู่กับปัจจัยสำคัญ คือ นโยบายต่างประเทศของสหรัฐฯ ที่มุ่งเน้นรักษาผลประโยชน์ทางเศรษฐกิจของสหรัฐฯ ในเวียดนาม และการรักษาดุลอำนาจทางทหารกับประเทศจีน

คำสำคัญ: ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศ สหรัฐอเมริกา เวียดนาม

Abstract

From 1975 to 2011, the relationship between the United States and Vietnam changed from that of being foes to friends. The question is how did this happen? This thesis studies the relationship between the United States and Vietnam from 1975 to 2011, a substantial thirty-five year period. As the study considers more than two decades, it is limited to only the American side. American leaders who defined the United States foreign policy towards Vietnam as well as the factors that affected the relations are investigated. This study divides time into two periods, the Post-Vietnam War period (from 1975-1989 B.C.) and the Post-Cold War period (from 1989-2011 B.C.). Since the political regime has dramatically changed from bipolar to unipolar and the regime has been very different from others during the cold war this thesis attempts to predict the future of U.S.-Vietnam relations by analyzing the major factors that affect it. This study shows that, in the Post-Vietnam War era, the constraints put on U.S. - Vietnam relations were applied not only because congress and public opinion were against the Vietnam War, but also due to the U.S. détente policy and the influence of the political regime at that time. During the Post-Cold War period, the POW/MIA (Prisoners of War/Missing in Action) was a major issue influencing U.S. bilateral goals. The POW/MIA issue was eventually surpassed by economic interests and security concerns. Consequently, the future of U.S.-Vietnam relations, based on U.S. foreign policy, will likely be influenced by economic reasons and the military powers of China.

Keywords: *relations, United States, Vietnam*

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Background

On September of 2010, former cold war enemies, the United States and Vietnam, demonstrated the end of diplomatic hostilities with a symbolic gesture of military cooperation with the U.S. nuclear super-carrier USS GEORGE WASHINGTON, cruising in the territorial waters of Vietnam. This occasion initiated the beginning of friendly diplomatic relations between the two countries and would lead to a new era of cooperation between them. The visit comes 35 years after the Vietnam War, which ended on April 30, 1975, when northern communist forces

seized control of the U.S.-backed capital of South Vietnam, reuniting the country. The Communist victory concluded three decades of the United States intervention in Vietnam. The war generated considerable social and political conflicts in the United States, massive disruption in Vietnam, and was enormously costly to both sides.

1.2 Statement of problems

The various foreign policies, political leaders, and all other social, economic, political, military, and environmental factors all played a role in taking this relationship from where it was after the Vietnam War to the collegial relationship it is today.

Thus, the question is, how did their relations lead up to this unlikely cooperation? Why did their relations come to be this way? What factors drove the relationship in this direction? Finally, what will happen in the future?

1.3 Review of Literature

The foreign policy of the United States is the way in which it interacts with foreign nations and sets standards of interaction for its organizations, corporations and individual citizens. The U.S. Constitution divides foreign policy-making power between the President and the Senate, giving them shared authority over the making of treaties and the extension of diplomatic recognition to other nations. Specifically, the Constitution gives the Senate the power of "Advice and Consent" on treaties, which the President is responsible for negotiating. The Senate also has the power of "Advice and Consent" in the appointment of ambassadors nominated by the President (The United States Constitution, Article II, Section 2) (Spring, 2012).

Rosati and Scott (2004) explained that the failure in Vietnam generated a chain of international and domestic changes, which resulted in three new patterns in U.S. foreign policy. First, with each new administration, there was a modification in the direction of U.S. national security policy. Second, with the growth of economic problems at home and abroad, foreign economic policy became "high" policy again, a priority on all the presidents' major agendas. Third, unlike the Cold War years, after the Vietnam War it became very difficult for any president or administration to devise a foreign policy

that responded successfully to changes in the global environment and obtained substantial domestic support over time. This forced every president to change or modify his foreign policy during his term, usually toward the political center. In contrast, the end of the Cold War, with the declining threat of communism and its collapse in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as changes in the American and global economy, provided current and future administrations with new opportunities and constraints in their conduct of foreign policy.

Hook and Spanier (2013) stated that Americans' attitude toward government is driven by a sense of moral mission because Americans have commonly viewed themselves as part of an exceptional society. For example, Ronald Reagan observed late in the Cold War, "There is sin and evil in the world, and we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might". These religious attitudes have long influenced American foreign policy, and their impact has been vital, especially on the use of its military forces. The immoral enemy of the United States, who threatens American integrity, if not the existence, of the nation's democratic principles has to be destroyed. It became a running theme that American power had to be "righteous" power, and only by exercising it fully can Americans ensure salvation and prosperity. (Hook and Spanier, 2013)

Rosati and Scott (2011) explained the U.S. president's role in foreign policy since World War II with three patterns. First, during the Cold War years, the president and the executive branch dominated U.S.

foreign policymaking. Second, in the post-Vietnam War years, the president's power declined within government and in society, making it more difficult for the president to manage and govern foreign policy effectively. Third, with the collapse of the Cold War, this post-Vietnam pattern continued, however, presidents now had greater opportunities to lead but also faced considerable political risks in attempting to govern foreign policy, as experienced by presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. Rosati and Scott (2011) also explained that, during the Cold War, presidential power in the making of foreign policy became supreme. In contrast, since the Vietnam War, the president's ability to govern and lead foreign policy declined and became much more complex. At the end of the Cold War, the paradox of presidential power, the presidential life cycle, and the crisis of leadership power have further intensified. (Rosati and Scott, 2011)

The relations of the United States and Vietnam during 1975 to 2011 were best characterized by confrontation and hostility. After that, at the end of the Cold War, a new pattern of interaction between Vietnam and the United States replaced confrontation as the dominant pattern of relations. A new and cooperative relationship between Vietnam and the US is not only in the interests of the two nations but also contributes to regional peace, security and development. (Lan, 2001)

2. Objectives of the research study

1. To study the relationship between the United States and Vietnam during 1975 - 2011.
2. To analyze factors that influenced the relationship between the United States and Vietnam during 1975 - 2011.
3. To predict the future of the U.S. - Vietnam Relations.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research - since this paper studies the relationship of two units, and the objectives are to analyze the factors of their relationship, it is necessary to approach the matter with an ideological and analytical approach. Statistics from the collected data will be only used for analysis and estimation as well as to describe the relationships and analyze the factors concerning the issues as listed throughout this study.

3.2 Data Collection - The data used in this paper comprising of text book, news, articles in academic journals, as well as official publication. The data is the history from 1975 to 2011, involving the United States and Vietnam, comprising of the Vietnam War, the Cold War, Post-Cold War, Sino-Vietnam War, Economic Crisis in their location, the rising of China as well as Maritime dispute in South China Sea.

3.3 Data Analysis - Collected data will be analyzed based on Qualitative Analysis. The study examines the relationship between the United States and Vietnam from 1975 to 2011, concentrating on major issues and other relative data. Because the duration of history being studied (1975 - 2011) calls for a substantial amount of data, the study concentrates on

one side. Moreover, by comparing the U.S. with Vietnam, the U.S. presents heavier military, political, and economic power, the study then choose to concentrate on the U.S. side. The U.S. perspective will focus on each American leader and the influences that drove not only the presidents' power, but also the economic, political, and security aspects of the country. The study intends to define United States foreign policy toward Vietnam and analyze the factors that affected the relationship over time. Since the political regime dramatically change from bipolar to unipolar during the period and the U.S. and Vietnam were different during the Cold War, the study will separate the period into two periods: the post-Vietnam War period, and the post-Cold War period. Finally, the study will assess the future of the U.S.-Vietnam relation by utilizing past information and historical data to predict how the relationship will endure upcoming stress.

4. Result and Discussion

After communist North Vietnam's victory over U.S.-backed South Vietnam in 1975, the United States closed its Embassy and evacuated all Embassy personnel. As a result, U.S.-Vietnam relations remained essentially frozen until the mid-1990s. Since then, bilateral ties expanded remarkably, to the point where the relationship became virtually normalized (Manyin, 2012). In 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia following border clashes. U.S. policy held that normalization of its relations with Vietnam be kept on the condition that they withdraw the Vietnamese military from Cambodia due in part to a

comprehensive political settlement and on continued cooperation on POW/MIA issues and other humanitarian concerns.

In 1995, the United States announced the formal normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Since then, U.S. relations with Vietnam have become increasingly cooperative and broad (Martin, 2011). Since 2002, the United States and Vietnam expanded political and security ties, symbolized by reciprocal summits that have been held annually since 2005 (Manyin, 2009). Vietnam is one of the largest recipients of U.S. assistance in East Asia. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defense signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding during the Defense Policy Dialogue that will further advance bilateral defense cooperation.

4.1 The Post-Vietnam War Period

In the years following the Vietnam War, presidential power was at an obvious decline. Although the president was able to initiate foreign policy in areas that he found interesting or concerning, the policies still needed approval from Congress; however, most were opposed, making the president anything but an authority on foreign policy. The constraints on the U.S.-Vietnam relation were not only that congress and public opinion were afraid of the Vietnam War, but also the U.S. détente policy and the political regime in the period because during the Cold War, the political regime was a serious problem for world peace. For example, Carter's administration tried to normalized relations with Vietnam but Vietnam aligned itself with the USSR and invaded

Cambodia. After the invasion of Cambodia, Carter halted all U.S. efforts to improve relations with Vietnam until the end of the Cold War.

The pattern of the U.S. foreign policy toward Vietnam during the terms of Ford, Carter and Reagan were the same. They all continued to try and neutralize the United States' relationship with Vietnam by offering humanitarian, economic, and military aid to them in exchange for investigative efforts on U.S. POW/MIA. For example, during the Carter administration, the U.S. proposed that diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam could be established, and the U.S. would lift export and asset controls on Vietnam. The Vietnamese responded that they would neither agree to establish relations nor furnish information on U.S. POW/MIAs until the United States pledged to provide several billion dollars in postwar reconstruction aid. Under Reagan's administration, the U.S. clarified that progress toward normal relations depended on Vietnam's full cooperation in obtaining the fullest possible account for U.S. personnel listed as POW/MIAs.

4.2 The Post-Cold War Period

The Post-Cold War period is very different from recent years because the Communist Regime finally ceased to be a threat that needed protection by the United States. Foreign economy became more important than security policy. According to this study, American presidents were able to focus on economic dimensions or relevant issues rather than national security. Since then, economic interests of the

U.S. became the most necessary agenda for the U.S.-Vietnam relation in the Post-Cold War period.

The pattern of the U.S. foreign policy during Bush Senior, Clinton, and Bush Junior period involved continuous efforts to try and normalize the country's relationship with Vietnam. In the hopes of accessing information regarding the whereabouts of the POW/MIA servicemen from the Vietnam War, earlier post-war presidents offered various humanitarian, economic, and military aids to Vietnam. However, unlike the Post-Vietnam War period, the U.S. goal in bilateral relations changed as the priorities shifted into that of economic interest. Although the POW/MIA was the main U.S. problem at the beginning of period, it was surpassed by economic interest and security. From the presidential terms of Bush senior to Bush junior, economic interest became the most important factor influencing the direction of foreign policy.

During the Obama administration, national security has been the most important goal. According to this, the rise of China and the South China Sea dispute became the most influential factors that forced the U.S. military presence into the region, especially in Vietnam. In 2011, the U.S. had two main interests in Vietnam: economic interest on bilateral trade with Vietnam who is the highest capability in ASEAN and large U.S. investment in Vietnam, and containment for China maritime power to maintain U.S. interest in the South China Sea. In fact, the two main U.S. interests relate to the projection of Chinese power during the South China Sea maritime dispute. For instance, if China exceeded power in the region and

the dispute became serious, it would not only damage the U.S. investment in Vietnam but also decline U.S. interest in the South China Sea.

4.3 The Future of U.S. Vietnam relations

The study shows that the main factors that inspired the relation were the stability it provided for the U.S. economy in Vietnam and the military power of China. Based on the two major factors above, the U.S. economic interests were affected most by the projection of China's power. According to this, the future of the U.S.-Vietnam relations based on the U.S. foreign policy goal could be seen in three different ways:

Firstly, in the case that China was threatened by a serious problem that would hinder its military power—such as political problem and economic problem—the South China Sea dispute and China influence in the region would be declined. The U.S. would then likely ease the pressure on the South China Sea and the Power of China. In this regard, the threat from China would no longer exist; furthermore, the U.S. would no longer need to expend costs towards the containment of Chinese power in those regions. Ultimately, the U.S. would reduce military cooperation with Vietnam because the U.S. might reduce military assistance and allocate funds elsewhere where new economic interests exist.

Secondly, in this scenario, the power of China is still ongoing and the South China Sea dispute was not resolved. Both the U.S. and Vietnam, in an effort to prevent China's dominance, strengthen their military cooperation. The U.S. might use the Vietnamese naval base—for example; Kamran Bay—

for the military deployment. As long as the China power was balanced the South China Sea dispute still existed, the two countries and even China could benefit their own interests.

Thirdly, the most dangerous of the three, China continues to extend its military power in the region and the South China Sea dispute become serious. Vietnam might confront China with U.S. support. Worst case scenario, it possibly leads to war. According the history in this study, the U.S. would be very likely to intervene because the U.S. goal strives to ensure that the U.S. maintains the freedom to navigate in and around the South China Sea. Moreover, the U.S. would secure the economic and investment ties that exist in Vietnam.

Though the way of relations relies on economic interest and China's Power, some factors could affect the future of relations: Sino-American relations, Sino-Vietnam relation, influences of Vietnamese-American citizens; Vietnamese workers in U.S. overseas companies in Vietnam; and the strength of the ASEAN community.

5. Discussion

Studying the relationship between the United States and Vietnam is will not only help every country learn about the way U.S. foreign policy utilized in Vietnam, but also help them to know the factors that influenced the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, including factors that are likely to influence their future relationship. Moreover, the results will be valuable data for any public and private sectors in Vietnam and others such as Thailand in order to

analyze and to better predict the outcomes of situations by using the past as a tool for the overall improvement of foreign relations with the United States and all other countries.

The study shows that the U.S. foreign policy towards Vietnam since the Vietnam War is governed by economic interests and military security in the Southeast Asia, which is why the U.S. return to strengthen economic and military relations with Vietnam after the Cold War despite the United States suffered the biggest humiliation of its history in the Vietnam War. So it is likely that the United States can go to any extent in the furtherance of its interest, for example, After Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia in 1972, the United States supported the Khmer Rouge against the Cambodian government despite the whole world knowing the brutalities of the blood thirsty regime of Pol Pot. Thus, Vietnam and others such as Thailand should tread carefully in moving ahead with the relationship and take all the assurances of USA with a pinch of salt, as well as give priority to strengthen the ASEAN community.

6. Conclusion

From the objectives of this study; to study the relationship between the United States and Vietnam during 1975 -2011; to analyze factors that influenced the relationship between the United States and Vietnam during 1975 - 2011 and; to predict the future of the U.S. - Vietnam relations. The study examines a substantial thirty-five year period by analyzing each American leader in order to reach a definition for the foreign policy of the United States

toward Vietnam and analyzing the factors that affected the relation. Finally, the study predicts the future of the U.S.-Vietnam relation by using the major factors that affect it.

In this study, in the Post-Vietnam War, the constraint of the U.S.-Vietnam relations was not only the congress and public opinion that are afraid of Vietnam War, but also the U.S. détente policy and the Political regime in the period. In the Post-Cold War period, the POW/MIA was the major issue for U.S. goal in bilateral relation. The POW/MIA issue was eventually surpassed by economic interest and security concerns. According to this, the future of the U.S.-Vietnam relations based on the U.S. foreign policy would be inspired by the U.S. economy in Vietnam and the military power of China.

Though the way of relations relies on economic interests and China's Power, some factors could affect the future of relations: Sino-American relations, Sino-Vietnam relation, influences of Vietnamese-American citizens; Vietnamese workers in U.S. overseas companies in Vietnam; and the strength of the ASEAN community. For more accuracy for the further study of the U.S.-Vietnam relations in the future, it should include the factors that mentioned above.

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