

THE UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM RELATIONSHIP:
BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAM

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Strategic Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

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The relationship between the United States and Vietnam, the two former enemies, is a topic of great interest. It has taken a long time, almost twenty years since the normalization of relations between the two nations in 1995, for both countries to reach the current stage in their bilateral relations. The U.S.-Vietnam relationship has been increasingly cemented in the context of the contemporary strategic realities of the world, Asia, and the complexity of the South China Sea dispute. However, because of their inherent differences, there are areas both countries need to continue working on for further improvement. This thesis scrutinizes the benefits and challenges for Vietnam as it develops a closer relationship with the U.S. It starts by reviewing the process of establishing and improving the relationship using the DIME model of national power as an analytical framework. The research then examines Vietnam's long-term national strategic goals and highlights its national strategic objectives. Analyses of the historic events and bilateral agreements in the U.S.-Vietnam relations reveal the congruence between U.S. interests and policies and Vietnam's long-term strategic objectives as well as challenges which must be addressed in order for Vietnam to achieve its strategic objectives. The thesis concludes by highlighting the benefits that would accrue to Vietnam from a closer bilateral relationship in terms of the economy, security, and national defense as well as the challenges posed by the China factor and the differences in political system and perspectives that exist in the Vietnamese and U.S. governments.

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ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BTA	Bilateral Trade Agreement
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
IMET	International Military Education and Training
MIA	Missing in Action
NTR	Normal Trade Relations
PNTR	Permanent Normal Trade Relations
POW	Prisoner of War
SOE	State-owned Enterprises
TPP	Trans Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VPA	Vietnam People's Army
WTO	World Trade Organization

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The past, no one can change, but the future belongs to our responsibility.¹

— Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Communist
Party of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

It has been almost 40 years since the war between the United States (U.S.) and Vietnam came to an end. During this time, the governments and people of both countries have made strenuous efforts to heal the wounds of war and develop bilateral relationships in many fields ranging from military defense to economy. In July 2015, two nations celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations. Amid the trend for increased global integration, the two countries have striven to find common ground on which to deal with issues of shared interest. As the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam has said, the past cannot be changed but the future of our two countries is ours to determine.

Many official visits of high-ranking delegations and dialogues between the U.S. and Vietnam have taken place. In November 2000, President Bill Clinton visited Hanoi. That was the first visit of a U.S. president since the war. In July 2013, President Obama welcomed President Truong Tan Sang to the White House. During the visit, a joint statement was made by the two presidents: “As we increase consultation, increase cooperation, increase trade, and scientific and education exchanges, ultimately, that’s going to be good for the prosperity and opportunities of the people here in the U.S., as

¹ Trong P. Nguyen, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Visit to the U.S. and meeting with the President of the U.S. at Oval Office, White House, July 7, 2015).

well as good for the opportunities and prosperity of the people of Vietnam.”² Recently, the visit of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam to the U.S. in July, 2015, contributed to further strengthening the U.S.-Vietnam comprehensive partnership. This visit raised the relationship of the two countries to new heights. Both sides expressed their intention to further develop bilateral cooperation in maritime security, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, criminal justice and law enforcement sector cooperation, and regional security.

This thesis examines the current U.S.-Vietnam relationship in order to explain what potential benefits could result from the relationship for Vietnam, the factors that could prevent or promote a closer relationship between the two countries, and potential challenges faced by Vietnam in order to achieve its strategic goals in the context of closer relations with the U.S. The research starts with an overview of background knowledge, including Vietnam’s geographical location, a summary of the history of the U.S.-Vietnam relations, and initial insights into benefits and challenges of the relationship.

Vietnam’s Geographical Location

Vietnam is located on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. It has a long land border and coastline of 4,550 km, with China to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the west, and the Eastern Sea (South China Sea) of the Pacific Ocean to the east. On a map, Viet Nam is an S-shaped strip of land, stretching from 23°23’ to 8°27’ north latitude. The country’s total length is 1,650 km from the northernmost point to the southernmost point. Its width, from the eastern coast

² USAID, *Development Cooperation Strategy for Vietnam 2014-2018* (Hanoi, Vietnam: U.S. Agency for International Development in Vietnam, 2013), i, accessed November 14, 2016, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/CDCS%20Vietnam%20public_version%20final.pdf.

to the western border, is about 500 km at the widest part and about 50 km at the narrowest part.³

Vietnam's location makes it an intersection of air and maritime routes between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This gives the country a favorable position for exchange and cooperation with other countries in military matters and trade in the region, and throughout the world. Cam Ranh Bay, which is located in Khanh Hoa province, 450 miles south of China, is an especially strategic place. During the war between the U.S. and Vietnam, Cam Ranh Bay was an important basing area for the U.S. and South Vietnamese navies. Today, it remains a major military port because of its special natural features:

Cam Ranh Port is surrounded by many islands of different sizes. Besides narrow entrances, Cam Ranh is also encompassed by approximately 400-meter-high mountain ranges, thereby making it almost impenetrable to winds and storms. Besides, this difficult terrain helps to keep control of the surrounding areas easily. That is why this navy port serves as a formidable fortress, being difficult to attack, yet easy to defend. The water surface covers a total area of 98km², with the water depth commonly ranging from 16m to 25m and the deepest places reaching 32m. This allows about 40 large-sized battleships, even aircraft carriers, to anchor. If air defense missiles are deployed in Cam Ranh Bay and surrounding high altitudes, the entire Malacca Strait and Singapore Strait are brought under the control of the firepower of those missiles.⁴

The Relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam after 1975 Where It Is Now, Where It Is Going

Since the war, the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam has experienced ups and downs. This is entirely reasonable because of the effects of the war and political and

³ Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America "Geography," accessed November 14, 2015, <http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/vietnam/geography>.

⁴ Minh Tan, "Báo Trung Quốc: Quân cảng Cam Ranh lợi hại nhất châu Á," *VTC News*, September 2, 2012, accessed November 16, 2015, <http://vtc.vn/bao-trung-quoc-quan-cang-cam-ranh-loi-hai-nhat-chau-a.311.346941.htm>.

economic differences. During the Carter Administration, the U.S. no longer ruled out Vietnam's application for being a member of the United Nations (UN). Additionally, the U.S. showed that it wanted a relationship with Vietnam and would lift export controls on Vietnam. Vietnam claimed that the U.S. needed to aid it in post-war reconstruction, but no money was provided by the U.S. at that time. The relationship became even worse due to both sides' different perspectives on Vietnam's participation in fighting against the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. The U.S. Congress did not want to support the relationship. It responded unfavorably to the Carter Administration initiatives and the Vietnamese reaction. In 1977, both houses of Congress went on record as strongly opposed to U.S. aid to Vietnam.⁵ The situation did not change during the Reagan-Bush Administrations and until Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia in 1989.

In 1991, the U.S. presented a road map for phased normalization with Vietnam. A U.S. office was established in Hanoi to deal with prisoner of war (POW)-missing in action (MIA) affairs. "The U.S. office began operation in mid-1991, and the aid was transferred by the end of FY 1991. . . . Also in 1991, the U.S. eased travel restrictions on Vietnamese diplomats stationed at the UN in New York, and on U.S. organized travel to Vietnam."⁶ Cooperation on POW-MIA issues continued to improve with the goodwill of both sides. Vietnam authorized U.S. investigators to access data and local areas and contact witnesses to search for American Soldiers missing in the war. To reciprocate, the U.S. provided supporting packages to help Vietnam such as humanitarian aid and disaster

⁵ Mark E. Manyin, *The Vietnam-US Normalization Process* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 17, 2005): CRS-2, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA461414>.

⁶ Ibid., CRS-4.

assistance for Vietnamese flood victims. The U.S. also supported Vietnam by allowing Vietnamese officials to access U.S. records when searching for MIAs.

The relationship witnessed much progress during the Clinton Administration. “Early moves to improve relations during the Clinton Administration included the President’s announcement on July 1, 1993, that the U.S. would no longer oppose arrangements supported by France, Japan, and others allowing for resumed international financial institutions aid to Vietnam.”⁷ Although some controversy still existed, a January, 1994, vote in the Senate urged that the trade embargo against Vietnam be lifted. In February 1994, President Clinton ordered an end to the trade embargo. The event that truly turned a new page in the history of the relationship was President Clinton’s and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet’s announcement of the normalization of the diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam on July 11, 1995.

Since the U.S trade embargo against Vietnam was lifted in 1994, Vietnam’s economy has gradually integrated into the regional and global economies. In 2001, Vietnam and the U.S. signed the Bilateral Trade Agreements (BTAs). The BTA created favorable conditions for an increase in trade between the U.S. and Vietnam.

The BTA led to a sharp rise in U.S.-Vietnam trade, which in 2004, was worth over \$6.2 billion, more than four times the level in 2001. . . . Most of the increase in U.S.-Vietnam trade since 2001 has come from a sharp rise in clothing imports from Vietnam, which were over \$2.6 billion in 2004, up from the \$45 million-\$50 million range that Vietnam had recorded in 2000 and 2001.⁸

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., CRS-6.

Table 1. U.S. Vietnam Trade before and after the BTA
(millions of dollars)

	U.S. Imports from Vietnam	U.S. Exports to Vietnam	Total Trade	Trade Balance
1994	50.5	172.2	222.7	121.7
2000	827.4	330.5	1,157.9	-496.9
2001	1,026.4	393.8	1,420.2	-632.6
2002	2,391.7	551.9	2,943.6	-1,839.8
2003	4,472.0	1,291.1	5,763.1	-3,180.9
2004	5,161.1	1121.9	6,283.0	-4,039.2
Jan–Apr 2004	1,470.8	212.7	1,683.5	1,258.1
Jan–Apr 2004	1,920.7	275.5	2,196.2	1,645.2
Major Imports from Vietnam	clothing, frozen shrimp, footwear, wooden furniture, petroleum products, cashew nuts, coffee, travel bags			
Major Exports to Vietnam	aircraft, mining equipment, electronic machinery, steel wire, raw cotton, plastics			

Source: Mark E. Manyin, *The Vietnam-US Normalization Process* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 17, 2005): CRS-6, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA461414>.

In May 2006, another BTA on the terms of Vietnam’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) was reached by the U.S. and Vietnam. This paved the way for Vietnam being granted membership in the biggest trade organization in the world in 2007.

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement that was signed in June 2007 led to a continuous increase in bilateral trade during the following years. “Bilateral trade in 2012 was approximately \$25 billion, \$20 billion of which was exports to the U.S. The U.S. is recognized as Vietnam’s largest single export market, although the European Union as a whole registered similar trade numbers in 2012.”⁹ In his 2015 Ambassador

⁹ USAID, *Country Development Cooperation Strategy for Vietnam 2014-2018*, 2.

Review, “Twenty Years of Diplomatic Relations with Vietnam-And What Comes Next,” the U.S. Ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Ted Osius, mentions, “Annual trade volume increased from less than \$500 million to \$35 billion in 20 years of normalized relations, although growth in U.S imports of Vietnamese goods has been faster than growth of our exports to Vietnam.”¹⁰

The relationship has become closer as official visits of senior leaders of both countries happen more frequently. The visit of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong, to the U.S. in July 2015 marked a crucial turning point in the relationship with a new height in the relationship between the two countries being reached. Both countries continued negotiating to reach the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, and establish a private university—Fulbright University—that would be used as a model in Vietnam.

In terms of defense cooperation, the milestones marking substantial progress are the 2011 Defense Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding for Advancing Bilateral Defense Cooperation, and the Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations signed at the ceremony by U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and Vietnamese Defense Minister General Phung Quang Thanh on June 1, 2015. Additionally, in 2013, the Chief of the General Staff of the Vietnam People’s Army (VPA), Do Ba Ty, visited the U.S.; and then U.S. General Martin Dempsey became the first chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to visit Vietnam since 1971.

¹⁰ Ted Osius, “Twenty Years of Diplomatic Relations with Vietnam-And What Comes Next,” *Council of American Ambassadors* (Spring 2015), accessed November 14, 2015, <https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/spring-2015/twenty-years-of-diplomatic-relations-with-vietnam-and-what-comes-next>.

Benefits of the Closer U.S.-Vietnam Relationship

In international cooperation, national interests are always calculated by countries. Common interests are one of many factors drawing countries together. Vietnam and the U.S. are two countries on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean, far apart geographically. However, they share common interests and issues.

From the U.S. perspective, Vietnam is an open and potential market that many international investors want to enter. During almost 30 years since the renovation (*doi moi*), Vietnam was one of the world's fastest-growing countries. Also, Vietnam has had a growing influence and an increasingly important position in Southeast Asia. The U.S. believes that the American business community plays a critical role in expanding American relations with different parts of the world; and the American business community does not want to be left behind in the increasingly competitive situation.¹¹ For Americans, developing new markets has been crucial.

Besides economic interests, Vietnam and the U.S. share a number of other interests and concerns. There are Vietnam War legacy issues such as clearing all questions surrounding the POW-MIA concerns and the different perspectives of both governments on human rights. Traditional and non-traditional security threats, including natural disasters, wildlife trafficking, water security, and pandemics, are issues on which the U.S. wants to work together with Vietnam. Of special concern is China, which is making the U.S. and other countries in the world worry about the security situation and

¹¹ Richard Solomon, "US-Vietnam Relations: Requirements for Normalization," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 1, no. 16 (December 1990): 332, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/233236449?accountid=28992>.

freedom of navigation in the South China Sea by claiming the nine-dash line and constantly building artificial islands. Having a closer relationship with Vietnam may help the U.S. and Vietnam deal with these issues.

From Vietnam's standpoint, with its desire to be friends with all countries in the world, the state of its relations with the U.S. is important. The U.S. is a huge market, which is already Vietnam's biggest export destination. Investment and cooperation with the U.S. has brought benefits to Vietnam. Upgrading the relationship with the U.S. will further boost Vietnam's economy. This has become more important since one of the priorities of Vietnam is economic development through the socialist-oriented market economy. A close relationship with the U.S. has facilitated the process of integrating the Vietnamese economy into the global economy. Vietnam also needs a favorable international economic environment—to which it sees U.S. support as critical—to enable the country's economy to continue to expand so that it can achieve its goal of becoming an industrialized country by 2020.¹² Additionally, Vietnam is also concerned about the war legacy. Since the normalization of diplomatic relations, the U.S. has supported Vietnam with a number of projects to overcome the aftermath of the war such as locating and neutralizing unexploded ordnance (UXO) and mitigating the effects of the chemical defoliant Agent Orange. Cooperation on the basis of mutual benefits will help Vietnam to gradually resolve these problems. Lastly, Vietnam is concerned about China's expansion in the South China Sea. The U.S. presence in the region and its cooperation will improve

¹² Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.–Vietnam Relations in 2013* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 6, 2010), 5, accessed November 14, 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40208.pdf>.

Vietnam's capabilities to protect its territory as well as support Vietnam in solving issues through peaceful means in accordance with international laws.

Challenges to Developing a Closer Relationship

Although the American and Vietnamese governments have made significant progress in bilateral relations, there are a number of factors that limit the relationship. One is differences between the two countries' political systems, cultures, perspectives, and beliefs. It is impossible that either Vietnam or the U.S. would change their system or beliefs to accord with that of the other. Even, reducing differences to find a common voice in a given area is a delicate process that needs to be worked out very gradually. How long the process will take depends on the efforts of both countries. Secondly, the effect of the war means that building trust will also take time. Thirdly, a closer relationship between Vietnam and the U.S. will raise China's concern regarding U.S. arms sales to Vietnam and a greater U.S. presence in the South China Sea disputes. From Vietnam's point of view, Vietnam wants to make friends with every country in the world and certainly does not desire to escalate tensions in the relationship with China.

Limitations

Because of limited time, this paper only aims to examine benefits and challenges for Vietnam, associated with a closer U.S.-Vietnam relationship. It will not intend to build a model or call for an alliance in the relationship between two countries. Moreover, the two countries have different perspectives on political systems, human rights, worker rights etc. The time available makes it is impossible for the thesis to discuss in detail such

different perspectives which are reasonable and accepted in each country. Instead, the research only brings up differences for the sake of revealing benefits and challenges.

Delimitations

The thesis is restricted to case studies and historical events between the U.S. and Vietnam. The only external factor which will be examined is China. Although other countries exert influence on the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, they will not be included in this study.

Significance

The study is being conducted in the context of a significant improvement in the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. Never in history have these two countries had a closer relationship than they do at present, which makes the thesis timely and useful. Studying the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam provides valuable information for the study of international relations in general because it is an improving relationship between two former enemies. The outcome of the research can be a reference for policy makers involved in developing relationships between countries that have significant differences but share a number of common interests. Moreover, understanding the benefits of a closer U.S.-Vietnam relationship may encourage other countries to pursue peace and stability in the region and the world. Finally, identifying benefits and emerging challenges contributes to quickening the formation of a closer relationship.

Primary Question

What are benefits and challenges of a closer bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam for Vietnam?

Secondary Questions

What are Vietnam's strategic objectives?

What are U.S. interests and policies towards relationship with Vietnam?

What influence does China have on the relationship?

What is the existing trend in development?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To lay the foundation for further analysis, this chapter will take previous literature on the subject into consideration. The literature review will examine the U.S.-Vietnam relationship based on the DIME model of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic).

DIME

The DIME model is mentioned in the U.S. doctrine, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for Armed Forces of the United States*. It is a tool to look at the national power of a nation using four elements: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic.

The first element of the model is “Diplomatic.” Joint Publication 1 considers diplomacy to be the principal instrument for engaging with other states and foreign groups in order to advance values (U.S. values), interests, and objectives. It helps organize coalitions and alliances, including states and non-state entities, as partners, surrogates, and others.¹³ “Information” also plays an important role. With the revolution in digital communications, information can be globally transmitted instantaneously. People easily and rapidly gain knowledge about what is happening throughout the world. Now, the concept of information as an instrument of national power is not only connected to nation-states but also non-state actors.¹⁴ “Military” strength reflects national power. It

¹³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2013), I-12.

¹⁴ Ibid.

is a fundamental instrument in support of a country's security goals. Military capabilities are various and useful in both conflict and non-conflict situations, such as in humanitarian emergency relief.¹⁵ Military power involves not only a large number of personnel and a huge amount of modern equipment but also leadership and morale. The last element is "Economic." A strong economy with free access to global markets and resources is a fundamental engine that enables the general welfare of the population. It also enables of strong national defense.¹⁶ It is obvious that a strong economy produces both military and non-military national power. A strong economy equips its military with modern equipment and favorable conditions for training. It also allows states with strong economies to exert non-military power by allowing them to apply sanctions—such as embargoes—or influence other nation's positively through grants or loans.

Diplomatic

The diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam has gone through many vicissitudes since the war ended. The constant effort of both sides has been to break through barriers and better foster ties. Significant landmarks are the "roadmap plan" of normalization of ties in 1991, President William Clinton's announcement of normalization of relations with Vietnam in 1995, and many official visits of high-ranking leaders of both countries. In 2000, President Clinton became the first president to visit Vietnam since Richard Nixon went to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) in 1969. In 2013, President Truong Tan Sang visited the U.S. The Joint Statement signed by him and

¹⁵ Ibid., 113.

¹⁶ Ibid.

President Barack Obama marked a notable advance in the diplomatic relationship. Recently, in June 2015, the relationship reached a new height with the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong's visit. This was also the first time that a General Secretary of the Vietnam Communist Party set foot on the White House.

There had been a number of frictions before the proposed "roadmap." After 1975, Vietnam used to be classified by the U.S. as an "enemy" under the "Trading with the Enemy Act."¹⁷ The different perspectives between the U.S. and Vietnam on Vietnam's participation in fighting against the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia was also an obstacle to the normalization. However, normalization was an inevitable trend when both sides realized that it was time for change. "U.S.-Vietnamese normalization at this time, a critical time the world over, would offer both countries a number of benefits, both political and economic."¹⁸

The diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam started to thrive in the early 1990s when the U.S. presented Hanoi a roadmap for phased normalization in 1991. In the course of improving its relation with Vietnam, one of the U.S concerns is the POW-MIA issue. The U.S.-Vietnamese cooperation on this issue began to increase in 1987 after the visit of General John Vessey as President Reagan's Special Emissary for POW-MIA Issues to Vietnam. As General Vessey told Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach during his visit to Washington in October 1990, it was essential that we deal

¹⁷ Kelly S. Nelson, "U.S.-Vietnamese Normalization," *Asian Affairs* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 55, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172149>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

effectively with the POW-MIA issue and be able to lay ongoing doubts and concerns to rest.¹⁹ One year after the roadmap was laid out, Vietnam allowed the U.S. to open an office in Hanoi to handle POW-MIA affairs. In March 1992, the visit by Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Solomon to Hanoi represented the highest-level visit to Vietnam by an American diplomat in several years. Vietnam permitted Solomon's delegation to conduct an unprecedented spot check on a POW-MIA live-sighting report.²⁰ In addition, at that time, Vietnam attempted to carry out its renovation program (*doi moi*) and reaped its initial achievements. One of them was the opening of an open market to attract foreign investors. In March 1991, Vietnam held its first international investment forum, with over 600 participants from Japan, Europe, and Southeast Asia.²¹ In that context, the policies that hindered the relationship between two countries became obsolete. The embargo was no longer recognized by the international community. Because of this lack of international support for the embargo, American companies were at a great disadvantage by their exclusion from the Vietnamese market.²² Therefore, in 1991, the U.S. eased travel restrictions on Vietnamese diplomats stationed at the UN in New York, and on U.S. organized travel to Vietnam.²³

Positive actions continued to be taken by both sides in the 1990s. Vietnam closely cooperated with the U.S. to deal with the POW-MIA issue. Important developments

¹⁹ Solomon, "US-Vietnam Relations: Requirements for Normalization," 333.

²⁰ Nelson, "U.S.-Vietnamese Normalization," 52.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Manyin, *The Vietnam-US Normalization Process*, CRS-3.

encouraged U.S. officials, armed with evidence (including photographs of extensive Vietnamese archival information on U.S. POW-MIAs) to request greater access to such data.²⁴ In particular, the Senate Select Committee on POW-MIA, led by John Kerry, operated from August 1991 to December 1992. It reported that there was “no compelling evidence” that POWs were alive after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.²⁵ After that, the U.S. pledged to provide disaster assistance and additional aid to help Vietnam combat diseases such as malaria, and lifted some restrictions. In November 1992, the U.S. lifted restrictions on U.S. telephone service to Vietnam, allowing direct service between the two countries. In December, the U.S. eased some restrictions on U.S. companies doing business in Vietnam.²⁶ The last major step toward official normalization was that President Clinton lifted the trade embargo on Vietnam in 1994. On July 11, 1995, in the East room of the White House, President William J. Clinton announced “Today, I am announcing the normalization of diplomatic relationships with Vietnam.”²⁷ As mentioned, there had been different American perspectives about establishing a diplomatic relationship with Vietnam; however, the final decision was made. In the article “Good Morning, Vietnam,” James Walsh and Dean Fischer say, “The Vietnamese,

²⁴ Ibid., CRS-3.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ James Walsh and Dean Fischer, “Good Morning, Vietnam,” *Time* 146, no. 4:50, accessed December 2, 2015, http://fw8pk7vf4q.search.serialssolutions.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/ProQ%3Anursing&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&rft.genre=unknown&rft.jtitle=Time&rft.atitle=Good+morning%2C+Vietnam&rft.au=Walsh%2C+James&rft.aulast=Walsh&rft.aufirst=James&rft.date=1995-07-24&rft.volume=146&rft.issue=4&rft.spage=50&rft.isbn=&rft.btitle=&rft.title=Time&rft.issn=0040781X&rft_id=info:doi/.

who lost many more lives than Americans did along the streets, rivers and paddy fields of a singularly ugly encounter, have put the past behind them. Americans need do no less.”²⁸ This is to say both American and Vietnamese people were ready for re-establishing the relationship. On January 25, 1995, the U.S. and Vietnam settled bilateral diplomatic and property claims and opened liaison offices in Washington and Hanoi on February 1, and February 3, 1995, respectively. On August 6, 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher opened the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi. On August 5, 1995 Vietnam’s embassy in was opened in Washington DC.²⁹

What happened in the 1990s really provided the main impetus for further improvements in the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. President Clinton’s visit to Vietnam in 2000 had enormous historical significance. President Tran Duc Luong called Clinton’s visit “a new page” in relations.³⁰ As the first U.S. president to visit since the Vietnam War, Clinton made important remarks, “The years of animosity are past. Today we have a shared interest in your well-being and your prosperity. We have a stake in your future and we wish to be your partners. We wish you success.”³¹ The U.S.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Manyin, *The Vietnam-US Normalization Process*, CRS-4.

³⁰ Terence Hunt, “Clinton Concludes Vietnam Visit,” *Associated Press Online* (November 19, 2000), accessed December 2, 2015, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=523d17a7-ab46-4b26-a81f-49d7909f34cf%40sessionmgr4002&hid=4204&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#d b=n5h&AN=ba9b629eae819006a203c52e2a61f78a>.

³¹ Ibid.

Ambassador Pete Peterson believed that the visit had improved understanding and trust between the two nations.³²

There have been a number of visits by senior leaders, agreements, and statements signed by both sides. One of the most important documents was the Joint Statement signed by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam when he visited the U.S. in 2013. In that meeting, the two presidents decided to form a U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership to provide an overarching framework for advancing the relationship.

The new Comprehensive Partnership will create mechanisms for cooperation in areas including political and diplomatic relations, trade and economic ties, science and technology, education and training, environment and health, war legacy issues, defense and security, protection and promotion of human rights, and culture, sports, and tourism.³³

When it comes to political and diplomatic relations, the Presidents agreed to enhance exchange and cooperation. President Truong Tan Sang expressed his appreciation for U.S. contribution to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region. The two leaders endorsed resolving disputes in the South China Sea by peaceful means based on international law, the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*, the *Declaration of Conduct of Parties*, and the *Code of Conduct*. The conversation between the two presidents achieved much success because both sides were open and candid. As President Truong Tan Sang said after the conversation “To be frank, President Obama

³² Ibid.

³³ Office of the Press Secretary, “Joint Statement by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,” The White House President Barrack Obama, June 25, 2013, accessed December 3, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/25/joint-statement-president-barack-obama-united-states-america-and-preside>.

and I had a very candid, open, useful, and constructive discussion.”³⁴ In reference to the conversations about human rights with his counterpart, Truong Tan Sang, Obama said “We had a very candid conversation about both the progress that Vietnam is making and the challenges that remain.”³⁵ According to BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific quoted from *Vietnam People’s Army Newspaper*,

The official state visit to the US of State President Truong Tan Sang comes at a time when the bilateral cooperation between the two countries is experiencing steady and positive developments. It is an opportunity for the leaders of the two countries to discuss ways to boost bilateral ties as well as exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual concern.³⁶

Opinions about President Sang’s visit to the U.S. vary. In article “Vietnam-US Rapprochement: A New Phase,” Rahul Mishra quotes others as thinking that while the visit can be seen as forging new grounds with the U.S., it brings few tangible benefits, little was achieved.³⁷ However, he later asserted that even in this case, the visit achieved a good outcome regarding long-lasting relations and trust building. He also predicted that the U.S.-Vietnam relationship will continue to develop on a higher level. On the flipside, the Comprehensive Partnership document gives the impression of being a high-sounding

³⁴ Barack Obama, “Remarks Following a Meeting with President Truong Tan Sang of Vietnam,” Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, July 25, 2013, 2, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=89881132&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

³⁵ Ibid., 1

³⁶ BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, “Vietnam Leader's US Visit “Important Milestone,” *Bilateral Ties-Army Paper*, July 26, 2013, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1412485726?accountid=28992>.

³⁷ Rahul Mishra, “Vietnam-US Rapprochement: A New Phase,” Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, September 2, 2013, accessed April 30, 2016, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/VietnamUSRapprochement_rmishra_020913.

proposal with idealistic objectives difficult to achieve. Yet, despite its vagueness, it may inspire both countries, especially Vietnam, to develop closer ties numerous areas. It fosters trust and may possibly result in the signing of a Strategic Partnership.³⁸

Indeed, bilateral diplomatic cooperation rose to new heights when the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam—Nguyen Phu Trong—paid a historic visit to the U.S., the first by a General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam. President Obama welcomed the General Secretary at the White House on July 7, 2015. On this occasion, the two countries adopted the “Joint Vision Statement.” With regard to U.S.-Vietnam relations, the vision seeks to deepen a long-term partnership. The new relationship is built on the basis of respect for the United Nations Charter, international law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.³⁹ Both countries reaffirm bilateral coordination in defense and security, joining hands to address issues such as non-traditional security threats, maritime security, and search and rescue. The POW-MIA issue and the clearance of unexploded ordinance and dioxin remediation continue as a focus for joint efforts. Both sides pledged constructive dialogues on human rights to improve mutual understanding, and reduce differences. According to a report in the *Asia News Monitor*, the Party General Secretary's first visit to the U.S., signifies the distance both countries have travelled over the years to forge a mutually beneficial

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Office of the Press Secretary, “United States–Vietnam Joint Vision Statement,” The White House President Barack Obama, June 7, 2015, accessed December 5, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/07/united-states-%E2%80%93-vietnam-joint-vision-statement>.

relationship despite differing political systems.⁴⁰ As far as global and regional issues are concerned, the U.S. and Vietnam made their commitment to enhancing cooperation on regional and global issues of mutual interest and concern. The tension in the South China Sea, which undermines peace, security, and stability, was also mentioned. Once again, both countries put emphasis on their support for international laws, including the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 10 December 1982*, the *Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea* in its entirety, and the *Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea*. Besides, the Joint Vision reaffirms the agreement signed between the U.S. and Vietnam, namely the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of National Defense of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Department of Defense of the United States of America on United Nations Peacekeeping Cooperation*, and the *Vietnam Aviation Safety Technical Assistance Project Agreement* between the U.S. Trade and Development Agency and the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam, to name but a few. Major German newspapers praised bright prospects in the bilateral relations between Vietnam and the U.S. following Party leader Nguyen Phu Trong's first ever visit to the U.S. For example, *Deutsche Welle* has an article by Robidon Ebbighausen considering bilateral economic cooperation to be a foundation and driving force for bilateral ties based on the comprehensive partnership.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Asia News Monitor, "Vietnam: Party Leader's US Visit in Int'l Media Spotlight," July 14, 2015, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1695793101?accountid=28992>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Informational

Political, economic and military ties are always of the essence. However, they are not the sum of bilateral relationships. People-to-people ties also play an important role in sustaining the engagement of Vietnam and the U.S. As people in both countries become more connected, the differences in cultures, beliefs, and values will be reduced.

Cooperation and ties take place in many areas such as education, science and technology, the environment, health care, and cultural exchanges, which, in turn, promote mutual understanding.

When it comes to educational cooperation, the U.S. has been one of the countries that draw the highest number of Vietnamese students. In 2012, there were nearly 16,000 Vietnamese students in the U.S., the highest number among Southeast Asian nations, and the eighth in Asia. The number has grown significantly since 1985, when the figure was only 800.⁴² The Fulbright Program, which was re-established in the 1990s, has provided funding to help Vietnamese and U.S. students, scholars and teachers to study, conduct research and teach in various fields in both countries. Together with other Fulbright Programs of the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, the Vietnamese Scholar Program remains devoted to the Fulbright Program's primary goal of "increasing mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchange."⁴³ During his visit to Washington in July

⁴² Asia News Monitor, "Vietnam: Workshop Discusses Vietnam-US Education Cooperation," April 30, 2013, accessed December 28, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1346648752?accountid=28992>.

⁴³ US Fed News Service, "Fulbright Program in Vietnam Celebrates 10th Anniversary of Vietnamese Scholar Program," June 27, 2008, accessed December 29, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/473236057?accountid=28992>.

2013, President Truong Tan Sang welcomed the planned foundation of a Fulbright University Vietnam. As U.S. Secretary of State, John F. Kerry said at a celebration of the school in Hanoi in 2015, “Fulbright University will be an incredible asset to Vietnam, because with academic freedom and with the energy and association with Harvard and all of the things that will come from it, they’ll be just a great asset for this country to take its education levels to an even higher level.”⁴⁴ As Mariel A. Klein’s judgment in his article “Harvard Works with Feds to Establish Fulbright University Vietnam,” policymakers in the U.S., for their part, are hailing the new university as an important step in developing diplomatic and academic ties with Vietnam.⁴⁵ In addition, the Vietnam Education Foundation, which was initiated by former President Bill Clinton and funded by the U.S. Government, has granted scholarships to Vietnamese officials to attend postgraduate training courses in the U.S. According to Mr. Nguyen Xuan Vang, General Director of the Vietnam International Education Development, Ministry of Education and Training, the contribution of the U.S. Faculty Scholars Program, initiated by the Vietnam Education Foundation, to advancing sustainable collaboration between U.S. and Vietnamese universities, is invaluable to the development and growth of Vietnamese education.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Mariel A. Klein, “Harvard Works with Feds to Establish Fulbright University Vietnam,” *University Wire*, August 13, 2015, accessed December 29, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1703720640?accountid=28992>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ PR Newswire, “Vietnam Education Foundation Sponsors U.S. Faculty Scholars to Teach in Vietnam,” November 14, 2012, accessed December 30, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1151756079?accountid=28992>.

Regarding science and technology, like most developing countries, Vietnam needs reliable sources of affordable energy. Traditional hydrocarbon potential is insufficient to ensure long-term energy security. The U.S. has committed itself to helping Vietnam overcome the problem by offering technical support. United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Clean Energy program is supporting Vietnam's initiatives to use energy more efficiently and reduce carbon emissions related to the energy sector.⁴⁷ In 2013, the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation provided \$50 million financing facilities to the Mekong Renewable Resources Fund, a private equity fund managed by Indochina Capital Investing in the Renewable Energy and Efficiency, Environmental Services, and Sustainable Forestry and Plantations sectors in Vietnam, and other Lower Mekong countries.⁴⁸

Most of the young generations in Vietnam have positive attitudes toward the American people. They consider the U.S. as their country's closest partner. The U.S. embassies and consular offices are attempting to seek innovative ways to reach out to people abroad, which is a part of soft power projection. Ted Osius, the U.S. Ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, said in his *2015 Ambassadors Review* that the U.S. consistently demonstrates sincere respect for Vietnam's people, history, values, and culture, has set up partnerships between Vietnamese and U.S. cultural institutions, and

⁴⁷ Office of the Spokesperson, "U.S.-Vietnam Cooperation on the Environment," US Department of State, December 15, 2013, accessed December, 30, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218729.htm>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

continues to fund numerous two-way exchanges that help build people-to-people ties.⁴⁹ In the Joint Statement between President Barack Obama and Truong Tan Sang in 2013, cultural exchanges were also highlighted, as the two Presidents encouraged more people-to-people exchanges through art performances, concerts, exhibitions, and other cultural and sporting events between the two countries.⁵⁰

Military

The military tie between the U.S. and Vietnam has experienced dramatic changes. This is illustrated through a number of historic visits between senior military leaders, agreements, dialogues, and defense cooperation activities.

The historic visit of U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to Cam Ranh Bay in June 2012 had a highly symbolic meaning for U.S.-Vietnam military relations. His stop at the harbor made him the most senior U.S. official to go to Cam Ranh Bay since the end of the war.

Today I stand on a U.S. ship here in Cam Ranh Bay to recognize the 17th anniversary of the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam. . . . We have a complicated relationship but we're not bound by that history . . . it is very important that we be able to protect key maritime rights for all nations in the South China Sea and elsewhere.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Osius, "Twenty Years of Diplomatic Relations with Vietnam-And What Comes Next."

⁵⁰ Office of the Press Secretary, "Joint Statement by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."

⁵¹ Lolita C. Baldor, "Panetta sends message to China on Vietnam visit," *Associated Press*, June 3, 2012, accessed December 24, 2015, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/lumen.cgsccarl.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=d7925b82-34a9-46ad-9e5c-726c4a3dd119%40sessionmgr120&hid=128&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZW9hbnQ3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=0e77a432ed844a5f90751f34e2f8e5a5&db=n5h>.

There have also been many Vietnam-U.S. defense policy dialogues. The Assistant Secretary level Defense Policy Dialogue was formally established in December 2009 when General Phung Quang Thanh, Defense Minister of Vietnam visited the U.S. On 17 August, 2010, the first dialogue between Deputy Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Scher that focused on future bilateral defence cooperation took place in Hanoi. Both sides found a common voice in a number of areas including regional and international issues, resolving MIA issues, and exchanging military students in the U.S. and Vietnam. Cooperation in rescues and dealing with disasters was also mentioned. Robert Scher said that, at the dialogue, the two sides finalized exchange mechanisms and ways in which the two countries could cooperate on policy, international, and regional issues.⁵²

The second Vietnam-U.S. Defense Policy Dialogue held between the co-chair of Vietnamese Deputy Defence Minister Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence Robert Scher took place in Washington on September 19, 2011. The two leaders agreed on enhancing defense cooperation as well as making it more effective and practical in the interests of each country for regional, as well as global, peace and stability. At the end of the dialogue, both sides were satisfied with the outcomes and reached a Memorandum of Understanding for advancing bilateral defense cooperation. The memorandum covered five areas. These are:

1. maritime security,
2. a commitment to continue high-level dialogues,

⁵² BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, “Vietnam, USA Hold Defense Policy Dialogue in Hanoi 17 August,” August 18, 2010, accessed December 24, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/744414083?accountid=28992>.

3. cooperation on search and rescue operations,
4. cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and
5. cooperation on peacekeeping operations.⁵³

These dialogues have promoted increased defense cooperation between the two countries. Regular high-level military visits help both sides understand and grow more comfortable with each other. Thus, this mutual understanding is turning talk into action.⁵⁴

In 2015, the year Vietnam and the U.S celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations. This anniversary was marked by the signing of a Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations by U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter and his counterpart, Vietnamese Defense Minister, Phung Quang Thanh. The statement was based on the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding. On this occasion, the U.S. pledged its support to the Vietnamese military to increase its capabilities to protect its territory. For example, Carter announced that the U.S. would provide \$18 million to the Vietnamese Coast Guard to purchase American Metal Shark patrol vessels.⁵⁵

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program is also a part of military-to-military tie between the U.S. and Vietnam. The IMET program is a key component of the U.S. Security Cooperation Program. The IMET program provides

⁵³ Osius, “Twenty Years of Diplomatic Relations with Vietnam-And What Comes Next.”

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Prashanth Parameswaran, “US, Vietnam Deepen Defense Ties,” *The Diplomat*, June 5, 2015, accessed January 4, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/why-vietnam-and-the-us-are-deepening-defense-ties/>.

funding to train military and civilian leaders of foreign countries, primarily at schools and facilities in the U.S. IMET is implemented by the Department of Defense's Defense Security Cooperation Agency, but funded by the State Department through the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.⁵⁶ Vietnam started to be involved in IMET in 2005 with limited training when Prime Minister Phan Van Khai announced, on the first trip for a Vietnamese Prime Minister to the United States, that Vietnam and the U.S. would cooperate in the exchange of intelligence on terrorism and transnational crime, and that Vietnam would send military officers for training in the U.S. An IMET agreement was signed later in 2005. Although Vietnam's participation in the IMET was limited at that time to the English language and medical training only, it marked the beginning of what has become a more extensive participation in defense cooperation programs.

⁵⁶ AllGov, "International Military Education and Training (IMET)," accessed January 4, 2016, <http://www.allgov.com/departments/departments-of-defense/international-military-education-training-imet?agencyid=7378>.

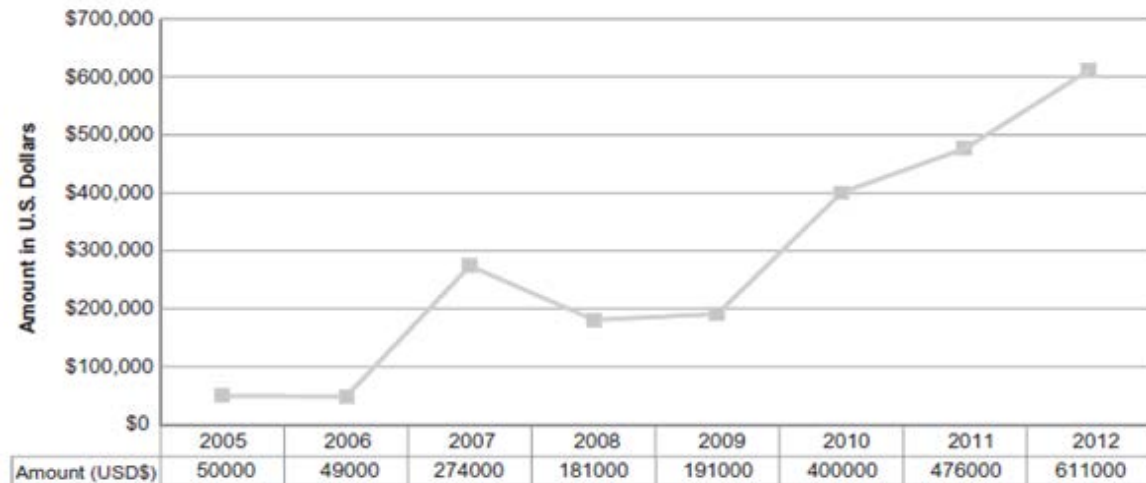


Figure 1. International Military Education and Training Program Funding for Vietnam since 2005

Source: Murray Hiebert, Phuong Nguyen, and Gregory B. Poling, *A New Era in U.S.-Vietnam Relations: Deepening Ties Two Decades after Normalization* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 15.

In November 2014, after the meeting between the U.S. Secretary of State and Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh, the U.S. announced its partial lifting of the arms embargo on Vietnam. The State Department said the focus would be on helping Vietnam patrol and defend itself in the South China Sea, but that weapon sales could include airborne systems as well as ships.⁵⁷ Although Vietnam wanted a full lifting of the U.S. arms embargo, it was appreciative of the partial lifting. According to Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang in an emailed answer to an inquiry by the Associated Press in

⁵⁷ Age, The (Melbourne), "Embargo on Arms to Vietnam Eased," October 4, 2014, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/lumen.cgscarl.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=ec8d107e-0263-4262-aa07-dd9ef6d0a233%40sessionmgr107&hid=128&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=SYD-6HB4K6FH680ZRF08AFP&db=n5h>.

2013, “It is now the time for our bilateral relations to be fully normalized in all fields.”⁵⁸

This could be the last step in the long process of healing the wounds of the past and opening a future of cooperation and comprehensive development for both countries.

Vietnamese Foreign Ministry’s deputy spokeswoman Tran Thi Bich Van, said in a statement that her government welcomes any step that aims to promote Vietnam-U.S. partnership.⁵⁹

The POW-MIA issue is important in the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. The pace of improvement in the relationship to date has depended heavily on the commitment of both sides to dealing with this issue. Officially, more than 2,000 Americans who served in Indochina during the Vietnam War era are still unaccounted for. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese remain missing.⁶⁰ The U.S. suspected that Vietnam kept U.S. soldiers in underground facilities after the war had ended. U.S. intelligence affirmed these facilities’ positions. During the Senate Select Committee’s final week of hearings in early December, 1992, Vice-Chairman Bob Smith noted that, “Our intelligence agencies have confirmed the existence of, and I quote, a below-grade

⁵⁸ IOL, “Vietnam Seeks End to US Arms Embargo,” July 23, 2013, accessed January 6, 2016, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/world/vietnam-seeks-end-to-us-arms-embargo-1551327>.

⁵⁹ The Canadian Press, “Vietnam Welcomes US Partial Lifting of Ban on Lethal Arms Sales,” October 3, 2014, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=65fff041-8fb1-4ed7-a582-131712d9d81e%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4201&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=MYO126534124214&db=n5h>.

⁶⁰ Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.–Vietnam Relations in 2010* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 6, 2010), 8, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA530565>.

infrastructure far more elaborate than one would find at a mausoleum.”⁶¹ Meanwhile, Vietnam insisted that it had no reason to keep U.S. POWs and stated that Vietnam itself had been attempting to search for its Soldiers who are still missing in the war. When talking to a U.S. journalist, Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet said, “Tens of thousands of families in Vietnam have relatives missing from the war. I am one of them. My wife, my son and my daughter were killed during an attack by the U.S. military along the Saigon River. I can deeply understand the pain of American families for the loss of relatives in Vietnam. I want American people to understand that Vietnamese families have suffered too. Anyone who suspects that Vietnam is keeping American POWs is invited to visit Vietnam to understand.”⁶² Later, Vietnam allowed U.S. investigators to access “live sightings” reports.

According to the Final Report of the Senate Select Committee on POW-MIA Affairs, 1993 Congressional Reports, under the leadership of the Defense Intelligence Agency and with the cooperation of the Vietnamese, Committee Members and staff conducted on-site inquiries into live-sighting reports involving the Citadel, a secure military compound in Hanoi analogous to the U.S. Pentagon; the X-4 Prison in Ho Chi Minh City; the Rach Gia Prison in Ha Tien Province; a mountaintop in Chau Doc Province; and the An Diem Prison in Da Nang. In each location, the team of members, staff and Defense Intelligence Agency investigators searched for corroboration of details

⁶¹ U.S. Congress, *Report of the Select Committee on POW-MIA Affairs*, 103rd Cong., 1st sess, 1993, accessed December 27, 2015, http://fas.org/irp/congress/1993_rpt/pow-chap4.html.

⁶² Tuoitrenews, “20 Years of Vietnam-U.S. Diplomatic Ties–P3: Hostility from Washington,” updated July 14, 2015, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://tuoitrenews.vn/features/29194/20-years-of-vietnamus-diplomatic-ties-p3-hostility-from-washington>.

of the relevant live sighting report by surveying the physical layout and appearance of the area and by interviewing local residents . . . none turned up evidence that live Americans remain in captivity in Vietnam.⁶³

Through investigations into live sightings, the U.S. gained useful insights into the level of the Government of Vietnam's cooperation on the issue. These investigations often required a substantial intrusion into government operations or into the privacy of Vietnamese citizens. Despite this, the Vietnamese have been extremely cooperative recently in response to U.S. requests for short notice investigations.⁶⁴ The U.S. Defense Department reciprocated by allowing Vietnamese officials access to U.S. records and maps to assist their search for Vietnamese MIAs.

In mid-June 2009, for the first time since the end of the war, Vietnam allowed a Military Sealift Command oceanographic survey ship—the USNS Bruce C. Heezen—to conduct an underwater mission in search of MIA wrecks in Vietnamese territories. Army Lieutenant Colonel Todd Emoto, Commander of the Joint Prisoner of War Missing in Action Command's (JPAC's) Detachment Two in Hanoi said, "The use of an oceanographic survey ship on JPAC's search operations in Vietnam could significantly expedite the discovery of underwater crash sites."⁶⁵ In June 2001, another ship—USNS Bowditch—came to Vietnam for the same mission lasting for a month. The bilateral survey mission was undertaken by the U.S. Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command, or

⁶³ U.S. Congress, *Report of the Select Committee on POW-MIA Affairs*.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Edward Baxter, "MSC Ship Joins Search for Missing U.S. Aircraft off Vietnam," U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command, September 2009, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.msc.navy.mil/sealift/2009/september/vietnam.htm>.

JPAC, and the Vietnamese Office for Seeking Missing Persons. This survey was hosted by Vietnamese military and government officials based in Da Nang, Vietnam. “The synergy amongst the U.S. and Vietnamese team has been superb,” said Ron Ward, Joint Prisoner of War Missing in Action Command team leader embarked aboard Bowditch. “The Vietnamese government has been very flexible throughout the mission in allowing us to collect as much data as possible.”⁶⁶

The relationship between the U.S. and Vietnamese in defense has been increasingly improved even though there are still hindrances. William Jordan, Lewis M. Stern and Walter Lohman, the Heritage Foundation think tank, believe that, at present, the U.S. and Vietnam have mutual, though not identical, interests in mitigating the negative impacts of China’s rise. Closer defense cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnam is in the interests of both nations in the long term.⁶⁷ The military relationship is still at a standstill because each side has its own strategic desire that has not been satisfied by the other. For example, the U.S. wants greater access to Vietnamese ports for its warships, while Vietnam wants the U.S. to fully remove restrictions on arms sales.⁶⁸ Vietnam will be interested in new activities of military cooperation only if they are congruent with Vietnam’s national interests and supportive of its nonalignment principle.

⁶⁶ Military Sealift Command Far East Public Affairs, “USNS Bowditch Completes U.S./Vietnam Oceanographic Survey Mission,” Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, June 22, 2011, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/000538>.

⁶⁷ William Jordan, Lewis M. Stern, and Walter Lohman, “U.S.–Vietnam Defense Relations: Investing in Strategic Alignment,” The Heritage Foundation, July 18, 2012, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/07/us-vietnam-defense-relations-investing-in-strategic-alignment>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Also, these military activities must be situated within the context of existing UN agreements, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) practices, international laws, and guidelines common to all UN members.⁶⁹ In their article “A New Era in U.S.-Vietnam Relations: Deepening Ties Two Decades after Normalization” Murray Hiebert, Phuong Nguyen, and Gregory B. Poling of the Center for Strategic International Studies, conclude that Vietnam is not simply seeking to move closer to the U.S. militarily; instead, it wants to obtain concrete U.S. support for its military and self-defense capabilities.⁷⁰

Economic

Economic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam commenced with the end of the trade embargo against Vietnam in February 1994. This decision resulted from two main reasons. The first was Vietnam’s willingness to deal with the POW-MIA issue. The second one was largely due to trends in the U.S. economy. American businesses lobbied for an end to the embargo because of their interest in an open Vietnamese market and the fear of being left behind by foreign competitors. Strong support for lifting the embargo came from the U.S. business community, which viewed positively Hanoi's decision to abandon its inefficient, planned economy in favor of market reforms.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Murray Hiebert, Phuong Nguyen, and Gregory B. Poling, *A New Era in U.S.-Vietnam Relations: Deepening Ties Two Decades after Normalization* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 13.

⁷¹ Cathal J. Nolan, *The United States and Vietnam Improve Relations* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 1999), 1643, accessed January 8, 2016, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=d2f07595-39d9-4468-b22f-d67ff8ee93cf%40sessionmgr>

After impressive growth in the 1990s that followed the economic renewal, Vietnam's economy entered a difficult situation in 1997. Annual economic growth declined from a peak of 9.5 percent in 1995 to less than 5 percent in 1999. Foreign direct investment dwindled from over \$8 billion in 1996 to \$600 million in 1999, the lowest level since 1992.⁷² This may be the main reason that prodded Vietnam into the BTA conversation with the U.S. The U.S.-Vietnam BTA, which was signed on July 13, 2000, was a comprehensive document that covers intellectual property rights, trade in services and goods, and investment protection. The BTA is based on WTO rules and other international trade principles. To be more specific, the BTA comprises five main agreements:

First, in terms of Market Access for Industrial and Agricultural Goods, Vietnam agrees to grant permission for within-its-borders import and export to Vietnamese and U.S. firms for the first time, and to comply with the WTO standards governing such actions.

Second, regarding Intellectual Property Rights, Vietnam expressed a commitment to apply the WTO standard for intellectual property protection within 18 months.

Third, concerning Market Access for Services, Vietnam makes all areas of its services market accessible to U.S. persons and firms.

Fourth, when it comes to Investment Provisions, Vietnam is going to give U.S. investments protection against expropriation, remove local content and export performance criteria, and gradually bring its investment licensing regime for many sectors to an end.

4004&hid=4212&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRI#AN=6351951&db=khh.

⁷² Mark E. Manyin, *The Vietnam-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 16, 2001), CRS-7, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://fas.org/man/crs/RL30416.pdf>.

Finally, in Transparency Provisions, Vietnam pledges the creation of a perfectly clear regime for each of the four above-mentioned areas.⁷³

The agreement reflected the dedication of the U.S. and Vietnam to creating a favorable and necessary environment for products of one side to gain fair access to the other's market. When the BTA came into effect in 2001, the U.S. immediately provided Vietnam's goods and companies with access to the U.S. market—a market that represents nearly a third of world gross domestic product (GDP)—on the same basis as other countries with which it has normal trade relations (NTR).⁷⁴ Another noteworthy point is that, under the agreement, Vietnam's products are assessed much lower tariffs by the U.S. In exchange, the BTA includes specific commitments by Vietnam to reduce tariffs on approximately 250 products, about four-fifths of which are agricultural goods. Typically, the cuts range from 33 percent to 50 percent and are to be phased in over a three-year period.⁷⁵

⁷³ M2 Presswire, "The White House: Office of the Press Secretary--Fact Sheet--Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement; Historic Strengthening of the U.S.-Vietnam Relationship," July 14, 2000, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/445741018?accountid=28992>.

⁷⁴ Embassy of the United States Hanoi, Vietnam, "The U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)-Resources for Understanding," accessed January 10, 2016, <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/econ12.html>.

⁷⁵ Manyin, *The Vietnam-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement*, CRS-12.

Table 2. Vietnam's Path to Normalization of Trade Relations with the United States

Step 1	Removing the U.S. trade embargo. (In February 1994, President Clinton ordered the embargo on Vietnam lifted).
Step 2	Granting an annual waiver of Jackson-Vanik restrictions on OPIC and Ex-Im Bank operations in the country, and one-time waivers of Foreign Assistance Act and Export-Import Bank Act restrictions. ¹¹ (President Clinton issued waivers for Vietnam in 1998, 1999, and 2000. In 1998 and 1999, disapproval resolutions were defeated in the House. The waivers paved the way for OPIC and EXIM Bank support for U.S. businesses exporting to and/or operating in Vietnam).
Step 3	Signing a bilateral trade agreement, subject to Congressional approval, that includes an extension of conditional most-favored-nation (MFN) treatment. (An agreement was signed in July 2000).
Step 4	Restoring permanent MFN status by passing a law "graduating" Vietnam from its status as a non-MFN country.

Source: Mark E. Manyin, *The Vietnam-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 16, 2001), CRS-4, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://fas.org/man/crs/RL30416.pdf>.

In *The Vietnam-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement*, Mark E. Manyin, an analyst in Asian Affairs, compared the U.S.-Vietnam BTA and other bilateral trade agreements with other Jackson-Vanik countries. He mentioned the 1979 agreement with China was less than 10 pages while the U.S.-Vietnam BTA that is much more comprehensive is more than ten times that length. The U.S.-Vietnam BTA goes beyond past agreements in its more detailed commitments in the areas of service and investment. Furthermore, Vietnam's tariff concessions represent a new development.⁷⁶ One year after the BTA, Vietnam's economy showed positive changes. In *Vietnam in 2002: On the Road to Recovery*, Regina M. Abrami concluded that all in all, the year 2002 had been a

⁷⁶ Ibid., CRS-15.

successful one for Vietnam, most importantly the implementation of the U.S.-Vietnam BTA and the expanded role of the private sector.⁷⁷

The process of Vietnam's accession to the WTO marked a significant period of the diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam. After a long process of applying for membership of the WTO, the last country that Vietnam had to negotiate with for a bilateral agreement was the U.S. It was the most difficult. In common with U.S laws dealing with trade relations with former communist countries, the U.S trade relations with Vietnam fall under the oversight of Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 that made Vietnam fall under the most-favored-nation or NTR status. To gain the benefits of a WTO member, Vietnam desired to obtain Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status. When the U.S Senate U.S. passed the combined bill (H.R.1100 and H.R.6111) this granted permanent NTR status to Vietnam.⁷⁸ Thus, on January 11, 2007, Vietnam became a member of the WTO.

After the negotiation on Vietnam's WTO accession, the two countries continued to promote their economic relations. In 2008, Vietnam requested the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Although the U.S. considered Vietnam, a Communist country, ineligible for GSP program based on the U.S. Trade Act of 1974, but the Trade

⁷⁷ Regina M. Abrami, "Vietnam in 2002: On the Road to Recovery," *Asian Survey* 43, no 1 (March 2009): 92, accessed January 11, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/as.2003.43.1.91.pdf?_=1461959687686.

⁷⁸ Patrick D. Reardon, "US-Vietnam Mil-Mil Relations: How to Elevate the Relationship" (Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA. March, 2013), 8, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA590660>.

Act had additional conditions.⁷⁹ Vietnam's eligibility for GSP was argued in the 112th Congress with mixed opinions.⁸⁰ Due to different perspectives leading to U.S. concerns about worker rights, intellectual property rights and others, Vietnam has never been granted this status. Differences between the U.S. and Vietnam continued to create points of friction in the economic relationship as well as difficulties for Vietnam. After joining the WTO, Vietnam has still designated a nonmarket economy by the U.S. Under U.S. Trade Law (19 U.S.C. 1677), the term "nonmarket economy country" refers to "any country that the administering authority determines does not operate on market principles of cost or pricing structures, so that sales of merchandise in such a country do not reflect the fair value of the merchandise."⁸¹ This causes Vietnam's merchandise to be easily subjected to antidumping duties. Despite these hurdles, the economic ties between the two countries have continuously been enhanced. According to a Congressional Research Service Report, U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations: Issues for the 113th Congress, by Michel F. Martin, the U.S was the 13th-largest source of Foreign Direct Investment in 2012 with 45 projects worth \$160 million.⁸² Recently, in February 2016, twelve countries including the U.S. and Vietnam successfully negotiated and signed the

⁷⁹ Michael F. Martin, *US-Vietnam Economic Trade Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 13, 2014), 5, accessed March 7, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41550.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Vivian C. Jones and Michael F. Martin, *Potential Trade Effects of Adding Vietnam to the Generalized System of Preferences Program* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 14, 2012), 7, accessed January 15, 2016, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=721942>.

⁸¹ Martin, *US-Vietnam Economic Trade Relations*, 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 20.

TPP agreement. This is also a significant progress in the economic relations between the U.S. and Vietnam.

Economic ties are conducive to improving the relationships among countries in other areas. Nguyen Quoc Cuong, a former Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S., believes that there is no better way to build peace and a better future for our children than through trade and commerce.⁸³ Increased trade and economic ties have also promoted bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnam in other fields. Through directly investing in Vietnam, American companies are gaining new customers and contracts while contributing to Vietnam's development.⁸⁴ In meetings and interviews, both the U.S. and Vietnamese governments admit the inevitability of their differences. However, the general consensus is that further collaborative efforts, particularly in the economic realm, are essential for further narrowing the chasms and completing the transformation that is already underway in U.S.-Vietnam relations.⁸⁵

⁸³ Cuong Q. Nguyen, "After 20 Years of Trade Relations, Vietnam and U.S. Look Forward," Roll Call, February 12, 2014, accessed April 30, 2016, http://www.rollcall.com/news/after_20_years_of_trade_relations_vietnam_and_us_look_forward_commentary-230861-1.html.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Cuong T. Nguyen, "The Dramatic Transformation in US-Vietnam Relations," *The Diplomat*, July 2, 2015, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/the-dramatic-transformation-in-us-vietnam-relations/>.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research methodologies used to answer the research questions proposed in chapter 1 which deal with the benefits gained and challenges posed to Vietnam by its bilateral relationship with the U.S. As may be suspected, identifying benefits and challenges in the relations between two countries is a complex exercise and is heavily dependent on the point of view from which analysts and researchers look at them. Therefore, this thesis evaluates the U.S.-Vietnam relationship specifically in terms of how the relationship can help Vietnam achieve its national strategic objectives. It also examines the challenges and obstacles that are inherent in the relationship. The methodology used in this study is a combination of methods. These include qualitative analysis of the pertinent documents, passive observation of recent and current events, and the analysis of case studies that illustrate specific challenges in the bilateral relationship.

First, the research examines the long-term national strategic objectives of Vietnam, as expressed in public documents, and the strategies developed to achieve those objectives. The effect of the U.S.-Vietnam relationship on the achievement of these national strategic objectives is considered to be the standard for assessing the benefits of the relationship for Vietnam. In other words, the bilateral relationship will be considered positive for Vietnam in the measure that it fulfills, or assists in fulfilling the stated national strategic goals. Conversely, the ways in which the relationship prevents Vietnam from reaching its national strategic objectives is taken to be the measure of the challenges the relationship creates for Vietnam. In addition to the effects of the interior factors within the relationship itself, the research also considers the effects produced by one

major exterior factor—China. This is because of China’s great influence on both Vietnam and the U.S. and because closer U.S.-Vietnam relations are likely to elicit a negative reaction from China.

The literature review provides a foundation for the research and offers the reader a historical context for the bilateral relationship. Official documents obtained from the Combined Arms Research Library and government websites are analyzed and compared to obtain accurate information on national policies and agreements. The literature review also offers the insights of experts and summaries of the key documents that shape the relationship. By reviewing the literature both reader and researcher can determine “where the relationship is” in regard to the categories of the DIME model of national power, thus establishing a point of departure for the following analysis of selected case studies.

The research questions are answered by synthesizing the insights gained through the analysis of relevant case studies and the key events that mark the relationship between Vietnam and the U.S. These case studies may cover one or more than one element of the DIME. In fact, in one case study, the elements of the DIME model are interwoven very closely. Therefore, each case study will be examined holistically and will not be categorized into separate elements such diplomatic, informational, military, and economic; although all these elements will be considered together as they influence each other. The cases studied provide the researcher insights into what benefits have been brought about and what challenges are likely to continue having an effect on both countries—especially on Vietnam. The following case studies will be subjected to analysis:

The visit of the General Secretary of Communist Party of Vietnam to the United States;

Vietnam's accession to the WTO and PNTR status;

GSP Application;

Non-Market Economy Designation;

The Catfish issue;

TPP negotiation;

Military-to-Military ties.

Again, the methodology used in this thesis is a combination of different methods such as qualitative analysis of the relevant documents, passive observation of recent and current events, and the analysis of case studies. To complement this, even though the study is not primarily qualitative in nature, selected data sets are carefully evaluated and the information provided is used in the study as factual data. All materials are evaluated based on their validity, relevance to the research, and the credibility of the authors.

Although the research focuses on the benefits and challenges of the U.S.-Vietnam relationship to Vietnam, the benefits and challenges to the U.S. are also examined to a certain degree in order to provide a suitable context for analysis.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Vietnamese National Strategies and Objectives

Any improvement in the U.S.-Vietnam relationship basically depends on the national strategies of both countries. This part of the thesis scrutinizes Vietnam's national strategies, clarifying its perspectives, objectives, and solutions in response to economic issues, foreign affairs, and national defense. The information about Vietnam's national objectives and strategies that is presented in this chapter is extracted from four documents namely the "Overall Strategy for International Integration through 2020, Vision to 2030;" "Strategy on Exports and Imports for 2011-2020, with Visions to 2030;" "Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020;" "Vietnam's Present Foreign Policy; and The White Paper: Vietnam National Defence 2009."

On January 7, 2016 Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung approved the "Overall Strategy for International Integration through 2020, Vision to 2030." The strategy highlights the nation's international integration process, strategic objectives, and solutions to achieve integration. As a developing country with the socialist-oriented market economy, international economic integration has been one of Vietnam's interests. "Viet Nam has gradually opened its economy and market by establishing bilateral relations in trade, investment and finance and by participating in multilateral mechanisms in those areas."⁸⁶ To incorporate its economy into the global one, Vietnam has been

⁸⁶ Dung Tan Nguyen, "Overall Strategy for International Integration through 2020, Vision to 2030," Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Government Portal, January 7, 2016, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/strategies/strategiesdetails?categoryId=30&articleId=10056863>.

seeking bilateral trade relations with different countries in the world. Expanding markets, fostering the development of domestic industries and bridging the gaps between Vietnam and developed countries are its specific objectives.⁸⁷ Agricultural, aquatic products and the textile industry are Vietnam's advantages. Expanding export markets, making use of the economy's comparative advantages, and improving efficiency and export-import competitiveness are what Vietnam has been striving for.⁸⁸ Its purpose is to gradually shift the economy towards industrialization and modernization. A strong relationship with powerful countries facilitates Vietnam's attaining the goal. According to *The Strategy on Exports and Imports for 2011-2020*, the target for export turnover in 2020 should triple compared with 2010, with a per capita average of over \$2,000. The average growth rate of exports should be 11 to 12 percent per year in 2011 to 2020, or 12 percent in 2011 to 2015 and 11 percent in 2016 to 2020.⁸⁹ The goal is to catch up with ASEAN-6 including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei and ASEAN-4 countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, becoming one of the top ASEAN countries. The global situation has changed in rapid and unpredictable ways. Vietnam has been pursuing a sustainable development that closely and harmoniously combines economic growth and social development, natural resource and environment protection, national security and defense. One way to do this is to expand international

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Dung Tan Nguyen, "Strategy on Exports and Imports for 2011-2020, with Visions to 2030," Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Government Portal, December 28, 2011, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/strategies/strategiesdetails?categoryId=30&articleId=10051303>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

cooperation in the fields of information exchange, science and technology for sustainable development.⁹⁰ The Vietnamese people are the central factor in the development of the country. Vietnam will focus on education, training, healthcare, and other social areas to enhance the development of its citizens to meet the requirement of the process of industrialization and modernization. Vietnam strives to promote the image of the nation and its people, enhancing their importance.

When it comes to foreign policies, Vietnam has attached great importance to the foreign relationships that are based on mutual respect and benefits.

Regarding its foreign policies, the Party and State of Viet Nam has adopted the viewpoint of independence, sovereignty, openness, multi-lateralization, diversification of external relations and proactive integration into the world under the motto: “Viet Nam is willing to become a friend and reliable partner of all countries in the world community, striving for peace, independence and development.”⁹¹

Realizing the growing trend of globalization, Vietnam has proactively promoted international integration. It has played an effective role in many international organizations such as ASEAN, APEC (the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and WTO. At the same time, Vietnam signed a number of important agreements with various nations in the world including Vietnam-U.S. BTA, Vietnam-China Land Border Treaty,

⁹⁰ Dung Tan Nguyen, “Viet Nam Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020,” Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Government Portal, April 12, 2012, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/strategies/strategiesdetails?categoryId=30&articleId=10050825>.

⁹¹ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, “Viet Nam's present Foreign Policy,” Government Portal, November 7, 2006, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/English/strategies/strategiesdetails?categoryId=30&articleId=3036>.

and Vietnam-Indonesia Agreement on the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf Boundary. As a matter of fact, Vietnam has expanded bilateral and multilateral cooperation with many countries and territories, regardless of political regimes or history of relations with Vietnam. The policy helps it address common challenges and global issues that cannot be resolved by individual countries.

Concerning national defense, Vietnam has followed a national defense policy of peace and self-defense expressed in the guideline of not using force or threatening to use force in international relations.⁹² Vietnam has experienced long periods of war, so it desires peace and stability to strengthen the economy. This policy of self-defense advocates the gradual modernization of the VPA and maintaining military power that is sufficient to defend the nation. The policy highlights the point that Vietnam wholeheartedly supports peaceful means to resolve international disputes, but it is also ready to resolutely fight against acts of aggression.⁹³ As displayed in its past wars, the focal point in Vietnam's defense policy is the concept of an "all-people national defense" using the full spectrum of the state and people's activities to build up a comprehensive power of the nation.⁹⁴

⁹² Vietnam Minister of Defense, *White Paper: Vietnam National Defence* (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban The Gioi, 2009), 18.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

Table 3. The Defense Budget of Vietnam (Billion VND)⁹⁵

	2005	2006	2007	2008
GDP	839,211	973,791	1,143,442	1,490,000
Defense budget	16,278	20,577	28,922	27,024
Share in GDP	1.872%	2.194%	2.529%	1.813%

Source: Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Minister of National Defence, “The Defence Budget of Vietnam,” accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.mod.gov.vn/wps/portal/>.

Although Vietnam boosted its military spending by 113 percent between 2004 and 2013, its defense budget has been much lower than other countries in the world. Defense expenditure has accounted for around 2 percent of the country’s GDP since 2004. Total spending was \$3.3 billion in 2012 and \$3.4 billion in 2013.⁹⁶ This can be

⁹⁵ Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Minister of National Defence, “The Defence Budget of Vietnam,” accessed April 8, 2016, http://www.mod.gov.vn/wps/portal/!ut/p/b1/vZTLbqMwGIWfJQ8QYQKBsjTXmHKvTYANgoRwSQIkkHB5-maq6Sxatd2Maq8sf0fnPz6SqYgKqKhO7mWe9GVTJ6c_54iLVWh5TyINAXA2KkA6A02MaAAg-wDCBwC-WBB8q2ff9f8A234DVtzzGnErRK9_0m-pwAppUe7MXIbeYRA2Er7IsNsJKM2T1NJ9qSnTy5LtEyF1ee3CbOc6vPH4civWwEyyXeiIJy6vEpmPoyo9iMGdXJiE77MbUG3dbmY3PN5yry9zUpAwwrnmO_bQ1auSNQMVM0EbrNqrhmQLQQcZH1Arkt2y0KbjAMedAtTnl_PIZMYc52piBsn8MfPnUD-8-ZaK3hBJgxuWNwB4MrQ1QHBDPMPfGACZv8B3tXxrojEfgc_FWJvnmFHhA-O_HnZNYSoAbPxSTS2aj7NXze6Ir-7QYXd6TDJhhcEWWgZrH1nm8TjSPBkwmGYsh0OvDPTj0tn7HhGhpNe9PP1g6HK_bcj-rqHtgt9O-P871KkoPzXp43_xrfBqyA0aFGUbFzvSFYD1w9staIzb0hcRp2NpXDpZOZfZEsJZZ4_ogQ3czkp6r7aphlz2nHhuJdu7QsF7YEwThGdPrCbnpVTfsK1cQhkDdjaesHQIwmiKND5gd437r7PhdOamSWO_JJNBjYUa8wp-RqHFjl7HciYmMITNfri1TefcJV3t5WCyo9kzI3eA85SAH8_uGi8UrOoET1A!!/dl4/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/.

⁹⁶ Murray Hiebert and Phuong Nguyen, “Vietnam Ramps Up Defense Spending, but Its Challenges Remain,” Asia, Maritime Transparency Initiative, March 18, 2015, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://amti.csis.org/vietnam-ramps-up-defense-spending-but-its-challenges-remain/>.

attributed to not only the self-defense capability policy, but also the economy. To enhance its military power, Vietnam is promoting broadening international cooperation in training, officer exchanges and the build-up of national defense industries to meet the demands for weaponry. At present, the domestic defense industry is not yet capable of producing some modern weapons. To provide its homeland with more effective protection, Vietnam continues to acquire military weapons from traditional trading partners. At the same time, Vietnam is expanding defense trade relations with other countries in order to further satisfy the needs for technical support as well as equipment and weapons.⁹⁷

Additionally, the universal trend of relying increasingly on interdependent, international and regional security arrangements has influenced Vietnam's search for security. Defense cooperation is viewed as an effective way to maintain peace and stability. A peaceful and stable environment also contributes to its national development. Vietnam has been involved in international cooperation activities, such as humanitarian assistance, and search and rescue operations. Vietnam is striving to become one of the key members that play a central role in the security and defense cooperation mechanisms in the region by 2030.⁹⁸ Maintaining a peaceful environment and political security contributes to the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of the country.

⁹⁷ Vietnam Minister of Defense, *White Paper: Vietnam National Defence*, 99.

⁹⁸ Nguyen, "Overall Strategy for International Integration through 2020, Vision to 2030."

From the aforementioned analysis and the “Overall Strategy for International Integration through 2020, Vision to 2030,” Vietnam’s strategic objectives can be generalized as follows:

1. Turning Vietnam into a modern-oriented industrialized country through expanding markets, establishing international relations and sustainable development, and improving people’s living standards.
2. Maintaining independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, and firmly defending the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam.
3. Gradually modernizing the VPA, strengthening its capability to ensure national security and defense, and proactively contributing to defense cooperation for peace, security and stability in the region.

U.S.-Vietnam Relations

Since the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam relations in 1995, there has been a number of issues that both countries have been working on to develop and deepen the relationship. In general, the ties between the U.S. and Vietnam have been gradually strengthened. Significant milestones have been reached. However, developments and difficulties usually go hand in hand. This part of the thesis examines important events that have occurred between the two countries. They reveal the forward momentum of the relationship as well as points of frictions that are also present.

The Visit of the General Secretary of Communist Party of Vietnam to the United States

Vietnam and the U.S. normalized their bilateral relationship in 1995 and have established a comprehensive partnership since 2013. High-ranking leaders from both

countries have paid many visits, but not until June 2015 did the highest official of the Vietnamese Communist Party. It took almost 20 years since normalization before this visit was made. For this reason, many analysts considered it to be a landmark or a turning point in the U.S.-Vietnam relationship.

Upon his arrival, Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, was ceremonially welcomed by President Obama to the Oval Office, at the White House. Normally, this honor is reserved to heads of state. However, although Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong visited the U.S. as the highest leader of the Party, in accordance with the U.S. political system, he was received with all the ceremonies due a head of state. This demonstrated U.S. recognition of the role of the Vietnamese Communist Party, and the importance of the General Secretary of the Party in Vietnam's political system. This also showed U.S. respect for Vietnam's political system, and vice versa, although the two countries have many political differences. In addition, the two sides reached the "United States–Vietnam Joint Vision Statement." This, once again, confirmed that in the eyes of Americans, Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong represented the country, not only the Party.

Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's trip also conveyed a new high level of mutual trust. In the U.S., there has been opposition towards U.S.-Vietnam relations from both the general public and politicians because of issues related to the Vietnam War such as POW issues and the large number of U.S. Soldiers killed in Vietnam. By the same token, although the vast majority of the Vietnamese population welcomes the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, there has also been an "American Syndrome" in Vietnam. In the Vietnam War, Vietnam suffered considerable damage. The number of Vietnamese casualties is

much higher than that of the U.S. This point was made by Mr. Bui The Giang, the head of the Department of Western Europe-North America, Party Commission for External Relations, who directly participated in preparing for Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's visit to the U.S. In an interview with a Vietnamese correspondent, he discussed the American Syndrome, which causes friction in U.S.-Vietnam relations. He cited statistics from the Vietnam Ministry of Defense that record that, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, 42,000 people have been killed by bombs, mines, and UXO that remained after the war ended. In addition, 200,000 Vietnamese Soldiers are still missing to this day.⁹⁹ Vietnam is probably the sole country having a national program in the media to receive and send information about MIA Soldiers. Because of that, the American Syndrome exists, and opposition to closer U.S.-Vietnam relations and the visit was inevitable. However, the success of the visit showed an enormous improvement in mutual trust, which far exceeded any friction.

In terms of the outcomes of the meeting and the "U.S.-Vietnam Joint Vision Statement," the meeting between Trong and Obama broke political ice and set a precedent for future visits by Vietnam's Party leader.¹⁰⁰ In "A Tipping Point in the US-China-Vietnam Triangle," Alexander L. Vuving commented that, for the U.S., the visit meant that the strategic gains from a close and strong relationship with Vietnam have

⁹⁹ Vietnamnet, "Hậu trường chuyến thăm Mỹ của Tổng Bí thư," updated July 22, 2015, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://m.vietnamnet.vn/vn/ban-tron-truc-tuyen/251776/hau-truong-chuyen-tham-my-cua-tong-bi-thu.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Carl Thayer, "8 Developments in US-Vietnam Relations Show Emerging Partnership," *The Diplomat*, July 13, 2015, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/8-developments-in-us-vietnam-relations-show-emerging-partnership/>.

outweighed the strategic costs of provoking China.¹⁰¹ The joint vision also fosters the implementation of the 2013 Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership, and creates mechanisms for enhancing cooperation in the nine areas highlighted in the 2013 agreement. Additionally, the meeting and joint vision reflected the commitment of both countries to conduct the reforms necessary to meet TTP's standards and complete negotiations on TTP in 2016. Finally, the meeting helped the two countries effectively focus on working on difficulties in bilateral relations such as market economy status and different political systems and perspectives by having positive and frank dialogues.

In sum, the visit produced positive outcomes. It showed the readiness of both countries to overcome differences, reset the future trajectory of bilateral relations and lay the foundation for the relationship in the coming years.

Vietnam's Accession to the WTO and PNTR Status

As mentioned in chapter 2, to meet the requirements for its entry into the WTO, Vietnam must negotiate with twenty-eight WTO members, including the U.S. and the European Union to reach bilateral agreements. On May 31, 2006, the negotiation with the U.S. was successful, and the process of Vietnam's accession to the WTO was almost finished. However, the WTO has its own principles of operating. One of them is not imposing unilateral measures. Although Vietnam was granted NTR status by the U.S. at that time, Vietnam's accession to the WTO would not bring it many benefits if it could not be granted PNTR.

¹⁰¹ Alexander L. Vuving, "A Tipping Point in the US-China-Vietnam Triangle," *The Diplomat*, July 6, 2015, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/a-tipping-point-in-the-u-s-china-vietnam-triangle/>.

The NTR or most-favored-nation trade status is used to denote nondiscriminatory treatment of a trading partner compared to that of other countries. In practice, duties on the imports from a country that has been granted NTR status are set at lower rates than those from countries that do not receive such treatment.¹⁰² Vietnam's NTR status or most-favored-nation derives from section 402 of Title IV of the Trade Act, which is known as Jackson-Vanik amendment.¹⁰³ According to the law enacted on January 3, 1975, Communist countries such as Vietnam cannot have nondiscriminatory status. However, it establishes a procedure (the Jackson-Vanik amendment) to restore most-favored-nation status.¹⁰⁴ In 1998, Vietnam was granted a waiver of the Jackson-Vanik amendment by President Clinton, and a BTA was signed by the two countries in 2000. The two events, based on the U.S. law, allowed the U.S President to grant Vietnam a NTR status. However, the NTR status lasted, in effect, for only one year. This meant that, every year, the U.S. Congress conducted assessment to determine if Vietnam was qualified for the NTR status or not. To gain the benefits as a member of the WTO, Vietnam needed the PNTR status. Investors, especially those from the U.S., did not want to invest in Vietnam's market if Vietnam's status in the following year was unpredictable. Without PNTR, for example, Vietnam's textile products faced difficulties such as the imposition of quotas. By the same token, PNTR status was essential for the

¹⁰² Mark E. Manyin and William H. Cooper, *Vietnam PNTR Status and WTO Accession* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 2, 2006), CRS-7, accessed February 14, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33490.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

U.S. to import products which it did not manufacture into its huge market. An increase in import and export turnover would benefit both sides.

Even though Vietnam's PNTR status would be beneficial to both Vietnam and the U.S., during the congressional debate on this issue, members raised a variety of related issues. Because of differences between the two political systems, cultures, and perspectives, the emergence of problems was inevitable. The U.S. was concerned about human rights, intellectual property rights, and other issues. From the Vietnamese perspective, human rights was not an issue. Vietnam stated that safeguarding human rights is its foundation and goal. According to Resolution No. 51/2001/QH10 on amendments and supplements to a number of articles of the 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam by the National Assembly on December 25, 2001, "The Socialist Republic of Vietnam State is a law-governed socialist State of the people, by the people, and for the people."¹⁰⁵ The question for PNTR for Vietnam and such issues were considered by the 109th Congress. On July 12, 2006, Eric G. John, Deputy Assistant Secretary, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, in testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, stated:

Vietnam, for its own internal reasons, is undertaking a significant transformation that has profound, positive effects inside the country and internationally. Although we would like to see faster progress in some areas, overall this transformation has been—and almost certainly will continue to be—good for American interests and good for American values. WTO accession—and PNTR

¹⁰⁵ Resolution No. 51/2001/Qh10 of December 25, 2001 on Amendments and Supplements to a Number of Articles of the 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Hệ thống văn bản quy phạm pháp luật, December 25, 2001, accessed January 12, 2016, http://moj.gov.vn/vbpq/en/Lists/Vn%20bn%20php%20lut/View_Detail.aspx?ItemID=9344.

status—is the logical next step in Vietnam’s transformation, and it is absolutely in our national interest to support it.¹⁰⁶

On June 13, 2006 Senators Max Baucus and Gordon Smith introduced bill S.3495 to grant Vietnam PNTR. In the House of Representatives, H.R.5602, a companion bill of S.3495, was introduced by Representatives Jim Ramstad and Mike Thompson.¹⁰⁷ On December 9, 2006, U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate passed legislation to allow extension of PNTR status to Vietnam. On December 29, 2006, President Bush signed a proclamation extending PNTR to Vietnam.¹⁰⁸

In addition to being in the two countries’ economic interest, granting PTNR also had symbolic political significance. It was a major step in the process of normalizing U.S.-Vietnam relations. It contributed to gradually eliminating an outdated legacy of the Cold War, the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which the U.S. had enacted to restrict Soviet influence. For the U.S. and Vietnam, another relic of the war was removed with PNTR. Considering the two countries’ different perspectives on human rights and religious freedom, the U.S. granting of PNTR to Vietnam illustrated the higher level of mutual trust and the readiness of both countries to work out differences regarding political systems and existing issues in order to foster closer relations. Also, PNTR reflected

¹⁰⁶ Eric G. John, “Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) for Vietnam,” U.S. Department of State Archive, July 12, 2006, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/68939.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Embassy of the United States Hanoi, Vietnam, “U.S-Vietnam Relation,” updated July 2010, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/chronology.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

changes in U.S. policy and the climate of its relations with many different countries in the world, especially with its former enemies.

GSP Application

While the U.S. granted Vietnam PNTR in 2006 and the U.S. supported its WTO accession, the GSP program is a different story. The GSP is a program that has been provided by the U.S., the European Union, and other developed countries to promote the economic growth of designated developing countries. The GSP provides non-reciprocal preferential tariff treatment to certain products imported from designated developing countries.¹⁰⁹ Under the GSP program, certain goods manufactured by the developing countries may be given preferential tariff or duty-free status. Until now, Vietnam has already been accepted into developed countries' GSP programs such as the European Union and Japan, but not the U.S. In the event of acceptance into the U.S. GSP program, up to 3,400 different types of exports from Vietnam could potentially enter into the United States duty-free.¹¹⁰

The U.S. has eligibility criteria for its GSP. One mandatory criterion is the exclusion of any country that is Communist, unless it has normal trade relation status with the U.S., is a member in the WTO and the International Monetary Fund, and is "not dominated or controlled by international communism."¹¹¹ In terms of politics, Vietnam claims to be a Socialist Republic. Nevertheless, it is governed by the Communist Party.

¹⁰⁹ Jones and Martin, *Potential Trade Effects of Adding Vietnam to the Generalized System of Preferences Program*, 2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2.

Regarding its economy, Vietnam, after renovation (*doi moi*), has gradually integrated into the global economy with a market economy recognized by 45 countries in the world.¹¹² Vietnam is a member of the WTO and International Monetary Fund. Although the U.S. is concerned about international communism, as a matter of fact, the Soviet Union collapsed a long time ago.

In May, 2008, Vietnam requested to be enrolled for the U.S. GSP program. The debates on that request have taken place for a long time. From the U.S. standpoint, issues such as worker rights, human rights, and freedom of association, should receive special attention. Vietnam has ratified five of the eight fundamental International Labor Organization conventions. Vietnam reported that it is considering qualification for two more conventions, concerning the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.¹¹³ On June 20, 2014, Vietnam's Human Rights Report was unanimously approved under the Universal Periodic Review by forty-seven member countries of the Human Rights Council in the presence of ninety-three member countries of the UN and many international and non-governmental organizations at the headquarters of the UN.¹¹⁴ During this occasion, Vietnam accepted 182 of the 227 recommendations made by the

¹¹² Voice of Vietnam, "45 Countries Recognize Vietnam's Market Economy Status," VOV, April 3, 2014, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://english.vov.vn/economy/45-countries-recognise-vietnams-market-economy-status-274999.vov>.

¹¹³ Jones and Martin, *Potential Trade Effects of Adding Vietnam to the Generalized System of Preferences Program*, 5-6.

¹¹⁴ Trung Ch. Hoang, "Vietnam's New Position in the International Community after its Implementation of the National Report on Human Rights," Political Theory, January 22, 2016, accessed February 7, 2016, <http://lyluanchinhtri.vn/home/en/index.php/figure-and-events/item/315-vietnam%E2%80%99s-new-position-in-the-international-community-after-its-implementation-of-the-national-report-on-human-rights.html>.

UN Human Rights Council.¹¹⁵ In addition, in Vietnam's 1992 Constitution, Article 69 declares, "The citizen shall enjoy freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, the right to be informed, and the right to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations in accordance with the provisions of the law."¹¹⁶ This is to say, Vietnam respects freedom and human rights, and citizens are expected to abide by the law.

In the course of assessing Vietnam's eligibility for the GSP program, the U.S. Trade Representative elicited public comments in 2008. Eighteen out of twenty organizations upheld Vietnam's acceptance in the GSP program; two opposed it; and three expressed some reservations, but stopped short of stating their opposition.¹¹⁷ Among members of Congress, some of them are still against granting Vietnam U.S. GSP status while others consider it to be an important policy step that would politically and economically benefit the two countries.¹¹⁸

At present, it is still difficult for Vietnam to gain approval for its GSP program by the U.S. because of the TPP agreement signed by twelve countries including the U.S. and Vietnam. In fact, the U.S. excluded developing countries which have Free Trade

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hệ thống văn bản quy phạm pháp luật, "1992 Constitution," December 25, 2001, accessed February 14, 2016, http://www.moj.gov.vn/vbpq/en/Lists/Vn%20bn%20php%20lut/View_Detail.aspx?ItemID=10450.

¹¹⁷ Jones and Martin, *Potential Trade Effects of Adding Vietnam to the Generalized System of Preferences Program*, 8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

Agreement (FTA) with it from the GSP program, for example, Columbia and Peru in 2009.¹¹⁹

Although the relations between the U.S. and Vietnam have been improved in many areas, differences in political system, institutions, and perspectives still exist. On the U.S. side, officials have managed to work with Vietnam to overcome inherent differences. Similarly, Vietnam has attempted to reform its economic institutions as well as steadfastly pursue its goal of becoming socialist while effectively integrating into the global economy and meeting the requirements in the current strategic context.

Non-Market Economy Designation

Upon Vietnam's accession to the WTO in 2006, it accepted the U.S. designation as a non-market economy for twelve years after the accession day, or until Vietnam met the criteria for a market economy. In high-ranking visits and meetings between the two countries, Vietnam has consistently expressed its desire for changing this status; but up until now, in the eyes of the U.S., Vietnam's economy is still a non-market one. This happened, despite the fact that, in 2014, Oman became the forty-fifth country to recognize Vietnam as a market economy.¹²⁰ The non-market economy status causes many disadvantages for Vietnam's exports to the U.S. For example, when entering the U.S. market, Vietnamese merchandise may be subject to the standards of the WTO Agreement on Anti-Dumping. The existence of the non-market designation is due to existing differences between two countries.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁰ Voice of Vietnam.

From Vietnam's viewpoint, it maintains that its economy is as much a market economy as the economies of other countries in the world. There is no common market economy for every social regime. In each regime, the market economy is characterized by the development level of production forces, the political nature of that social regime, and that country's history, customs, and cultures. Therefore, there is no copy of a country's market economy model that is applicable to all others.¹²¹ Vietnam is a socialist state; therefore, the economy is characterized by not only the principles and rules of a market economy but also the principles of a socialist regime. The concept of a "socialist-oriented market economy" was introduced in the 1990s. Because this model has never existed before, Vietnam has faced challenges when developing its economy and designing measures for that model to operate effectively at the same time. In April, 2001, the ninth National Party Congress made the concept clearer:

Vietnam's socialist-oriented market economy is an economic model, which both conforms to the principles of a market economy, and is based on and guided by the principles and nature of socialism in terms of ownership, management organization and distribution. In other words, the socialist-oriented market economy is a multi-sectorial commodity economy, which is regulated by the market, under the State management, with the aim of building a strong and prosperous country and an equitable, democratic and civilized society.¹²²

¹²¹ Phuc V. Vu, "Developing the Socialist-Oriented Market Economy in Viet Nam: Theoretical Awareness, Practices and Recommendations," September 5, 2014, accessed February 15, 2016, <http://english.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/Socialist-oriented-Market-Economy/2014/425/Developing-the-socialistoriented-market-economy-in-Viet-Nam-Theoretical-awareness-practices-and.aspx>.

¹²² Radio Voice of Vietnam, "Socialist-Oriented Market Economy: Concept and Development Solution," Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America, November 17, 2003, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/vi/node/2861>.

The sixth plenum of the tenth Party Central Committee continued to firmly embrace all these orientations, “A socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam is an economy that abides by the rules of a market economy and is controlled by socialist economic rules and factors that guarantee socialist orientation.”¹²³

From the U.S. point of view, until now, Vietnam is still a non-market economy. Under U.S. Trade Law (19 U.S.C. 1677), the term nonmarket economy country means “any foreign country that the administering authority determines does not operate on market principles of cost or pricing structures, so that sales of merchandise in such country do not reflect the fair value of the merchandise.”¹²⁴ For over twenty years, the U.S. witnessed significant changes in Vietnam’s economy. After renovation (*doi moi*), it has decentralized with more business autonomy and the growth of private sectors. It is also permitted to be influenced by foreign markets. Prices have been deregulated. However, the U.S. still expresses concern about the government’s direction and management of the economy. State-owned enterprises (SOE) have dominated major sectors of the economy and are granted preferential treatment. The largest enterprises including Vietnam Oil and Gas Group, Vietnam National Petroleum Corporation, Vietnam Electricity, Vietnam National Coal and Mineral Industries Group, and Vietnam

¹²³ Dung Tien Nguyen, “Socialist-oriented Market Economy-Continuation of Renewal Process,” *Communist Review*, April 22, 2013, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://english.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/Socialist-oriented-Market-Economy/2013/354/Socialistoriented-market-economy-continuation-of-renewal-process.aspx>.

¹²⁴ Michael F. Martin, *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 13, 2014), 8, accessed February 27, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40208.pdf>.

Post and Telecommunications Group are all SOE.¹²⁵ Under *doi moi* policies, the SOE went through the process of equitization and became quasi-private corporations. Their shares are sold to the public. Moreover, these SOE have shown their ineffectiveness. For example, Vietnam Shipbuilding Industry Group (Vinashin) went bankrupt in 2010, because of its poor investments in non-shipbuilding ventures. The company had run up \$4.4 billion in debt by June 2010, and was having trouble servicing its debt to both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese banks.¹²⁶ The Vietnamese government has a tendency to restructure and rearrange all the SOE to increase their efficiency. Speaking at the conference on SOE restructuring in February, 2014, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung stressed that SOE restructuring is the “government’s central task,” and that the government would issue a resolution on measures to accelerate the SOE re-arrangement and equitization, and the withdrawal of the State’s capital from enterprises.¹²⁷ Besides, the U.S. also cares about price and wage controls. Although the Vietnamese government asserts that most of the prices and wages in Vietnam are market-determined, the U.S. still assumes that the Vietnamese government maintains control over important prices and worker wages.

As mentioned, the socialist-oriented market economy is a new model. It is unceasingly developed and improved by the Party, State, and people. Vietnam signed the TPP on February 4, 2016, with great awareness of the opportunities and challenges

¹²⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ H. Minh, “Drastic Measures for SOE Equitization,” *The Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Online Newspaper of the Government*, March 4, 2014, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://news.chinhphu.vn/Home/Drastic-measures-for-SOE-equitization/20143/20424.vgp>.

created by this new-generational FTA. Immediately after the agreement, the Prime Minister of Vietnam released an article on the opportunities, challenges and actions needed subsequent to this significant event. The article underlined Vietnam's action to meet the requirements of the FTA. It stressed the importance of national governance institutions. "Good institutions, law-governed State, people's right to democracy and compatibility with modern market economy rules will stimulate the aggregate strength to the fullest level and resources for development."¹²⁸ The article also highlighted the necessity of precisely defining the relations between the state, market, businesses and the society: "The State must perform well its role as a development creator, especially in stabilizing the macro-economy; develop the system of laws, policies . . . to create an open, transparent business environment to ensure the right to business freedom and equal competition. . . . The market decides the mobilization, allocation and effective use of resources."¹²⁹ The statement also brought up the TPP requirement of open and transparent operations of SOE and their fair competition with enterprises of other economic sectors. SOE need to be restructured to improve their effectiveness, and private enterprises need to be encouraged to play more important roles in the economy. Finally, to overcome challenges, Vietnam needs to continue reforms to ensure the compatibility

¹²⁸ Dung Tan Nguyen, "PM Talks about Future Actions Following Official TPP Signing," *The Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Online Newspaper of the Government*, February 16, 2016, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://news.chinhphu.vn/Home/PM-talks-about-future-actions-following-official-TPP-signing/20162/26668.vgp>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

and synchronization of laws, structural organizations and contingents of cadres and civil servants.¹³⁰

To sum up, disagreement on the appropriateness of a non-market economy designation results from the different viewpoints and institutions in the U.S. and Vietnam, and the lack of a full understanding of each other. While Vietnam considers itself to be a market economy, the U.S. still has concerns about the structure of the Vietnamese economy. However, following the trend towards economic integration, Vietnam is making more efforts to improve its institutions and ensure the synchronization of laws in order to create favorable conditions for economic development. Also, the U.S. continues to negotiate and engage in dialogues to strengthen common interests and overcome difficulties. A persuasive piece of evidence for both countries' constant efforts to move closer together is the success of the TTP negotiations.

Catfish Issue

The catfish issue has remained a source of trade friction in U.S.-Vietnam relations. Vietnam's catfish or *swai* is known as *tra* and *basa* in Vietnamese. Because the price of *tra* and *basa* imported from Vietnam is lower than that of U.S. domestic catfish, the volume of *tra* and *basa* has significantly increased, making Vietnam a major exporter. In 2013, *basa* and *tra* imports from Vietnam to the U.S. were valued at over \$339 million.¹³¹ However, over the decade, the U.S. has developed policies that have made the export of *tra* and *basa* from Vietnam to the U.S. more difficult.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Martin, *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations*, 11.

In 2002, Congress passed legislation that prohibited the labelling of *basa* and *tra* as “catfish.” In August 2003, the U.S. government imposed anti-dumping duties on “certain frozen fish fillets from Vietnam,” including *basa* and *tra*.¹³² In 2008, the 110th Congress passed the Farm Bill (P.L. 110-246)¹³³ stipulating specific aspects of inspection of catfish including the conditions under which the fish were raised and transported. The six U.S. International Trade Commission commissioners voted to continue the anti-dumping duties on frozen fish from Vietnam in 2009. In 2014, the Farm Bill passed the responsibility for regulating imported catfish from the Food and Drug Administration to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This meant that stricter inspection could be applied by USDA. According to supporters of U.S. policies to reduce fish imports from Vietnam, these are measures designed to protect customers and domestic businesses from unfair and unsafe business.

From Vietnam’s standpoint, as represented by the Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, this policy was an example of U.S. trade protectionism. In fact, U.S. domestic catfish cannot compete with *tra* and *basa* in terms of price because of high labor costs and taxes. *Tra* and *basa* come to the U.S. market with lower price and equivalent quality. So far, no report has shown that exported fish or fish products from Vietnam do not meet the U.S. food safety standard. In “Up with Vietnamese Catfish”, an article on the Mises Daily Site, Jeffrey A. Tucker describes how he assembled a tasting team to compare U.S. catfish and Vietnamese *swai*. The results: the U.S. catfish is light and flaky with delicate flavors. The Vietnamese *swai* is tender,

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

textured, and moderately rich in flavor.¹³⁴ The author concluded that it was a close contest and the biggest difference was price. Regarding the decision on keeping anti-dumping duties on Vietnamese fish, Vietnam's deputy minister of trade and industry, Nguyen Thanh Bien, was quoted as saying, "in this economic context, this decision shows the heavy protectionism of the U.S. judicial and executive agencies."¹³⁵

The catfish issue remains controversial. The passage of the Agricultural Act of 2014 created more obstacles for Vietnam's *tra* and *basa* to enter the U.S. market. Section 12106 amended Section 1(w) of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 USC 601(w)) to require "all fish of the order Siluriformes" to be inspected by the USDA, confirming the change made in the 2008 Farm Bill, and effectively including *basa* and *tra* under the definition of catfish.¹³⁶ One year before, in October 2013, Pham Binh Minh, Vietnam's minister of foreign affairs, and Vu Huy Hoang, the country's minister of industry and trade, had argued in a two-page letter sent to Secretary of State John Kerry that if USDA were allowed to finalize the catfish inspection program, and adopted a broad definition that requires imported products to prove equivalence with domestic products, it would create an unfair trade barrier for Vietnam.¹³⁷ Even so, on December 2, 2015, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, an agency of the USDA, published the final rule,

¹³⁴ Jeffrey A. Tucker, "Up with Vietnamese Catfish," Mises Institute, June 6, 2011, accessed March 10, 2016, <https://mises.org/library/vietnamese-catfish>.

¹³⁵ Martin, *U.S.-Vietnam Economic and Trade Relations*, 13.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³⁷ Food Chemical News, "Farm Bill Update: Vietnam asks Kerry to Intervene on Catfish," November 1, 2013, accessed March 15, 2016, <https://repealcattfish.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/food-chem-news-110131.pdf>.

Mandatory Inspection of Fish of the Order Siluriformes and Products Derived from Such Fish. The 2015 Final Rule adopts all the regulatory requirements outlined in the 2011

Proposed Rule, with some changes:

The term “catfish,” is replaced by the term ‘Siluriformes/Fish.’ . . . By the Effective Date, March 1, 2016, foreign countries that currently export Siluriformes fish and fish products to the U.S., and intend to continue during the 18-month transitional period, must submit: Documentation to demonstrate their authority to regulate the growing and processing of fish for human food and assure compliance with the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) good manufacturing practices, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans, Sanitation Control Procedures, & other regulatory requirements . . . and are advised to initiate a request for equivalence and provide documentation showing its system is equivalent as soon as possible.¹³⁸

Overall, the Final Rule articulates the USDA sanitation standards. It says that the countries who want to export Siluriformes fish and fish products have to demonstrate that their laws, standards, and system are equivalent to the U.S. standards. This rule, obviously, has put up a major barrier to Vietnam’s *tra* and *basa* to access the U.S. market. The standards maintained in Vietnam such as Best Aquaculture Practices, Global Good Agriculture Practice, and Aquaculture Stewardship Council do not apply in the U.S. market under the Final Rule. To qualify for importing Siluriformes fish into the U.S., Vietnam must devote considerable effort including changing its regulations, training its workers, and upgrading the facilities to meet the U.S. standards.

¹³⁸ Phil Derfler, *Mandatory Inspection of Siluriformes* (Washington, DC: Food Safety and Inspection Service, 2016), accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/f412c8f2-e579-4e81-b354-ad18420a5859/Catfish-Meeting-0121162.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>.

Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement

The TPP is a FTA that was signed by twelve countries including the U.S., Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam on February 4, 2016. Although the TPP agreement involves many countries, it is also a major event in the U.S.-Vietnam relations.

On Vietnam's side, the signature of the TPP agreement opens up great opportunities. Tariff reductions will offer Vietnam's goods improved access to major markets such as the U.S. and Japan, creating chances for Vietnamese exports to compete with Chinese counterparts in the U.S. Besides, TTP will help Vietnam attract more foreign direct investment in improving export capability. Key export sectors such as textiles, footwear and fishing will achieve significant breakthroughs in major markets. According to Minister of Industry and Trade, Vu Huy Hoang, in an interview after the TTP talks in Atlanta in October 2015, the pact is expected to help raise the country's GDP by an additional \$23.5 billion by 2020 and \$33.5 billion by 2025.¹³⁹ Similar to Vietnam's WTO accession, the U.S. and Vietnam also had to negotiate to overcome the differences that are the U.S. concerns such as intellectual property right and SOE. Additionally, TTP leads to a more competitive environment for Vietnam's enterprises, and its strict rules could be a hurdle for the nation. The TPP agreement may drive enterprises with out-of-date technologies into difficulty and even bankruptcy, increasing the unemployment rate. These TTP's rules, for example, "Rules of Origin" establish the

¹³⁹ "VN to Receive Various Benefits from TPP Agreement," *The Socialist Republic of Vietnam Online Newspaper of the Government*, October 7, 2015, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://news.chinhphu.vn/Home/VN-to-receive-various-benefits-from-TPP-agreement/201510/25585.vgp>.

criteria needed to determine the national source of a product. Their importance is derived from the fact that duties and restrictions in several cases depend upon the source of imports.¹⁴⁰ Regarding textiles, the U.S. requested the inclusion of the “yarn forward” rule requiring that an apparel product could be considered from within the FTA area, and therefore eligible for preferential treatment, if the entire manufacture of the product, from the spinning of the yarn to final assembly, has occurred within the FTA region.¹⁴¹ Because many of Vietnam’s exports are made using imported materials and intermediate goods such as clothing being made using textiles from countries such as China and Taiwan, complying with these rules will be a challenge for Vietnam.¹⁴² A less restrictive rule that Vietnam was seeking was “cut and sew,” which would have allowed its products to be manufactured from materials of non-TPP origin, thus enabling it to reap benefits from the TPP.¹⁴³

By signing an FTA with TPP countries including the U.S., Vietnam has moved to open up marvelous opportunities to develop its economy. However, in such a competitive environment, the challenges Vietnam will face due to internal issues such as upgrading

¹⁴⁰ World Trade Organization, “Technical Information on Rules of Origin,” accessed March 3, 2016, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/roi_e/roi_info_e.htm.

¹⁴¹ Ian F. Fergusson, Mark A. McMinimy, and Brock R. Williams, *The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Negotiations and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 2015), 34, accessed March 21, 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42694.pdf>.

¹⁴² Nhân Dân Online, “Impacts of the TPP on Vietnam—Opportunities and Challenges,” December 30, 2015, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://en.nhandan.com.vn/highlights/item/3911602-impacts-of-the-tpp-on-vietnam-%E2%80%93opportunities-and-challenges.html>.

¹⁴³ Fergusson, McMinimy, and Williams, *The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Negotiations and Issues for Congress*, 34.

technology, developing institutions, and its dependence upon imported raw materials are considerable.

Military-to-Military Ties

The U.S.-Vietnam military relationship has been gradually built for decades. It has been shaped by both sides' concerns such as the legacy of war and common interests. It has taken a long time for the two former enemies to build trust and improve the relationship.

The start of military relations between the U.S. and Vietnam grew out of a legacy of the Vietnam War. In the 1990s, military cooperative programs involving the POW-MIA issue were implemented and they lessened the hard feelings produced by that war. Vietnam's substantial assistance and support in POW-MIA issues satisfied the U.S. Because the U.S. suspected Vietnam of still keeping U.S. prisoners in underground places, Vietnam allowed U.S. investigators to access live-sightings—underground places in 1992. There was no evidence of U.S. soldiers in these sites. Thus, mutual trust grew and the relations improved. The U.S. helped Vietnam deal with the repercussions of the war such as the devastating effects of Agent Orange and UXO. The U.S. military sprayed approximately eleven to twelve million gallons of the chemical defoliant Agent Orange over nearly 10 percent of then South Vietnamese territory between 1961 and 1971.¹⁴⁴ The agent not only was harmful to the victims who were directly exposed to it, but also has had negative effects on the health of later generations. Although the U.S. has

¹⁴⁴ Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 24, 2014), 23, accessed March 28, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40208.pdf>.

appropriated nearly \$110 million for dioxin removal and related health care services in Da Nang,¹⁴⁵ Vietnam would like to see the U.S. do more than that. Similarly, Vietnamese people have suffered from UXO because U.S. military aircrafts dropped between 5 million and 7.8 million tons of ordnance on Vietnam during the war. An estimated 800,000 tons of UXO remain from the Vietnam War.¹⁴⁶ The U.S. funding programs have helped Vietnam clear UXO as well as enhance the capability of the Vietnam Bomb and Mine Action Center under the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense.

Exchange activities have also improved the relationship. U.S. Navy ships have visited Cam Ranh Bay of Vietnam, and Vietnamese ships have visited the U.S. The IMET program is also a part of a growing bilateral defense cooperation program. The program started in 2005 with limited military training, English language training, and a small number of officers. Now, there has been an increase in the number of Vietnamese officers participating in the program, which is no longer restricted to English courses. Vietnam has sent officers to company-grade career courses and field-grade officer courses in the U.S. Army and similar courses of study in Navy and Air Force schools.

The framework for military relations has been improved through official visits from high-ranking officials of both countries. The 2011 *Defense Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding for Advancing Bilateral Defense Cooperation* and the 2015 *Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations* are two important documents. The *Defense Joint Vision Statement* in 2015 reaffirmed and expanded defense cooperation areas. It highlighted the building of mutual trust, the enhancement of military capabilities,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

the expansion of collaboration in maritime security, and cooperation in promoting security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, the Defense Policy Dialogues that are periodically held are considered to be primary mechanisms to increase shared understanding between both countries and provide practical guidance to the U.S.-Vietnam defense relationship.

Although the U.S.-Vietnam relationship has witnessed obvious advances, there have been continuing differences. The U.S. partially lifted the arms embargo on Vietnam, but Vietnam still wishes for a full removal of the restriction on lethal weapons in order for it to access, for example, maritime equipment. Because normalization was already declared twenty years ago, Vietnam considers the embargo to be unnecessary and views it as a source of friction in the defense relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. Vietnam's foreign policy also impacts U.S.-Vietnam defense relations. Vietnam desires to be friends with all countries in the world for peace, development, and stability, and does not join any military alliance. This position was clearly stated by General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, in a speech he gave at a conference on proactive international integration diplomacy in Ha Noi, December, 2013. His speech stressed that, "We should also be persistent in our principle which is neither join any military alliance nor give permission to any foreign country to have military bases in Viet Nam. Viet Nam does not ally with any country to oppose others."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Trong Ph. Nguyen, "External Relation Work should Consider Fundamental and Long-Term National Interests the Foundation," *Communist Review*, May 8, 2015, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://english.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/Focus/2014/409/External-relation-work-should-consider-fundamental-and-longterm-national-interests-the-foundation.aspx>.

Within the existing strategic situation, the trend is toward a deepening of the bilateral relationship between Vietnam and the U.S. In this context, the U.S.-Vietnam defense relationship continues to evolve. Both countries continue to bridge gaps. Most importantly, the foundation for future development has been laid and is based on respect for each other, mutual interests, and a desire for peace and stability.

The U.S. Strategy toward Vietnam and Interest in Vietnam

The United States' Rebalance to the Pacific

In the global context, U.S. policy now states that it wants an increased presence in the Asia-Pacific region. The presence covers many different areas ranging from military to trade and investment. In 2011, President Obama announced formally the renewed U.S. focus on the Asia Pacific region.

Before the President's speech, in her article, "Foreign Policy," Secretary of State Clinton described six lines of activity fundamental to this strategy:

1. strengthening bilateral security alliances;
2. deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China;
3. engaging with regional multilateral institutions;
4. expanding trade and investment;
5. forging a broad-based military presence; and
6. advancing democracy and human rights.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ David J. Berteau, Michael J. Green, and Zack Cooper, *Assessing the Asia-Pacific Rebalance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 4, accessed March 31, 2016, http://csis.org/files/publication/150105_Berteau_AssessingAsiaPacificRebal_Web.pdf.

In this context, the U.S. places strong emphasis on its relationship with Vietnam. When Secretary Kerry visited Hanoi in December 2013, he noted, “Nowhere is this more important or more visible, frankly, than in the heightened investment and engagement right in Vietnam.”¹⁴⁹

Apparent Congruence between U.S. Interest and
Policies Regarding Vietnam and Vietnam’s
Long-Term Strategic Objectives

The relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam has been comprehensively deepened. This is due to the existing congruence between U.S. interests and policies and Vietnam’s strategic objectives.

Vietnam’s first strategic objective is to become a modern-oriented industrialized country and improve its people’s living standards. To this end, the domestic economy plays an important role. The development of an economy depends on its trade relations with others and international trade organizations. The normalization of U.S.-Vietnam relations in 1995 brought benefits to both countries. It offered opportunities for subsequent bilateral trade relations and for Vietnam’s goods to enter the U.S., a huge market. It also opened the door to a new potential market with abundant labor sources where U.S. investors could establish businesses. It is undeniable that the success of U.S.-Vietnam negotiations on the bilateral agreement and PNTR status paved the way for Vietnam’s accession to the WTO. As a member in the WTO, Vietnam’s merchandise has accessed different member economies with lower tariff rates and without discrimination. The accession to an international trade organization with operating conditions fostered

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

the improvement of Vietnam's institutions and economic laws in accordance with the socialist-oriented market economy, providing a transparent business environment. This, in turn, has drawn investors from different countries. Also, the WTO brought Vietnam an equal position and created favorable conditions for it to protect its domestic corporations.

In addition, the problems resulting from the tragic legacy of the war have been addressed, thus improving the lives of Vietnamese people. Since the war ended, there reportedly have been over 105,000 Vietnamese casualties from UXO, including roughly 35,000 deaths.¹⁵⁰ Recognizing its responsibility for this problem the U.S. has been one of the largest donors in helping Vietnam solve this issue. Between 1993 and 2012, the U.S. provided nearly \$35.5 million for demining efforts and \$26.8 million for programs for war victims.¹⁵¹ In the other war legacy issues such as Agent Orange and POW-MIA, the U.S. and Vietnam continue working with each other to locate and recover the remains of U.S. and Vietnamese soldiers missing in the war and mitigate the effects of Agent Orange.

The second and third strategic objectives of Vietnam, which are linked together, are maintaining independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, and firmly defending the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam and also gradually modernizing the VPA, so that it maintains the capability of ensuring national security. In the U.S.-Vietnam relation, the major barrier has been the different political systems. Now, this may become less significant because the U.S. recognizes and respects Vietnam's political system. The visit by General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam to the White House is

¹⁵⁰ Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014*, 24.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

obvious evidence of this new reality. That is to say, Vietnam and the U.S. have expressed respect for the independence, sovereignty, and unity of the other, despite their differences.

Sovereignty and territorial integrity are connected to military capabilities. The IMET program grants funds for Vietnam to enhance its military capabilities. The partial lifting of the U.S. ban on lethal arms sales allows Vietnam to access modern weapons from the U.S. to strengthen its military, especially the Coast Guard, to face challenges in dealing with complicated issues in the South China Sea. Furthermore, the bilateral defense relationship focuses on building skills in specialized areas such as peacekeeping, environmental security, multilateral search and rescue coordination, and regional disaster response. In addition, the U.S. has pledged to support Vietnam's military financially. For example, \$18 million in aid is a remarkable sum, which helps Vietnam mobilize its armed forces.

Obstacles in the Way of the U.S. Helping Vietnam Achieve its Strategic Objectives

There remain some areas where there is friction in the U.S.-Vietnam relationship. This friction creates obstacles in Vietnam's path to achieving its strategic objectives. These obstacles represent challenges to be overcome as the relationship develops.

In terms of the first objective, the economic one, up to the present, the U.S. keeps considering Vietnam to be a non-market economy. Vietnam is recognized by a number of countries as having a market economy, but the U.S. does not agree. The U.S. is concerned about the SOE, worker rights, and intellectual property rights. Because of different political systems and economic models, the manner in which each state manages

its economy as well as institutions is different. The non-market economy designation leads to a series of difficulties for Vietnam's goods to enter the U.S. market. This makes it more likely that antidumping rules will cause adverse rulings against Vietnamese companies. The catfish lawsuit is a typical example. Moreover, the Final Rule, which was adopted by the Food Safety and Inspection Service in December 2015, imposed more requirements for Vietnam. At present, making immediate changes in Vietnam's institutions and standards to meet the new requirements is challenging for Vietnamese companies. Another obstacle for Vietnam's economy is Vietnam's GSP application. Although Vietnam applied for it in 2008, it has never been granted. Until now, it is likely to be difficult to gain this status with the signed TPP. Even though Vietnam may get more benefits from TPP than the GSP status, this is still an obstacle in the development of Vietnam's economy.

For the second and third strategic objectives, the U.S. assistance in enhancing Vietnam's military capabilities is still limited because the arms embargo has not been fully lifted. At present, Vietnam is focusing modernization on some forces such as Navy and Air Defense-Air Force that require modern weapons. With the arms embargo still partially in place, Vietnam's access to U.S. weapons is restricted. Moreover, cooperation in the defense industry sector between the U.S. and Vietnam is very new. The U.S. has enormous capabilities, and having a modernized defense industry is a pressing requirement for Vietnam. At a reception for the Senior Vice President for the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council, Michael Walter Michalak, the Vietnamese Deputy Minister of National Defense, Senior Lieutenant General Vinh, affirmed that cooperation in the defense industry area has not matched the two countries' potential. Vietnam wants the

U.S. to provide modern technologies to meet Vietnam's need to produce amphibious products, considering that this is a vital step to boost bilateral defense cooperation.¹⁵²

The China Factor

South China Sea Disputes: Vietnam, China, and the U.S.

Six countries including Brunei Darussalam, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam are involved in the South China Sea disputes. China and Vietnam have overlapping territorial claims. China claims that its territorial water covers almost the entire South China Sea. China's claim is reflected in the so-called "nine-dash line." According to this line, the Pratas, Spratlys and Paracels Islands, MacClesfield Bank, the Gulf of Tonkin, and James Shoal are Chinese territory. Noteworthy is the fact that China's nine-dash line overlaps littoral states' Exclusive Economic Zones including those of Vietnam. Vietnam also claims the Spratly and Paracels islands. According to Robert Kaplan:

The South China Sea is the center of maritime Eurasia, punctuated by the straits of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar. More than half the world's annual merchant fleet tonnage passes through these choke points, and a third of all maritime traffic. The oil transported through the Strait of Malacca from the Indian Ocean, en route to East Asia through the South China Sea, is more than six times the amount that passes through the Suez Canal and 17 times the amount that transits the Panama Canal.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Hoai Tran, "Vietnam and the US to Promote Defence Cooperation," *People's Army Newspaper*, March 17, 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://en.qdnd.vn/defence-cooperation/vietnam-and-the-us-to-promote-defence-cooperation/404149.html>.

¹⁵³ Robert D. Kaplan, "The South China Sea Is the Future of Conflict," *Foreign Policy*, August 15, 2011, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/08/15/the-south-china-sea-is-the-future-of-conflict/>.

In general, China has applied a long-term strategy to gradually reach its goals. With its military power being superior to that of its neighbors, China has used force to occupy islands, and has menaced fishermen from neighboring countries who were fishing in the areas it claimed. China has systematically demonstrated its power and consolidated its position in disputed waters. There have been confrontations between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea; but both sides have attempted to avoid escalating tension with the presence of military forces. Thus far, there have been no real battles in the South China Sea. China has been careful and has not created any pretext for other powerful nations, namely the U.S. or Japan, to intervene forcefully in the area. Moreover, after each incident, China considers and evaluates the reactions of the international community before taking the next actions. This is one of the reasons that have restrained the U.S. from taking more vigorous responses to China's expansion in the South China Sea.

There have been a few incidents in the past. Some have caused casualties. For example, China started to forcibly seize the Paracel Islands from Vietnam in 1974. In 1988, China and Vietnam skirmished over Johnson Reef. This clash saw Chinese naval frigates sink two Vietnamese ships, leaving sixty-four sailors dead—some of them shot while standing on a reef. This still remains a point of friction between the two nations.¹⁵⁴ As a result, China secured its first holdings in the Spratlys. In January of 2005, a Chinese attack on Vietnamese fishermen that gained wide publicity was the massacre in the Gulf of Tonkin (Vinh Bac Bo). Chinese Navy ships killed nine Vietnamese fishermen and

¹⁵⁴ Greg Torode, "Spratly Island Tensions Persist," *South China Morning Post*, March 17, 2013, accessed April 4, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccll.com/docview/1317220887?accountid=28992>.

injured seven others. Also, eight fishermen were kidnapped.¹⁵⁵ According to China's explanation, this was an act of self-defense against armed pirates that intended to capture Chinese fishing boats. The author of the article "Massacre in the Gulf of Tonkin" judged the Chinese explanation to be absurd. Small wooden boats, even if they were armed, he noted, would never "attack" larger Chinese boats protected by naval vessels armed with machine guns and cannons.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, survivors of the massacre reported that the incident had occurred in Vietnam's territorial waters. Once again, China used force against Vietnam—a much smaller country—to strengthen its claims over the South China Sea.

In 2014, China erected oil rig 981 in the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea for more than two months (from May 2 to July 16). Vietnam strongly opposed this action of China, claiming that the oil rig was completely within Vietnam's continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zones. Chinese Coast Guard vessels used water cannons against Vietnamese Coast Guard vessels when they attempted to intercept the oil rig. According to James Hardy and Ridzwan Rahmat in *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Rear Admiral Ngo Ngoc Thu, deputy commander of the Vietnamese Coast Guard, showed reporters in Hanoi video footage of Chinese vessels obstructing Vietnamese ships and spraying them with water cannons.¹⁵⁷ This is said to be a part of China's long-term

¹⁵⁵ Thi Lam, "Massacre in the Gulf of Tonkin," *National Catholic Reporter* 41, no. 19 (March 11, 2005): 6, accessed April 4, 2016, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/215317357?accountid=28992>.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ James Hardy and Ridzwan Rahmat "Chinese, Vietnamese Coastguards Square Off as Oil Rig Dispute Escalates," *Jane's Navy International*, May 9, 2014, accessed

strategy. The fact that China moved the oil rig out of the disputed water is probably not because they fear Vietnamese forces. The oil rig was withdrawn because it had finished its mission of waging psychological warfare. China wanted to show its power *vis-à-vis* Vietnam and that it could exert its will wherever it pleased.¹⁵⁸ However, the deployment of oil rig 981 disconcerted the U.S.

Up until the 1990s, the U.S. did not take any position in the South China Sea disputes. In both the 1974 Paracel Islands clash and the 1988 China-Vietnam confrontation over the Johnson Reef, the U.S. hardly even reacted to Chinese aggressiveness. Although the U.S. has not taken sides in the South China Sea issue, now it is obvious that it and Vietnam have identified shared concerns over Chinese assertiveness. One of the U.S.'s major strategic concerns is to ensure freedom of navigation. Some significant economic interests of the U.S. lie in the South China Sea. Ninety percent of the oil destined for U.S. allies passes through the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca.¹⁵⁹ Its interests and concerns have induced the U.S. to compete with China. Besides expressing its worries about South China Sea security regarding China's actions, the U.S. has carried out air and sea patrols in international water where China has

April 5, 2016, <https://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&ItemId=+++1710635&Pubabbrev=JDW>.

¹⁵⁸ Matthew Ribar, "China Moved Its Oil Rig: So What?," *International Policy Digest* 1, no. 7 (July 2014): 15, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=eb1db35b-c476-4366-acb5-2b3455ed8a76%40sessionmgr103&hid=128&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=108818130&db=poh>.

¹⁵⁹ Kamrul Hossain, "The UNCLOS and the US-China Hegemonic Competition over the South China Sea," *Journal of East Asia and International Law* 6, no. 1 (2013): 107-133, accessed January 17, 2016, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

been building artificial islands. In May 2015, China's navy issued eight warnings to the crew of a U.S. P8-A Poseidon when it was flying directly above one artificial island. When the American pilots responded that they were flying through international airspace, a Chinese radio operator said with exasperation: "This is the Chinese navy. . . . You go!"¹⁶⁰ In October 2015, the U.S. sent the destroyer USS Lassen that "conducted a transit" within twelve nautical miles of Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands.¹⁶¹ The U.S.'s sending surveillance planes and war ships to contested waters China has claimed indicates that its concerns in the South China Sea are closely related to China's activities rather than those of other littoral states. U.S. surveillance imagery shows that China's weaponry is on one of the artificial islands that may have been built for military purposes and that may hinder freedom of navigation. In addition, the air and sea patrols that pass directly above or very close to the artificial islands—twelve nautical miles—indicate that the U.S. does not recognize the Chinese claim over the disputed waters.

Recently, the U.S. has been showing increasing interest in defense cooperation with Vietnam. In 2014, the U.S. partially lifted the embargo on arms sales against Vietnam. According to senior U.S. officials unarmed P-3 surveillance planes could be

¹⁶⁰ David Brunnstrom, "U.S., China Rift Grows over Sea Provocations," *The World Post*, May 21, 2015, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/21/us-china-sea_n_7417478.html.

¹⁶¹ Jim Sciutto and Barbara Starr, "U.S. Warship Sails Close to Chinese Artificial Island in South China Sea," *CNN Wire Service*, October 26, 2015, accessed April 6, 2016, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/1726932321?accountid=28992>.

one of the first sales.¹⁶² Such equipment is likely to help Vietnam face challenges from China. The U.S.-Vietnam Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations was signed in 2015. The U.S. promised to help Vietnam enhance its maritime capability. The U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that the U.S. would provide \$18 million to the Vietnamese Coast Guard to purchase American Metal Shark patrol vessels. Thus, despite the tense situation in the South China Sea, the U.S. supports finding peaceful solutions among the various claimants. However, it also keeps a close eye on China's activities and has continued to enhance its relationships with other littoral states like Vietnam.

The U.S. also supports a collaborative diplomatic process by all claimants for resolving the disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with international law including the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention and opposes the threat of use force by any claimant.¹⁶³

The U.S.-China relationship

The U.S.-China relationship is a complicated mix of both competition and cooperation in many fields, including economy, politics, and the military. The rise of China has been a matter of concern to the U.S. It is uncertain about China's ambitions. The rise of China may be viewed as a threat to the U.S. and international security. The

¹⁶² The Straits Times, "US Set to Lift Arms Embargo on Vietnam," September 25, 2014, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1564597251?accountid=28992>.

¹⁶³ John R. Crook, "Secretary of State Comments on South China Sea, Affirms U.S. Navigational Interests, and Expresses U.S. Desire for Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes," *The American Journal of International Law* 106, no. 1 (January 2012): 159, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/923244885?accountid=28992>.

South China Sea issue has also brought the U.S. and China into conflict. However, U.S.-China relations still remain important to both countries. Because of that importance, the U.S. is cautious when making any decision to support other countries involved in the South China Sea dispute. China has been a large trading partner with the U.S. and U.S. corporations are always interested in the Chinese market. China has become the sixth-largest market for Procter & Gamble, the U.S. company that makes products such as Crest toothpaste and Olay moisturizing cream. By 1997, an estimated 150,000 American jobs were dependent on the export of goods to China.¹⁶⁴ Senator John Kerry, in a speech about Chinese currency manipulation in 2011 said that China was a major investor and important partner of the U.S. in a lot of ways. The partnership is important for the economic stability and growth of both countries.¹⁶⁵ This means that U.S.-China trade relations are interdependent. The Chinese government views economic growth as a prerequisite for China's development. Therefore, China will not behave in such a way that threatens the continuation of international trade and investment.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, the U.S. does not want to cause more conflict with China because more tension will negatively impact efforts by the U.S. to integrate China into the international system.

¹⁶⁴ Mary M. MacCarthy, "The Impact of Economic Interdependence on US-China Relations" (Conference Papers, International Studies Association, August 24, 2005), 13, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=27158345&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁶⁵ Targeted News Service, "Kerry: US-China Partnership Important for Economic Stability, Growth," October 6, 2011, accessed 7 April, 2016, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/896507923?accountid=28992>.

¹⁶⁶ MacCarthy, "The Impact of Economic Interdependence on US-China Relations," 18.

“America needs to sell its technology, import comparatively inexpensive goods, productively employ its capital, foster peace and stability in Asia (Korea, the Taiwan Strait, and the subcontinent), and effectively address a plethora of global issues.”¹⁶⁷ Therefore, according to David M. Lampton, in the 1997 to 1999 Asian crisis, the U.S. needed China to be a responsible macroeconomic manager and engine of regional economic growth.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the interests of both China and the U.S. have contributed to promoting cooperation and reducing tensions between two countries. The interdependence between the U.S. and China may serve to explain why U.S. reactions to China’s actions have not been straightforward. Senator John McCain complained recently that lack of U.S. action was allowing China to continue to “pursue its territorial ambitions” in the region.¹⁶⁹ The chairman of the influential U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee criticized the Obama administration for delaying further “freedom of navigation” patrols within twelve nautical miles of islands built by China.¹⁷⁰

In sum, U.S.-China relations are inextricably interwoven. Changes in the relationship between these two powerful countries would have a significant impact on themselves, the region, and the world. Hence, the U.S. is cautious about taking any

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S. China Relations, 1989-2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 11, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://site.ebrary.com/lumen.cgscarl.com/lib/carl/reader.action?docID=10053534>.

¹⁶⁹ Asia News Monitor, “United States/China: McCain Blasts Lack of US Patrols in South China Sea,” January 7, 2016, accessed April 8, 2016, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/1753652046?accountid=28992>.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

actions that are deemed unfavorable to China. U.S. support to Vietnam or any other claimants opposing China in the South China Sea will involve serious contemplation by the U.S.

The Vietnam-China relationship

The Vietnam-China relationship is complicated, and it rises and falls in historical periods. In the past, Vietnam had been a Chinese colony for almost 1,000 years. This period began in about 179 BC. Its colonization was divided into four periods. Vietnamese culture has been influenced by that of China. Vietnam's history records many battles fought by the Vietnamese people to repel the invaders from the North. More recently, in 1979, while Vietnam fought against the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, China supported them. This resulted in a brief war between China and Vietnam in Vietnam's northern border areas. After a month, Chinese forces withdrew. In 1986, Vietnam carried out the renovation (*doi moi*) which advocated open-door policies. This required an improvement in ties with China. In 1991, Vietnam-China relations were normalized. The improvement of Vietnam-China relationship brings advantages since both countries are neighbors and are directed by Communist parties. In March 1999, the two Party general secretaries, Jiang Zemin and Le Kha Phieu, agreed on the "16-Character Guidelines" for relations between the two countries: "long-term, stable, future-orientated, and all-round cooperative relations."¹⁷¹ In 2009, Vietnam and China established a comprehensive strategic partnership. Despite the South China Sea disputes, China has remained

¹⁷¹ Bill Hayton, "Vietnam and the United States: An Emerging Security Partnership" (Paper, The United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, November 2015), 11, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://ussc.edu.au/ussc/assets/media/docs/publications/Emerging-Asia-Reports/MacArthur-Vietnam-ONLINE.pdf>.

Vietnam's largest trading partner. In 2001, the trade deficit with China was at only \$210 million. In 2013, Vietnam's imports from China topped \$30.37 billion, sending the trade deficit to \$19.6 billion.¹⁷² Thus, China is Vietnam's important partner in many areas on account of not only bilateral trade relations but also geographic proximity. As is the case with the U.S., Vietnam also desires to avoid harming its bilateral relations with China. Although the U.S.-Vietnam relationship has been limited thus far, China still has reasons to worry about it. At present, the U.S. is competing with China. A closer relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam may make China believe that the U.S. will increasingly rely on Vietnam to restrain China. The South China Sea issue is likely to be a good reason for increased American military presence in the region with Vietnam's concurrence. China's concerns were expressed in the Chinese press. In, *People Daily Online*, a Chinese online newspaper, Li Hongmei says "Vietnam must not play a dangerous game between China and the United States, which is something of playing with fire. . . . It might well overestimate the capacity of Uncle Sam's protective umbrella."¹⁷³ The *Chinese Daily* also criticizes the U.S.-Vietnam relations, "The return to Asia momentum of the U.S. appears strong, but in reality it is superficial, in essence it is Washington's forced defense of its declining dominance in Asia."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Tuoitrenews.vn, "Vietnam's Trade Deficit to China Surges to Near \$20 bln," updated September 12, 2013, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://tuoitrenews.vn/society/15841/vietnam-imports-many-goods-from-china-from-needles-to-elephants>.

¹⁷³ Hongmei Li, "Vietnam Advisable not to Play with Fire," *People's Daily Online*, August 17, 2010, accessed April 9, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/90002/96417/7107160.html>.

¹⁷⁴ Wenzhao Tao, "Being an Amicable Neighbor," *China Daily*, May 1, 2011, accessed April 10, 2016, http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-01/05/content_11796203.htm.

In short, a closer relationship with the U.S. may bring benefits to Vietnam; however, it may have negative impacts on Vietnam's relations with China, a big neighbor and strategic partner. In this case, obviously, as in all complex international relations, Vietnam needs to exercise careful strategic calculation to harmonize with its partners. This, in turn, may be an obstacle to forming closer U.S.-Vietnam relations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the possible benefits for Vietnam arising from a closer U.S.-Vietnam relationship and the challenges associated with such a development. First, past and current U.S.-Vietnam relations were scrutinized using the DIME model. Subsequently, Vietnam's policies and strategic objectives, U.S. policies towards its relationship with Vietnam, historical and critical events, and China's influence on Vietnam-U.S. relations, were examined. Based on these discussions and analyses, this study has reached the following conclusions about the questions raised in the introduction.

A fundamental question that was addressed was: What are Vietnam's strategic objectives? The "Overall Strategy for International Integration through 2020, Vision to 2030" specifies three strategic objectives focusing on the economy, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and modernization of the VPA. After the renovation in the late 1980s, Vietnam's economy entered a period of rapid development. As a developing country, Vietnam is well aware of the importance of a strong economy. Full integration into the global economy and expanding markets by enhancing relations with other nations are Vietnam's key measures to become a modern-oriented industrialized country. In addition to stimulating the economy, maintaining independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and firmly defending the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam are also principal strategic objectives. For the Vietnamese people, independence and sovereignty is sacrosanct. This is why they have valiantly fought and sacrificed everything for that right throughout the nation's history. The national strategy also makes it very clear that

maintaining independence and sovereignty must be associated with protecting the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam. Socialism is the sole model that Vietnam has been pursuing. To effectively protect independence, sovereignty, the regime, and the people, as well as to ensure national and regional security, Vietnam attaches great significance to military capability. As a developing country facing many challenges, gradually modernizing the military is one of Vietnam's strategic goals.

After discussing Vietnam's strategic objectives, the thesis addressed the question: What are the U.S. interests and policies towards its relationship with Vietnam? The answer to this question is not stated in a single document from the U.S. government. Answers must be gleaned by examining the U.S. -Vietnam relations, official documents, as well as U.S. policies towards Asia. First, the U.S. has had a deep interest in resolving all outstanding POW-MIA issues. As we have shown, it was possible to resolve POW issue with the full cooperation of both sides. In fact, this issue has been largely overcome, leading to significant improvements in the U.S.-Vietnam relationship. The search for missing Soldiers in the war has taken the U.S. and Vietnam a long time. Not only the U.S., but also Vietnam, are concerned about the issue. American and Vietnamese teams have been working hard together to accomplish the mission.

Second, when it comes to the economy, U.S. investors want to expand their businesses into new markets. Vietnam is both a potential market and a large labor source. Moreover, Vietnam has thriving textile and aquaculture industries. Vietnamese products entering the U.S. market are in high demand with good prices because Vietnam has lower costs for labor and raw materials. The BTAs signed in 2001 and 2006, and the recently negotiated TTP agreement, are a clear manifestation of U.S. interests in Vietnam's

economy and the expansion of bilateral commercial activities. In addition, in the Asia-Pacific Rebalance Policy, Secretary of State Clinton highlighted six lines of activities including engaging with regional institutions and expanding trade and investment. Vietnam's potential as a market and its strategic geographical position in the intersection of air and maritime routes between the Pacific and Indian oceans make it one of the important countries with which the U.S. wants to establish a closer relationship.

In general, U.S. policies towards Vietnam show that the relationship is continuously flourishing. However, those policies vary from situation to situation. U.S. policy makers seem reluctant to grant Vietnam PNTR status, but the TPP agreement demonstrates that U.S. efforts to work out differences are finding common voices in Vietnam. However, in some areas, there are problems. Vietnam's market economy status has already been recognized by many countries, but not by the U.S. The catfish issue arose from this non-market economy designation with anti-dumping duties being imposed on Vietnamese catfish. Eventually, the rule became stricter. The Final Rule posed more obstacles for Vietnam's aquaculture. In the military policy area, Vietnam has not been granted a full lifting of the arms trade embargo even though the two countries have normalized their relations for almost twenty years.

Given China's power and influential position, the question of China's influence on the Vietnam-U.S. relationship was also examined. China's impacts were looked at from three different angles, which are the South China Sea dispute, the Vietnam-China relationship, and the U.S.-China relationship. In the South China Sea dispute, the rise of China and its assertiveness over territorial claims have been a cause of concern for both Vietnam and the U.S. Although each country has different concerns, both have common

interests. Vietnam is worried about territorial claims, while the U.S. is concerned about freedom of navigation and the flow of maritime commerce. The dispute is complex and complicated, which requires many related agents to join hands. In a sense, it brings the U.S., Vietnam and other countries together to seek effective solutions. Therefore, common interests on this issue tend to improve the U.S.-Vietnam relationship. On the other hand, for both Vietnam and the U.S., China is an important partner. A closer U.S.-Vietnam relationship may worsen the relationship of both countries with China. Although there are U.S. interests in the South China Sea, in fact, the dispute is among six countries— Brunei Darussalam, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Moreover, China has been a main trading partner with the U.S. For the long-term U.S.-China relationship, any U.S. support for Vietnam regarding the South China Sea dispute will be thoroughly calculated by the U.S. By the same token, China is one of Vietnam's strategic partners and is an influential neighboring country. Ties with China are an important concern for Vietnam. The desire of both the U.S. and Vietnam to avoid damaging their bilateral relations with China is a potential barrier to improved U.S.-Vietnam relations. Accordingly, China serves as a factor which both pushes the U.S. and Vietnam to come closer together and constrains U.S.-Vietnam collaboration on issues that act against China's interests.

So what is the existing trend in the Vietnam-U.S. relationship? Since the war, generally, the U.S.-Vietnam relationship has gradually improved. In some periods, both countries made great strides when the time was ripe. Currently, the relationship is developing because the U.S. and Vietnam share common interests and are working together to ease differences. The successful visit of the General Secretary of the

Communist Party of Vietnam to Washington and the TPP agreement in 2016 are obvious evidence of a positive trend. The differences in political systems, perspectives, and institutions have been recognized and both countries have reached a consensus about the relationship being based on equality and mutual respect for mutual interests. Different viewpoints on politics, economics, and social issues still exist and will take a long time to resolve, but both countries desire a positive outcome. Most importantly, the U.S. and Vietnam have emphasized their preparedness to work together and even make necessary reforms for the sake of both nations. Vietnam is reforming and improving its economic institutions to meet TPP agreement's requirements to accelerate its economic integration into the global economy. The U.S. is considering completely lifting its arms trade embargo against Vietnam. Furthermore, the strategic context in Southeast Asia and shared interests are encouraging the U.S. and Vietnam to cooperate more closely with each other.

Having addressed these questions, it is possible to assess the benefits and challenges faced by Vietnam and the U.S. in developing a closer bilateral relationship. First, Vietnam will benefit because a closer relationship with the U.S. can facilitate the achievement of Vietnam's stated strategic objectives. Stronger ties with the U.S. may speed up Vietnam's economic integration process. The U.S. is one of the biggest economies and potential markets for Vietnam's merchandise. The removal of barriers and the reduction of tariffs may enable Vietnam's export and import turnover to increase. BTAs between the U.S. and Vietnam give the latter credibility as its representatives attend different economic forums and join multiple organizations. Foreign investment is also indispensable to Vietnam's economic development. A closer relationship will create

favorable conditions for U.S. investors to conduct their business in Vietnam. Closer U.S.-Vietnam relations will promote Vietnam's economic integration, contributing to converting Vietnam into a modern-oriented industrialized country in the near future.

Independence and sovereignty are at the top of the agenda for Vietnam. The dispute in the South China Sea is complex and complicated. Addressing this issue requires the aid of the international community. Vietnam wants to resolve conflicts by diplomatic and peaceful means; in other words, it wants to avoid military confrontation. Its policy is more effective with the assistance of the international community, especially with the assistance of a powerful country like the U.S. Moreover, the U.S. may help Vietnam modernize its military to enhance its defense capabilities. The U.S. sells lethal weapons and provides the Vietnamese military with officer training courses. These agreements are helping to build a stronger VPA to ensure peace and stability in the region.

A closer relationship also means more U.S. collaboration with Vietnam in an attempt to cope with the repercussions of the war. The search for Vietnamese and U.S. Soldiers lost in the war will still take a long time. Close cooperation continues proving its efficiency in bringing positive outcomes for the quest. U.S. assistance in cleaning up the dioxin left from the spraying of Agent Orange and providing Vietnamese dioxin victims with medical care reduces Vietnam's burden of overcoming the war's tragic legacy.

Other areas of potential benefits include search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief cooperation. These can contribute to social stability and safety in Vietnam. The relationship also offers Vietnamese students and people more education opportunities in the U.S. and the possibilities of cultural

exchange, strengthening people-to-people ties. Socio-political stability which results in strengthened national security and safety throughout the country will, in turn, promote Vietnam's prestige and status in the international arena.

Along with potential benefits, the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship also involves many challenges. First, there are challenges arising out of the differences between the two countries. The major differences are in the political system and differing perspectives or points of view. According to U.S. law, there are many interests in bilateral relations that the U.S. has not granted to Communist countries, or the U.S. may do, but only under specific conditions. In the past, during its WTO accession, Vietnam struggled to negotiate with the U.S. for its PNTR status. Vietnam has never been accepted into the GSP program because the program excludes countries that are Communist. Vietnam meets the exceptions such as having a normal trade relation status with the U.S., is a member of the WTO and the International Monetary Fund, and has been accepted by the European Union but not by the U.S. The reason is the different viewpoints on human rights. Vietnam declared that protecting human rights is one of its first priorities. In addition, it recently accepted 182 of the 227 recommendations made by the UN Human Rights Council, but the U.S. has been skeptical. Similarly, Vietnam's non-market economy designation is a consequence of different points of view. The U.S. is concerned about Vietnam's socialist-oriented market economy model and the government's orientation to the economy. The non-market economy designation causes Vietnamese companies to encounter difficulties such as anti-dumping duties. Also, Vietnam's standard of products is different and the level of scientific and technical development is still lower than that of the U.S. It is not an easy task for Vietnamese

companies to meet U.S. standards in a short time. In terms of military matters, further coordination is still under consideration. Meanwhile, although Vietnam expresses a strong need for lethal weapons to modernize its military, it still cannot have full access to U.S. lethal weapons.

Besides the differences intrinsic to the relationship with the U.S., external factors such as the strategic significance of China also constitute serious impediments for deepening U.S.-Vietnam ties. China has expressed its “dissatisfaction” with a closer U.S.-Vietnam relationship. Both the U.S. and Vietnam have attempted to avoid damaging their bilateral relations with China. In the event that the U.S. wishes to support and have a closer relationship with Vietnam, it may be caught in a real dilemma. In the same way, China is Vietnam’s strategic partner, Vietnam needs to give important decisions concerning the relationship with the U.S. careful thought. Strategic considerations about China’s possible reactions to steps taken by either Vietnam or the U.S. can place obstacles in the way of Vietnam building up a closer relationship with the U.S.

To sum up, the U.S.–Vietnam relationship has been improving significantly recently. Yet some challenges and limitations remain. Both countries are endeavoring to overcome these differences and promote shared interests. Looking ahead to the future, the trend is positive. Not only Vietnam, but the U.S. as well, will benefit from closer bilateral ties. What all those benefits might be and all the challenges that need to be overcome are potential topics for the future research in both countries.

Recommendations

The challenges existent in the relationship between the two former enemies with two different political systems are inherent and inevitable. Overcoming differences takes time. However, there are some considerations that may shorten the process.

Trust is a vital factor in all relations. Maintaining confidence-building measures such as Defense Policy Dialogues create opportunities for both countries to share understanding, work on differences, and promote common interests. The two countries also continue to deepen and solidify the cooperation on nine areas of the 2013 Joint Statement. Cooperation in search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief should be promoted. Through such exercises, both countries will gain more understanding on political perspectives and culture and find effective ways to coordinate with each other and deepen their ties through mutual respect.

Vietnam needs to continue to reform its economic institutions in order to improve the business environment, utilizing science and technology, and its abundant labor resources to meet TPP standards as well as U.S. market conditions so that these standards and conditions are no longer barriers to closer economic ties between the U.S. and Vietnam.

Recently, the U.S. and Vietnam have worked well together towards eliminating differences. The successful trip of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam to the U.S. is a good example of this trend. The relationship is enhanced as the U.S. gains confidence in Vietnam and this may lead to important decisions such as fully lifting the arms trade embargo. Since the U.S. and Vietnam have normalized diplomatic

relationships for almost twenty years, it is clearly “abnormal” if an embargo still exists in the middle of a normal relationship.

Finally, in a complex world, strategic calculations are critical for both countries. Strengthening the U.S.-Vietnam relations while avoiding damaging their bilateral relations with China is a concern that both U.S. and Vietnam share.

Suggestions of Possible Future Research

In the limited period of time allotted for the project, the researcher conducted a thorough analysis on the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, recognizing the benefits and challenges for Vietnam in the context of a closer relationship between the two countries. However, many related areas remain for future study—including the development of Vietnamese or American foreign policies in order to balance the U.S.-Vietnam relationship with their respective bilateral relationship with China. Another area for further research is to examine the strength and weakness of Vietnam’s industrial infrastructure and how best to develop a set of standards to meet U.S. market’s conditions. Still another topic that could be pursued is how to build effective mechanisms that would allow the U.S. and Vietnam to resolve remaining difficult issues in their bilateral relationship.

APPENDIX A

VIETNAM MAP



Source: Cục Đo đạc và Bản đồ, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.dosm.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=393&ID=131&MapID=7876F32F-EAC0-4229-A8FE-EF9E64A472D2>.

APPENDIX B

US-VIETNAM RELATIONS: KEY MILESTONES

Time	Events
April 1991	The George Bush Administration presented Hanoi with a “roadmap” plan for phased normalization of ties
July 1991	United States Office for MIA Affairs opened officially for business in Hanoi
December 1991	Washington lifted the ban on organized U.S. travel to Vietnam
February 1994	President William J. Clinton lifted the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam
January 1995	The U.S. and Vietnam signed agreements settling property claims and establishing liaison offices in each other's capitals.
May 1995	Vietnam gave the U.S. presidential delegation a batch of documents on missing Americans, later hailed by the Pentagon as the most detailed and informative of their kind to date.
July 1995	President William J. Clinton announced "normalization of relations" with Vietnam
August 1995	Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Hanoi and officially opened the U.S. Embassy. Vietnam opened an embassy in Washington.
April 1997	Senate confirmed Douglas “Pete” Peterson, Vietnam War veteran and former POW, as Ambassador to Vietnam
May 1997	Le Van Bang presented his credentials as Ambassador in Washington, D.C.
March 1998	President William J. Clinton issued waiver of Jackson-Vanik Amendment to Vietnam
March 2000	Secretary of Defense William Cohen became the first U.S. Defense Secretary to visit Vietnam since the end of the War
November 2000	President William J. Clinton visited Vietnam
December 2001	Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung headed a high level delegation to Washington, D.C., New York and San Francisco
December 2001	The U.S. – Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement was signed in Washington, D.C.
November 2003	Minister of Defense Pham Van Tra visited the United States to discuss cooperation in regional security promotion

February 2004	Admiral Thomas Fargo, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, paid a two-day visit to Vietnam, stopping in Hanoi and Danang.
June 2005	Prime Minister Phan Van Khai met President George W. Bush in Washington, D.C. in the first visit by a Vietnamese Prime Minister in the post-War period
May 2006	The U.S. and Vietnam reached a bilateral agreement on Vietnam's accession to the WTO.
June 2006	Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Vietnam to discuss ways to broaden defense cooperation.
June 2006	Senators Max Baucus and Gordon Smith introduced bill S.3495 to grant PNTR status. In the House of Representatives, H.R.5602, a companion bill of S.3495, was introduced by Rep. Jim Ramstad and Mike Thompson.
July 2006	Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on granting Vietnam PNTR.
November 2006	U.S. President George W. Bush began a four-day visit to Vietnam where he participated in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' meeting
December 2006	U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate passed legislation to allow extension of PNTR status to Vietnam.
December 2006	President Bush signed proclamation extending PNTR to Vietnam.
January 2007	Vietnam became the 150th Member of the WTO
March 2007	The U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Maritime Agreement was signed in Washington D.C.
June 2007	President Nguyen Minh Triet visited the U.S.
September 2007	Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung paid a five-day visit to New York to attend the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly
June 2008	Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung officially visited the U.S.
April 2009	U.S. Senator John McCain visited Hanoi
November 2009	Military ties were strengthened between the U.S. and Vietnam when Naval ships USS Blue Ridge and USS Lassen docked at Da Nang port
August 2010	The first dialogue between Deputy Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Scher that focused on future bilateral defense cooperation took place in Hanoi

September 2011	The second Vietnam-U.S. Defense Policy Dialogue that was under the co-chair of Vietnamese Deputy Defense Minister Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Scher happened in Washington, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for advancing bilateral defense cooperation was signed
June 2012	U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta visited Cam Ranh Bay
July 2013	President Obama welcomed President Truong Tan Sang to the White House, The Joint Statement was signed
May 2014	Bilateral Nuclear Energy Agreement was signed
Jun 2015	Vietnamese Defense Minister, Phung Quang Thanh signed a Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations
July 2015	The General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong, visited the U.S.
February 2016	TTP agreement was signed by twelve countries including the U.S. and Vietnam

Source: Embassy of the United States Hanoi, Vietnam, “U.S.-Vietnam Relations,” July 2010, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/chronology.html>, and synthesized by author.

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