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Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies

RUSSIAN SCHOLARS ON VIETNAM

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Chief Editor:

Vladimir Mazyrin, D.Sc. (Econ.)

Editorial Board:

Evgeny Kobelev, Ph.D. (Hist.), Nguyen Quoc Hung, Ph.D. (Econ.)

RUSSIAN SCHOLARS ON VIETNAM

Selected Papers. Volume 2

This collection includes materials presented for discussion during three theoretical and practical conferences held at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, the Russian Academy of Sciences, in 2013 through 2015 and published in Russian under common title of the Vietnam Studies in Russia. The papers in this title were selected among those submitted by Russian scholars only and published in issues 4 through 6 of the Vietnam Studies. It aims at acquainting foreign readers and researchers with current state of and case-studies on Vietnam in Russia. The authors of presented topics are full-time employees in major research centers of Russia, such as academic institutions, first of all the Centre for Vietnam and ASEAN studies, IFES RAS, and university centers in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Vladivostok.

The collection consists of six subject sections covering the main areas of research and touching upon various realms of Vietnam's internal and foreign policies, social and cultural processes in that country. Part one includes papers discussing the current trends in relations between Russia / USSR and Vietnam. Part two analyzes political situation in Vietnam and its challenges in the region. Part three looks at Vietnam's socio-economic development under the impact of renovation reforms and market economy building. Part four highlights different episodes of Vietnam's history, and Part five represents studies in cultural area. Part six consists of topics on Vietnamese linguistics and literature.

The original papers in this collection rely on a wide range of sources and documents, and reflect their authors' own findings. The authors' views do not necessarily represent those of the collection compilers.

This collection is the second of its kind in the Russian Federation and is intended for distribution abroad. Volume One was edited by IFES RAS and published by Forum Publishing House in 2014.

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Address: 32 Nakhimovsky Prospekt, Moscow 117997, Russia

Tel.: +7 (499) 124-08-33

E-mail: vietnamidvran@yandex.ru

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The Association was established in Moscow in 1993 and registered as a nongovernmental organization of individual and group members. It provides support to Vietnamese nationals studying at Russian higher education institutions or engaging in scientific research in natural sciences and humanities in the Russian Federation. The Association holds regular meetings to report to its members and have elections, and arranges meetings for its same-occupation members. The results of the Association's efforts and its great contribution to the Vietnamese citizens' academic and educational activities in Russia have been reviewed at several academic and practical conferences and published in collections of reports presented at the conferences.

The Association maintains links with Russian academic and educational centers, societies of Russian-Vietnamese and Vietnamese-Russian friendship, and other nongovernmental organizations in Russia, and contributes to a deeper and broader strategic partnership and cooperation between Vietnam and Russia in all fields.

The Association is headed up today by Dr. Nguyễn Đình Hoàng, who replaced its deceased founder Dr. Nguyễn Văn Thạc, elected Chairman of the Association Board several times in succession until his death in 2010.

The Scientific and Technological Association of Vietnam in Russia is headquartered at 7A Simferopolsky Boulevard, Moscow, Russia.

INTRODUCTION

Evgeny KOBELÉV

Russian Studies on Vietnam Today

The problems of history, economics, politics, culture, literature of Vietnam, and also the Vietnamese language are studied at several well-known educational institutions: the RAS Institute for Far Eastern Studies, RAS Institute of Oriental Studies, Institute of Ho Chi Minh at St. Petersburg State University, the Far Eastern Federal University (Vladivostok), the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow M.V. Lomonosov State University, MGIMO University, Russian State University for the Humanities, Oriental Department of Moscow Linguistic Academy, and Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Most of them hold academic conferences on timely problems of Vietnamese studies annually, and their representatives are invited to attend such conferences in Vietnam and other countries. Their articles and monographs are regularly published in academic and popular-science journals.

Naturally, it is rather difficult to compare the scope of the Russian studies on Vietnam today with the 1960s—1970s, when relations between the Soviet Union and Vietnam developed within the fraternal friendship format. In those years, fundamental titles were published in our country on the new and recent history of Vietnam, ancient Vietnamese literature. Excellent translations of historical works, poetry and prose of Vietnamese authors into Russian were published too.

At the same time, after signing the *Declaration on strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam* in 2001, and raising the level of relations to *comprehensive strategic partnership* in 2012, the Russian studies on Vietnam received an additional positive impetus.

First of all, enrollment of students studying the Vietnamese language at Russian institutions of higher education is gradually increasing, especially at

Moscow M.V. Lomonosov State University and Far Eastern Federal University of Russia. At present, dozens of Russian students from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok are studying in Vietnam. This gives hope that several years later our community of scholars on Vietnam, which dwindled in the 1990s—2000s, will be replenished by young scholars of the Vietnamese language, history and literature, who will have broader knowledge and more free thinking.

In recent years, the number of scholarly and popular-science publications about Vietnam has noticeably increased in Russia. Noteworthy among them, in my view, is the monograph by V. Mazyrin *Vietnamese Economy Today: Results of the 25 Years of Market Transformation (1986—2010)* [Moscow, Forum Publishing House, 2013], in which one can find answers practically to all basic questions concerning the specific features of the *Doi moi* policy pursued by the Communist party of Vietnam, and the mechanism of the rapid development of the country's economy during the past quarter of a century.

The publication of the fundamental collectively written title *Complete Academic History of Vietnam in Six Volumes* [Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 2014], which has been prepared on the initiative and under editorship of the late Pavel Pozner, and in which almost all well-known specialists on Vietnam took part, was an invaluable contribution to the Russian studies on Vietnam.

In 2015, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Vietnam's independence, the RAS IFES Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies published a vast work *Modern Vietnam. Academic Guide*. Leading scholars on Vietnam of both the younger and older generations from different research centers and other bodies in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok took part in its writing.

In contrast to other guides on Vietnam published in our country earlier, this collection is not confined to formal enumeration of the latest data of that country, but analyzed each subject it takes among its achievements and problems. The major aspects of the Vietnam's history, politics, economy, social development, science and culture, and foreign relations are discussed. This difficult task has been tackled quite well, which makes it possible to regard this title as a full-fledged monograph in the contemporary school of Vietnam studies in Russia.

A major event in Russian studies on Vietnam has been the publication of *The Poem Kieu. Lament of the Bedeviled Soul* by the great Vietnamese poet Nguyen Du [Social Sciences Publishers, Hanoi, 2015] in a masterly translation by the poet Vasily Popov. Nguyen Du (1765—1820) is the most

famous poet and humanist of Vietnam recognized by UNESCO as a “Beacon of World Culture.” Quite a few Soviet literary scholars analyzed the literary work of Nguyen Du and tried to translate it into Russian. Nevertheless, this masterpiece of Vietnamese classical literature has not been translated till our days. “And so ... on the eve of the 250th birth anniversary of the outstanding poet ... for the first time the full poetic version of his work was prepared for publication,” the well-known Vietnamese literary scholar Nguyen Huy Hoang wrote in the foreword to the Russian translation. “This is our cultural present to the fraternal Russian people.... The cherished dream of many Russian scholars and readers to get acquainted with the masterpiece of Vietnamese literature draw come closer to the rich spiritual culture of the Vietnamese people has now come true.”

Practically all Russian scholars on Vietnam are active members of the Russia-Vietnam Friendship Society, the successor of the Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship Society set up in 1958. With their assistance, the Society regularly prepares and publishes popular-science books about Vietnam and Russian-Vietnamese relations.

On the occasion of the 120th and 125th birth anniversaries of Ho Chi Minh (2010 and 2015) a *Political Biography of Ho Chi Minh* and a collection of reminiscences *Russians about Ho Chi Minh* were published. Apart from that, active members of the Society have prepared for publication several books about Soviet-Russian-Vietnamese relations: *The War in Vietnam.... What was It* (1965—1973), *This Unforgettable Word “Lienxo,” Friendship Tested by Time*, *The Unextinguishable Light of Hoabinh*, *The U.S.S.R./Russia-Vietnam: Milestones of Cooperation*, and others.

A considerable contribution to the development of the Russian studies on Vietnam has been made by the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies at the RAS Institute for Far Eastern Studies set up on December 1, 2008 on the initiative of the late Director of the Institute and outstanding Orientalist, Academician Mikhail Titarenko.

During the nine years of its existence the Center has become a virtual headquarter of Vietnamese studies, where authoritative specialists on Vietnam and Southeast Asia work. This small research unit has achieved serious theoretical and practical results and, what is especially important, gained recognition in the academic world, including their Vietnamese colleagues and political figures. The President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has awarded the “Order of Friendship” to three of the Center research associates for their “active contribution to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Russian Federation”. And the Academy of Social Sciences of Vietnam also delivered

honorary medals “For weighty contribution to development of social sciences.”

Work of the Center employees is based on their desire to contribute to the further broadening and strengthening of Russia-Vietnam relations and their strategic partnership. In this context, the Center is striving to develop close partnership relations with institutes of the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences. The Center has maintained fruitful relations with the Institute of Chinese Studies, Institute for European Studies, Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, and Institute for Development Studies (Ho Chi Minh City), Center of International Studies at the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations, Foreign Trade University, and other institutions.

Close partnership relations connect the Center and the Institute for Far Eastern Studies with the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics. In 2014, an Agreement on Cooperation was signed between the two parties whose action was prolonged in May 2017 for three more years until 2019. The Agreement provides for organizing conferences, which interest the two sides, joint publication of collectively prepared titles on the results of these conferences in the Russian and Vietnamese languages, exchange with lecturers, postgraduate and PhD students, exchange with scientific literature, etc.

Each year, the Center publishes two or three monographs or collections of articles on the problems of Vietnam, Russian-Vietnamese relations, and ASEAN. Besides, research associates of the Center publish dozens of articles in various academic and other journals of Russia, Vietnam and ASEAN countries, write analytical memos and recommendations on timely problems of modern Vietnam, which are of interest to Russian organizations in charge of economic, political, and cultural relations with Vietnam.

One of the latest achievements of the Center was its participation in translating, editing, and preparing for publication certain documents and other relevant material of the Geneva Conference on Indochina (1954). The results of the Conference had a historic importance, and at the same time at least half of all documents connected with its preparations and unprecedentedly long duration (almost three months) have not been published in the Soviet press, especially records of numerous meetings and statements of its participants, which remained unknown to the broad reader due to obvious reasons. Now this “historical case” has been rectified, and in 2017 readers were able to get acquainted with this major historical-political publication entitled *Geneva Conference and the End of the War in Indochina. 1954. Collection of Documents and Materials*.

Beginning from 2010, the Center holds annual conferences on the subject of *Topical Problems of Vietnam Studies*, in which scholars from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, our foreign colleagues from Vietnam, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Japan, USA and other countries take part. The Center publishes collection of papers reflecting the conferences content entitled *Vietnam Studies*. In 2017, the seventh issue came off the press under the title *Experience of Renovation in Vietnam: Modernity and History* [Moscow, RAS IFES, 2017].

In 2014, the Center associates made a digest of the most interesting articles from the first three issues of *Vietnam Studies* which was translated into English — *Russian Scholars on Vietnam. Selected Papers* [Forum Publishing House, Moscow, 2014]. The second such digest includes the best articles from the fourth, fifth and sixth issues of *Vietnam Studies*.

Scholars of the Orient and common readers who want to learn more about Vietnam will definitely find much new and interesting data about Russian-Vietnamese relations in historical context and at the present stage, about the political situation and successes in foreign policy and other fields, as well as about problems of Vietnam's socioeconomic development, and also little known facts or newly-interpreted pages of the country's history, its culture, literature, and linguistics.

Basic information on the activities of the RAS IFES Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies and all published titles of the Center is regularly placed on the site: <http://www.ifes-ras.ru>

PART ONE
**RUSSIA/USSR-VIETNAM RELATIONS:
CURRENT TRENDS AND HISTORY**

Evgeny KOBEL'EV

**Russia-Vietnam Relations:
Reality and Prospects¹**

Introduction

The paper analyzes the current state and prospects of Russian-Vietnamese relations in the context of the foreign policy Asia vector. It highlights strategic partnership as a format new to either party and gives a description of its main spheres, such as political, diplomatic, trade, economic, military-technological, cultural and educational. There is a study of obstacles preventing bilateral cooperation from rising to the level adequate to the new format.

The **subject is topical** as Russia's relations with Vietnam, a dynamically developing country in East Asia and one of the three major strategic partners of Russia in the region, along with China and India, are extremely important. In this context, research into the said issue is of great scientific and practical interest.

Research materials. There are numerous theoretical and popular science publications, both by Russian and by Vietnamese political analysts and historians. Besides, I used my own articles on the subject published in various theoretical journals and collections of papers, as well as reports that I delivered at international conferences in Hanoi from 2010 to 2015.

¹ The paper was first published as Evgeny Kobelev "Russia-Vietnam Relations: Reality and Prospects", in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 21–43.

Research procedure. The research was made by means of collecting and grouping information about historical facts, ways and trends in the development of Russian-Vietnamese relations both in the past and, especially, nowadays.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was primarily official Russian-Vietnamese documents, agreements, treaties, joint declarations and communiqués, speeches by RF and SRV leaders. Another staple was books, articles, analytical notes, memoirs, and other works by Russian and Vietnamese scholars and practical workers.

The theoretical basis of the research was the principal provisions of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation approved on February 12, 2013, together with the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the RF and the SRV (2001) and the Joint Declaration on Strengthening Relations of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the RF and the SRV (2012). Another thing taken into consideration was the concept of Russia's turn toward Asia Pacific countries strategically important for Russia, especially East Asia countries, and advanced development of political, economic, military-technological, and other types of cooperation with them.

Result analysis. The research revealed that in general, Russian-Vietnamese relations have been developing in a positive trend, and are mutually beneficial, above all in the political sphere and in military-technological cooperation. At the same time, for quite a while the two countries' trade and economic relations have been fairly low-key, especially as compared with Vietnam's burgeoning relations with China and the United States.

During the last few years, Russian-Vietnamese relations have been increasingly adversely affected by the tense situation in the South China Sea (SCS). Hanoi counts on Russia's support in its current conflict with China over the disputed islands, as used to be repeatedly the case in Soviet times. However, Russia, bound as it is by the relations of strategic partnership both with Vietnam and with China, has taken a largely neutral stand and is advocating peaceful settlement of the SCS conflict at the negotiating table.

The main part of research

In the 1980s, I worked at the CPSU Central Committee International Department. The Asia sector supervised the Soviet Union's relations with Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Naturally, we were all for strengthening the Asia line in this country's foreign policy, which was at the time largely neglected. And when Mikhail Gorbachev became General Sec-

retary of the CPSU Central Committee in 1985, we instantly decided to write an analytical memo for him elucidating the geopolitical importance of urgently developing the economy of the Soviet Far East and consolidating relations with Asia Pacific countries.

The core of the memo boiled down to the following. **In the 21st century, the center of world life, first economic and then also political, gradually can and should shift to the Asia Pacific Region.** It was there that a new world pole of economic might was taking shape; it was there that the majority of most dynamically developing states of the world were located. According to computations by world experts, the APR accounted for 25 percent of total global GDP in 1995, against the four percent in 1950, and as predicted by economists, could have reached a 40 percent to 50 percent share by 2025 [Dergachev 2003]. Moreover, when we were writing our memo, no expert in the world could even begin to visualize the chance of China's explosive economic rise.

It needs to be said that either our memo or someone else's initiatives did the trick, and Mikhail Gorbachev paid a visit to Vladivostok where he made a program speech in the spirit of our memo. Alas, the further development of events showed that that had been no more than lip service, and in fact hardly anything was done to boost the Far East.

And after the Soviet Union disintegrated, the leaders of new Russia reversed the whole of their foreign policy toward the West. The thing was that the then Russian leaders suddenly saw the United States and Western Europe as their chief political and ideological allies, major donors and a model for Russia's socioeconomic development.

Yet life showed that those were mere illusions. As had been obvious back in the 18th and 19th centuries, America and the West were invariably hostile to Russia, that is both after the October 1917 Revolution and before it. And in the 20th century they were fighting against not so much the Soviet Union, as most people imagined, but Russia as such, a powerful Orthodox Christian state. So one can only welcome the fact that with Vladimir Putin's accession to power, Moscow has finally made the perfectly natural and most rational move of showing a keen interest in the APR.

First, the Russian political elite, albeit belatedly, realized the obvious, namely that Russia was an inalienable part of the APR, two thirds of its territory being in Asia. And second, it turned out that at present in the APR, too, not only in the United States and Europe, it was possible to get both the necessary loans and advanced technologies. The logical conclusion was that modernization of Russia's backward areas in the east, a treasury of mineral resources, was impossible without our Asian neighbors. As a result, the Asia

Pacific line gradually started to come to the fore as a major trend in Russia's foreign policy. The APR is becoming particularly important for Russia these days when the tragic events in Ukraine have prompted the West to resort to tough unjustified sanctions against Russia.

Stages in Asian integration. Thanks to mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia and China a powerful regional grouping emerged in East Asia in 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The main objectives of the organization, as proclaimed by its founders, are fighting terrorism, separatism, and drug trafficking, furthering economic cooperation and humanitarian projects. Currently, the population in the SCO countries together with observer states exceeds three billion people. The SCO strategic potential is four nuclear states, Russia and China, as well as India *de jure* and Pakistan *de facto* [Luzyanin 2007: 84].

Along with SCO, a major nucleus of Asian integration is unquestionably the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN). This healthily developing subregional political and economic organization has now become one of the most authoritative in the world, together with the European Community. The ASEAN Declaration presented it to the world as a regional association, which would work to solve problems primarily in the socioeconomic sphere. Yet in reality, from the moment of its emergence, and especially after Vietnam joined it in 1995, **coming to the fore in the activity of ASEAN have been issues of ensuring peace and stability in Southeast Asia.**

Judging by the regional tasks ASEAN is currently carrying out and its image in the international arena, it can be rightly regarded as a collective power, which incorporates ten countries in Southeast Asia with a population total of 0.65 billion.

As a system-forming grouping, ASEAN is increasingly prominent not only in Southeast Asia but also across the APR as a factor of peace and security. So, its desire to establish working relations with the SCO is perfectly natural. Thus, in January 2007, in the course of the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Cebu, the Philippines initiated establishing closer relations with the SCO, and then, Russia initiated signing the Protocol of SCO-ASEAN Cooperation, where both parties endorsed the idea of steadily developing relations between the two organizations [Luzyanin 2007: 108].

With the advent of the 21st century, the APR started changing precipitously; added to the old problems are now new ones, plus more conflict situations. For instance, the relationships between China and Taiwan is still an unsolved problem in East Asia, as is the issue of Korea reunification and nuclear-free status for the Korean Peninsula. The territorial disputes between

China and Japan over the ownership of the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyudao) in the East China Sea have recently flared up with a renewed ferocity.

A highly explosive problem is that of the unsettled legal status of the South China Sea and the state ownership of the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Archipelago. Since the end of the first 21st century decade, the SCS territorial dispute that used to be a regional conflict has grown into a serious international problem. Heated disputes over the borders of exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and ownership of the two groups of islands in the South China Sea have created one of the most dangerous conflict situations in SEA with a high degree of military and political tension.

Currently, one of the major factors of peace and security provision both in Southeast Asia and in the Asia Pacific Region at large is doubtlessly Russian-Vietnamese relations. Decree 605 of May 7, 2012, by President Vladimir Putin *On Measures of Implementing the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* says that Vietnam is **one of the three most important (along with China and India) strategic partners of Russia in Asia** [Rossiyskaya gazeta: 9.05. 2012].

Since the day of establishing diplomatic relations in January 1950, this country and Vietnam have been bound by a relationship of friendship and comprehensive cooperation. There was just a brief period in the wake of the Soviet Union's disintegration, while Russia was going through a difficult phase of changing political priorities and was in the midst of conceptual formation of a new foreign policy, when Russian-Vietnamese relations were suddenly plunged in a crisis. In the end both sides managed to find a new model of interaction, which matched the radically altered domestic and international political situations. The result was, first, the *Treaty on Principles of Friendly Relations between the RF and the SRV* (1994), and then the *Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the RF and the SRV* signed during President Putin's first visit to Hanoi in 2001.

Importantly, Russia became the first country with which Vietnam established relations in a format that was fundamentally new to the Vietnamese foreign policy practice. At the same time, for Russia too, Vietnam is today the only country in Southeast Asia with which this country has established and is furthering the relations of strategic partnership.

Strategic partnership as a new relations principle. The *Declaration on Strategic Partnership* became in essence a program of relations development between the two countries in the new century. Its main content can be summed up in the following logical conclusion. Despite the global changes in the international arena and, especially, in the two countries themselves, Russia and Vietnam are bound by so many historically conditioned factors

drawing them together that life itself dictates further close friendly cooperation, obviously on a mutually advantageous basis, and considering the new world reality. The main thing that both Moscow and Hanoi were fully unanimous on was that strategic partnership should remain a fundamental factor in the two states' relationships.

Saying that Russian-Vietnamese relations have acquired a new nature, are resting on new principles and are subordinated to the cause of attaining new objectives, the two sides at the same time have no intention of forgetting the powerful potential of traditional Soviet-Vietnamese friendship and cooperation built up over the many years of relations between the two countries. That important feature of strategic partnership between Russia and Vietnam is invariably pointed out by the leaders of the two countries. Speaking at a rally in Hanoi in the course of his official visit to Vietnam in 2001, President Vladimir Putin emphasized that we should securely guard the best of what unites us and brings us closer. We must not squander and send into oblivion the honestly earned shared positive capital that we paid for dearly [Voronin 2011: 147].

The signing of the Declaration signalled the conclusion of restructuring in our relations with regard to the modern situation. Especially noticeable today are achievements in furthering the relations of strategic partnership in politico-diplomatic cooperation. In the Russia-Vietnam political dialogue the two hold identical or similar positions on vital issues of contemporary world development; this concerns in particular the problems of security and cooperation in Southeast Asia and in the Asia Pacific Region, given the geographical location of both countries. In order to fulfil the goals and tasks stemming from the *Declaration of Strategic Partnership* the leaders of all power branches in our two countries keep up regular and intense contacts. Thus, all the four top leaders of the SRV regularly come to Moscow on official and friendly visits, while Russia's three highest officials go to Hanoi on similar missions.

On Russia's part, powerful impulses to develop strategic partnership have been coming from President Vladimir Putin. In 2006, he again arrived in Vietnam on an official visit. In the course of negotiations with the top Vietnamese leadership conducted in a sincere and trustful vein the sides summed up the results of bilateral relations development since the signing of the *Declaration of Strategic Partnership*. The parties agreed that the traditionally close and friendly relations that had formed between Russia and Vietnam were in the long-term fundamental interests of the two countries, and were marked by trust and mutual respect.

As for the foreign policy course of both countries, it was stressed that Russia and Vietnam advocated purposeful joint efforts of the world community to form a just, democratic world system, arrange an intercivilization dialog, consolidate international law order and security, and maintain stability on a global and regional levels.

An important demonstration of the significance the two countries' leadership attached to strengthening the sociopolitical basis of Russian-Vietnamese strategic partnership, and boosting the people's diplomacy in the area, was the ceremony of signing the *Agreement on Cooperation between the Society of Russian-Vietnamese Friendship and the Society of Vietnamese-Russian Friendship for 2011—2015* that took part in the Presidential Palace in Hanoi, in the presence of both countries' Presidents.

Systematic interparliamentary contacts between the RF and the SRV occur on a planned basis, which helps place in time bilateral relations on the necessary legislative basis. The two countries' parliaments have formed groups of Russian-Vietnamese and Vietnamese-Russian friendship. Deputy parliament heads are meeting regularly. Core committees and commissions maintain ties. The two sides are actively cooperating in international and regional parliamentary organizations, above all within the framework of the Interparliamentary Assembly and Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum.

The fruitful efforts of the two sides have resulted in a sufficiently broad contract-law basis for the Russia-Vietnam strategic partnership relations. Now the relations between the two countries are regulated by over 60 inter-governmental agreements, as well as by a whole series of bilateral interdepartmental documents.

Russian-Vietnamese relations are not encumbered by a load of chronic unsettled problems. However, this does not cancel the extreme importance of further efforts to consolidate and improve the contract-law basis of the relations of friendship, comprehensive cooperation, and strategic partnership. This cause is to be served by regular substantial and creative contacts between the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, an enhanced role of mechanisms of interparliamentary cooperation, and turning the latter into an increasingly effective factor of rapprochement between our nations and states.

By the start of 2012, cooperation between the two countries in the new format had been just over 10 years old, and the elapsing years convincingly showed that strategic partnership was exactly the form of interrelations not only to preserve the traditions of former brotherly friendship, but also to successfully build up interaction in every sphere of bilateral cooperation. As a result, on July 27, 2012, in the course of the official visit to Russia of SRV

President Truong Tan Sang, the parties reached an historic agreement on a fundamental rise in the level of strategic partnership, having signed the *Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*.

A year later, during President Putin's next official visit to the SRV on November 12, 2013, the sides signed the *Joint Declaration of Further Strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership*. Having expressed their mutual satisfaction with the results of progress in the new relationship format, the parties pointed out that ***the heads of state had reiterated the good reasons for making Russian-Vietnamese strategic partnership comprehensive, which had opened qualitatively new opportunities for building up mutually advantageous cooperation in a vast range of areas, including intense political dialogue at the top and high levels, strengthening of interparty, interparliamentary, interdepartmental, interregional ties and humanitarian exchanges*** [*Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka* 2014-1: 3–9].

Russia and Vietnam are conducting an uninterrupted multilevel dialogue on a broad range of issues related to the situation in Southeast Asia, and matters of political and economic integration practiced by ASEAN. In this context, it is important to note that furthering the Russia-Vietnam strategic partnership *per se* is a factor that boosts up dialogue partnership between Russia and ASEAN. An increasingly active inclusion of Vietnam in the regional integration processes within ASEAN is also accompanied by further consolidation of Moscow's ties with SEA countries.

The Russia-ASEAN dialogue partnership has taken on a deeply structured nature. Its normative-legal basis has been formed. The Second ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit that took place in Hanoi on October 30, 2010, for whose preparation and successful work Vietnam had done so much as the Organization chair, confirmed that Russian-Vietnamese strategic partnership was becoming an increasingly important key factor working toward strengthening positive trends in Southeast Asia.

Russia is interested in a strong and prosperous Vietnam. This kind of relations between Russia and Vietnam is an inalienable constituent of President Putin's policy of consolidating relations with Asia Pacific countries, and of developing Russia's Asian entities. It appears that maximum increase in the comprehensive potential of strategic partnership with Russia is also in Vietnam's interests. As SRV President Truong Tan Sang said in July 2012 in Moscow, “*strengthening and developing the relations of traditional friendship and comprehensive strategic partnership with the Russian Federation is one of the more important priorities of Vietnam's foreign policy*” [Voronin 2013: 33].

There are no unsettled political issues in RF-SRV relations that might hamper their strategic partnership, no more than there are political forces that would oppose the development and consolidation of the traditional friendship bonds between our peoples. Russia is the only great power that has never had any serious, let alone armed, conflicts with Vietnam. Moreover, millions of Vietnamese are very well aware and do not forget that it was thanks to the disinterested military assistance and political support of the Soviet Union, whose successor Russia is, that Vietnam emerged victorious in all wars for its independence that it had to wage in the second half of the 20th century.

The Vietnamese side has invariably demonstrated by specific acts its sentiment of gratitude to the USSR/Russia for a tangible contribution to the historic victories of the Vietnamese people. Thus, on December 10, 2009, a monument to **Soviet, Russian, and Vietnamese servicemen** who had perished in Vietnam while performing their duty was solemnly unveiled in the vicinity of the Cam Ranh international airport at the site where Soviet Navy ships used to be based. In June 2013, Hanoi hosted an international conference titled **Ninety Years Since the First Visit of Ho Chi Minh to Russia**. In September 2015, a monument to **Soviet cosmonaut German Titov** was unveiled on the island of his name in the Vietnamese Ha Long Bay; German Titov had for over 30 years been head of the Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship Society. Finally, in the wake of RF Government head Dmitri Medvedev's visit to the SRV in 2015, two important agreements were signed, **On Cooperation between the United Russia party and the Communist party of Vietnam** for the term of three years (2015—2017), and between the two countries' **Friendship Societies** for five years (2016—2020).

Military-technological and trade-economic ties. A major feature of Russian-Vietnamese strategic partnership that goes back to the time of the Vietnamese people's struggle against the US aggression is the high level of multifarious relations between the two countries in the area of defense and security. This is recorded in black and white in the *Declaration of Strategic Partnership*, “*The parties shall strengthen cooperation in the defense sphere in the interests of Russia's and Vietnam's security. This cooperation is not directed against third parties*” (Point 8) [Lien Xo 2006: 410].

In October 2008, during the visit to Russia of SRV President Nguyen Minh Triet, the sides signed an intergovernmental memorandum on the strategy of military-technological cooperation until 2020. According to the RF Defense Ministry, in 2009 Vietnam purchased in Russia 3.5 billion US dollars' worth of armaments, including six diesel-electric torpedo submarines (simultaneously there is provision for building in Vietnam the infrastructure

of submarine basing and servicing with Russian participation); in 2010, the sum rose to 4.5 billion US dollars, and that included delivery of Gepard modern patrol boats [Nguyen Canh Toan 2013: 128]. In 2016, Vietnam was the third biggest importer of Russian weapons (after India and Algeria) accounting as it did for 16.1 percent [Argumenty i fakty 2017-17]. Alongside with that, Vietnamese military specialists are being actively trained at Russia's military universities.

Besides the Navy, Vietnam's Air Force is also undergoing profound modernization with Russia's assistance. It purchases from the RF multipurpose Su-30MK2 fighter aircraft and air defense facilities. As Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in the course of talks in Hanoi in March 2010, "we are ready to help Vietnamese colleagues also in creating naval aviation" [Nguyen Canh Toan 2013: 129], and this is a new serious prospect of expanding Russian-Vietnamese military-technological cooperation.

A new form of cooperation that can be successfully furthered to mutual advantage is licensed production of several types of Russian weapons in Vietnam. In this connection, one cannot but deplore that in February 2014, Russia lost the bid for a Kalashnikov assembly factory for Vietnam's Ministry of Defense. In the immediate future, Vietnamese servicemen are to take up Israeli Galil ACE-31 and ACE-32 rifles. The reason for this choice by the Vietnamese side, according to some sources, was a higher price of the Russian offer against the Israeli one [Nezavisimaya gazeta: 10.02.2014].

This is certainly a most unpleasant signal. After all, for Vietnamese soldiers the AK-47 has always been a wonder weapon; they emerged victorious with it from all the wars that the Vietnamese people had to fight in the 20th century. One would expect that proceeding from the relations of comprehensive strategic partnership and given the historic role of Kalashnikovs for Vietnam, both sides could have met each other halfway and agreed on mutual concessions. There are special cases both in economics and in trade when the matter should be settled not only from strictly market considerations but also considering moral and political factors.

Regrettably, a fairly weak point in Russian-Vietnamese partnership has for a long time been trade and economic relations, although there is evidence of some progress there as well. There is the Intergovernmental Russian-Vietnamese Commission on Trade-Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation that acts as the key coordinating force. Also there are major joint ventures with Russian participation set up in the SRV over the years, such as Vietsovetpetro, the biggest sea shelf oil and gas extracting enterprise in SEA; Visorutex, producer of natural India rubber stepping up production by the year; Siprimfico, engaged in sea fishery and transportation; the Rus-

sian-Vietnamese Tropical Research and Technology Center (Tropic Center), one of the few R&D biomedicine institutions in the world whose branches are successfully operating in various parts of Vietnam, and now in Russia too. Since 2016, the well-known Vietnamese company TH True Milk has been building dairy complexes in the Moscow and Kaluga regions (the total worth of the project is 2.7 billion US dollars) [RDIF: 19.04.2017].

Power engineering is a traditional line of cooperation between the two countries. There is the Hoa Binh Hydroelectric dam facility, the biggest in Southeast Asia, whose role in providing electricity for the economy of North Vietnam is difficult to overestimate. In 2001—2003, the SRV power system received new major power plants, the Yali Hydropower Plant (720 MW) and Tri An and Da Mi hydropower plants constructed and put into operation with the help of the Russian side. In 2003—2004, contracts were signed under which Russia would grant credits and take part in the construction of two more hydroelectric power plants, Se San-3 and Pleikrong. On December 2, 2005, the SRV witnessed a ceremony marking the start of construction work on the Son La hydropower plant, with Russian participation, designed to reach the capacity of 2.400 MW (nearly 500 MW more than at the Hoa Binh plant).

At the close of the first decade of the 21st century, a new mutually beneficial and promising line took shape in the cooperation of the two countries, namely the construction of Vietnam's first nuclear power plant. The plan of building the first NPP was approved by the National Assembly of the SRV in November 2009. In October 2010, the parties concluded an inter-governmental agreement on cooperation in the construction of this facility, and a year later, in November 2011, it was agreed to grant Vietnam a loan of 10.5 billion US dollars to implement the NPP 1 project. It was supposed that the NPP would start to be built in 2014, in the Ninh Thuan province, but alas, for reasons not altogether clear, the launch of the project was suddenly postponed [Vedomosti: 10.11.2016].

The Russian-Vietnamese cooperation in developing nuclear power engineering is comprehensive and provides not only for building NPP 1 and training personnel to operate it, but also for setting up a research and technology center that is to further civil nuclear power engineering in Vietnam. That unique research center that will include a research nuclear reactor and several laboratories is also being created on the Russian loan.

Since 2010, Vietnamese experts have been trained at an education center set up specially for them in the Russian academic town of Obninsk and at relevant higher education institutions. Many would-be nuclear power en-

gineers from Vietnam will receive professional training and will be able to practice their skills at Russia's operational NPPs.

Russia is prepared to guarantee supplies of fuel for nuclear power plants both in the SRV and in other SEA countries, should they decide to build NPP. That was announced by Gleb Yefremov, Commercial Director of the International Uranium Enrichment Center (IUEC), in the course of the Fifth International Conference on Nuclear Power Engineering that convened at the end of 2013 in Hanoi [Bạch Dương 2014: 11].

Geographically, Vietnam is a fairly close neighbour of the Russian Far East. In this connection, the working visit to Vietnam of a delegation from that region headed by Yu.P. Trutnev, deputy chairman of the Government and Plenipotentiary Representative of the RF President in the Far Eastern Federal District, that took place in March 2017 assumed considerable significance.

During the talks, the Vietnamese side was granted the mechanisms of state support that had been operational in the Russian Far East during the last few years. That will help reduce the costs and increase the efficiency of investment, above all in building new enterprises. Among other things, the parties discussed advanced development territories with preferential tax regime, the work of the Far East Development Foundation, and programs of small business support and one-hectar plots of land allotted in the Far East.

Representatives of Vietnamese business reciprocated by proposing cooperation in the area of port infrastructure, shipbuilding, air communications development, agriculture, and other branches of the Russian Far East economy. For instance, Vietnamese VietJetAir company, JSC announced a plan of launching a direct air flight between Vietnam and Primorye Territory. Another major company, ShipBuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC), suggested starting construction of fishing vessels in cooperation with the shiprepair yard in the township of Slavyanka, Khasan District. The TH True Milk company expressed interest in building a big livestock complex in Khabarovsk Territory or in Sakhalin Region [Trutnev: 15.03.2017].

A major mutually advantageous issue of economic relations between Russia and Vietnam in the near future is successful completion in 2015 of the negotiations on the Free Trade Zone that went on for years between Vietnam and the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan). The SRV President Truong Tan Sang said apropos of that at the Russian-Vietnamese business forum, *“The creation of a free trade zone can become a breakthrough move in Vietnamese-Russian economic cooperation and trade. Vietnam is ready to provide all the necessary*

most favorable conditions for Russian entrepreneurs” [Rossiyskaya gazeta: 31.07.2012].

At the same time, all these obvious achievements notwithstanding, one cannot but agree with the view of most experts, both in Russia and, especially, in Vietnam, that in trade and economic cooperation there is a vast potential of comprehensive strategic partnership that is yet to be fully brought into play. The particularly weak point is mutual trade. Even though on the whole the bilateral trade turnover has been slowly but surely growing, by the end of 2016, the mutual commodity turnover between the RF and the SRV had reached 3.8 billion US dollars.

By 2020, both countries, counting on the potential of the Vietnam-EAEU free trade zone, intend to have brought the mutual commodity turnover up to 10 billion US dollars worth, that is virtually treble it [Rossiyskaya gazeta: 15.03.2017]. Yet, even this figure appears minuscule against Vietnam's commodity turnover with its major trading partners, China, the US, the EU, and Japan, that is rapidly growing by the year (from 40 billion US dollars to 65 billion US dollars in 2016.)

Cooperation in science, education, and culture. Among the more important and successfully developing lines in Russia-Vietnam strategic partnership is cooperation in science and education that has deep historical roots. Vietnam is second in terms of the numbers of specialists trained in Russia, 52.000 persons in all. At present, there are more than 7.000 students being trained in Russia, of them 2.000 on government grants. This sphere has enormous room for expansion. The number of Vietnamese under- and post-graduates educated in Russia will be on the increase, to all intents and purposes, especially in the area of power engineering, military technology, shipbuilding, and also healthcare, and several other areas experiencing a shortage of highly skilled personnel.

The Theme Plan of Scientific Cooperation currently in force, approved by the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) and the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), provides for research in such areas as issues of SEA countries' development, peace, security, and cooperation in the APR, state and law matters in the course of transition to market economy, modernization of society and the environment, Russian-Vietnamese relations and cooperation in politics and culture, issues of nationality relations in the RF and the SRV, linguistic research, etc.

Successful development and deepening of cooperation between the two countries' social scientists is most graphically evidenced if one analyzes the work of the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies set up on December 1, 2008, on the decision of the management of the RAS Institute for Far East-

ern Studies (RAS IFES). That decision confirmed an extensive program of the Center's research activity. Among the major lines are the following.

- Comprehensive analysis and prognostication of the political and socioeconomic development of contemporary Vietnam;
- studies in Vietnam's modern and recent history;
- strategic partnership of Russia and Vietnam. The potential of Russian-Vietnamese cooperation;
- the historical experience of furthering relations between the USSR, Russia, and Vietnam;
- basic trends in the development and formation of ASEAN as a major regional political and economic organization;
- the current state and prospects of relations between Russia and ASEAN. The interests of Russia in Southeast Asia; issues of security in the region;
- processes of regional integration in Southeast Asia. Ways of optimizing Russia's inclusion in these processes, first and foremost of its eastern areas [IFES RAS: 11.04.2017].

In a mere six and a half years of its existence the Russian Center has become a specialized Vietnam studies headquarters, as it were. A modest-sized research unit has achieved considerable theoretical and practical results, won acknowledgement in the academic world and, most importantly, recognition among Vietnamese colleagues and politicians.

The work of the Center staff is based on the desire to do everything possible to further consolidate Russian-Vietnamese relations on the principles of strategic partnership, and strengthen Russia's position in Southeast Asia. This was highly acclaimed in Vietnam; in 2013, three members of the Center staff were decorated with the VASS commemorative medal For Great Success and Contribution to the Buildup and Development of Social Sciences.

Since 2010, the Center has annually held theoretical and practical conferences on topical issues of Vietnam studies that attract Vietnam experts from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, and their colleagues from Vietnam, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, etc. The Center issues collections of reports by conference participants summing up the results of each conference, which increasingly excite interest on the part of not only Orientalists, but also Russian organizations and departments in charge of political, economic, and cultural relations with Vietnam. The Center staff took a most active part, jointly with Vietnam experts at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Institute of Asia and Africa Studies, Moscow M.V. Lomonosov State University, and others, in preparing a major theoretical work, *A Full Academic*

History of Vietnam in six volumes edited by Doctor P.V. Pozner that came out in 2015. That contribution by Russian scholars to the development of Vietnam history studies was unquestionably outstanding.

Each year the scientific and business relations of the Center with VASS institutes are expanding. The institutes involved include the Institute for Chinese Studies, the Institute for European Studies, the Southeast Asia Studies Institute, the Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia, as well as other research centers of the SRV, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, the Center for International Research and Cooperation of the Alliance of Vietnam's Societies of Friendship with Foreign Countries, Vietnam's Foreign Trade University, the Institute of Cultural Studies, etc.

In May 2013, an agreement was signed between the RAS IFES and the Ho Chi Minh State Political Academy on **large-scale cooperation for a term of ten years**. The Agreement provided for, inter alia, preparation and publication in Russian and Vietnamese of joint works on two subjects, Russia-Vietnam-ASEAN, and joint theoretical symposia to be held in turn in Hanoi and Moscow, as well as annual exchange of delegations of researchers and lecturers, exchange of scientific literature, etc.

On September 16—17, 2014, Hanoi hosted an international theoretical conference about Cooperation for Development between Vietnam-ASEAN and the Russian Federation: Current State and Prospects organized by the Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy. Taking part in its work were over 60 scholars, public and political figures from Russia, Vietnam and five more ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, and Laos), members of the Vietnamese-Russian Friendship Society, and several other Vietnamese public organizations. In accordance with the spirit and letter of the above agreement, the leadership of the Ho Chi Minh Academy also invited two staff members of the Center to take part in the conference at the expense of the Vietnamese side.

The Conference became an outstanding event in the country's sociopolitical life; its work was extensively covered by the *Nhan Dan* newspaper, the CPV Central Committee organ, and the Vietnamese Central Television. SRV Vice-President Nguyen Thi Doan and ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh addressed the conference participants with a greeting. The main report was delivered by Ho Chi Minh Academy Rector Prof. Ta Ngoc Tan. The Center staffers delivered reports on the Current State and Prospects of Russia-ASEAN Cooperation (leading research associate G.M. Lokshin) and Interaction between Russia and Vietnam in ASEAN (leading research associate Ye.V. Kobelev), which aroused a lot of interest

among conference participants. Moreover, some of the issues raised in their reports provoked an active and sincere discussion that showed, among other things, that Russia's policies and practices in the region were not always seen correctly, especially in light of the recent events in the South China Sea and expanding comprehensive cooperation of Russia and China. On the Russian part the discussion participants were given all the necessary explanations on the matter.

Cultural cooperation between our two countries is on the up. Holding Vietnam Culture Days in Moscow and Russia Culture Days in Hanoi has become a regular practice. In 2014, Moscow hosted the Round Table on intensifying cooperation in the area of culture, cinema, and literature, taking part in which were SRV Minister for Culture, Sports and Tourism Hoang Tuan Anh and leaders of the Hanoi Institute of Culture. Speaking at the Round Table, I proposed examining the issue of coproducing a movie about six Vietnamese internationalist soldiers who had taken part in defending Moscow in 1941, and were posthumously awarded Orders of the Patriotic War First Class in 1981, on the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Moscow, under the Decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium. That proposal was enthusiastically welcomed by Vietnamese culture personalities.

The year 2015 was rich in jubilee dates in the history of our countries and their relationships. Above all, it was the 70th anniversary of the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War and the 70th anniversary of Vietnam's independence. On October 5, 2015, the Center held a traditional theoretical conference about Vietnam's 70 Years of Independence, which several invited Vietnamese scholars also took part in. The conference results were summed up in a collection of papers, which primarily analyzed the main historical landmarks in Vietnam's development and its political and economic achievements, particularly over the last 30 years, after the policy of renovation was launched.

What hampers cooperation? Unfortunately, despite the seemingly serene condition of our countries' political relations, there are always a variety of irritants present therein. The most inveterate of those is the issue of Vietnamese illegal migrant workers coming to Russia. Moscow's response, namely, periodic mass deportation of Vietnamese migrants, moreover, with an extensive TV coverage of the events, typically excites a rather negative reaction in the Vietnamese public opinion, which, alas, cannot view similar actions objectively and takes them to be hostile to Vietnam. Commendably, over the last two years the competent organs of the two countries have been studying the problem and taking relevant bilateral measures.

Another, a lot more serious irritant surfaced in the last few years, as the Vietnamese-Chinese conflict over the ownership of islands in the South China Sea started escalating. The irritant “peaked” in May 2014, when China unilaterally decided to install its oil rig in the SCS area, which Hanoi considers its exclusive economic zone.

Every time serious conflict situations arise in the SCS, the Vietnamese side probes Russia's China stand via every available channel. There it becomes apparent that a good few Vietnamese officials, experts, and journalists continue to cling to the stereotypes of the fraternal Soviet-Vietnamese friendship period, insisting that Russia should react actively in support of Vietnam's position. Meanwhile, Russia is connected with bonds of comprehensive strategic partnership both with Vietnam and with China. Russians, therefore, above all politicians and scholars, see their task in maximum promotion of the search for a peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea. Besides, the position of the Russian research and political science community boils down to the fact that Russia is sincerely interested in further preservation of most friendly relations between Vietnam and China.

At the same time, Hanoi counts on Russia's support, as used to be the case on numerous previous occasions, in its current conflict with China over the disputed SCS islands, too. So, Russia's largely neutral position on the issue is not at all to the liking of Vietnamese politicians and the Vietnamese public, which naturally adversely affects Russian-Vietnamese relations; the erstwhile trust is dwindling, important joint ventures in the economic and military and technological spheres are impeded.

Overall, the increasing aggravation of the SCS conflict between Russia's two strategic partners places this country in a difficult position. In the circumstances, Russia has but one alternative, to avoid expressing support of either party to the conflict and use its political influence to keep both sides from unpredictable actions. Unfortunately, this stand is increasingly making the Vietnamese political elite and broad masses to question whether this position is in keeping with the spirit of comprehensive strategic partnership, which, in their view, is perfectly logical.

Conclusions and recommendations

This research has revealed that at the start of the second decade of the 21st century a new, fairly productive and stable model of Russian-Vietnamese relations took shape and was named comprehensive strategic partnership. At the same time, for this concept to yield maximum productive re-

sults **it must be constantly developed, specified, renovated, and fed with new major ideas and projects** whose implementation will help ensure a sustainable furthering of bilateral relations.

Relying as they are on mutual understanding and scrupulous consideration of each other's national interests, the relations of **comprehensive strategic partnership** between our countries on the whole display good positive dynamics. Their further intensification is today a major task of Russian foreign policy aimed at ensuring peace and security and consolidating Russia's position in SEA and the APR. This attitude cannot be affected by the immediate political situation. It is fundamental and long-term, and will doubtless determine the nature, vectors, scale, and algorithm of Russian-Vietnamese relations in the foreseeable perspective.

The RF and the SRV are harmoniously mutually complementary in many state interest areas of each country. And in this respect, the important thing is that, according to Vietnamese experts, the Vietnamese see in Russia a friendly extraregional power that has preserved and is further building up a weighty political, economic, and military potential.

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Elena NIKULINA

Russia-Vietnam Cultural Cooperation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow¹

The paper is based on speeches by Russian and Vietnamese scholars and culture figures at the Round Table dedicated to Russian-Vietnamese cultural cooperation that was held in Moscow as part of Vietnam Culture Days in Russia, in June 2014. The paper gives a concise description of Russian-Vietnamese ties in literature, theater, cinema, and arts in the 1950s—1980s and nowadays.

Introduction

Until the 1990s Russian literature, theater, and cinema were well known and loved in Vietnam. But with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and weakening of Russian-Vietnamese relations the dissemination of the Russian language and the influence of Russian culture diminished considerably. Vietnam is experiencing the expansion of US and West European culture. What makes this research **topical** is a sociopolitical factor. The new ideological struggle under way at present is between the corrupt West with the United States at the head and the world of traditionalism, which Russia want to spearhead. In the circumstances, the influence of Russian culture on its Vietnamese counterpart would be most important.

Research procedure. The research was done in the form of information gathering and analysis at Russian and Vietnamese publishing houses, theaters, museums, film studios, and mass media.

¹ The paper was first published as Elena Nikulina “Russia-Vietnam cultural cooperation — Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (the Round table review)”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 441—452. While most of information and analysis are still valid, some parts have been updated in line with recent developments in Vietnam.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by Russian and foreign historians on issues of culture. The author used a complex research method.

Research materials. The research relies on information from Russian and Vietnamese publishing houses, theaters, Mosfilm film studio, the State Museum of Oriental Art, and the Fine Arts Museum in Ho Chi Minh City.

The main part of research

Today's Vietnam is a mix of traditions and innovations. Having endured several waves of westernization during French colonization, Americanization of the South, and socialist transformation, Vietnam has now plunged into the process of integration and globalization. This is causing comprehensive alterations in society. The level of SRV economic development has risen thanks to mastering achievements of advanced Western and newly industrialized countries. But changes in the social and cultural sphere are destroying the national genotype, and one of the reasons is spread of the Western mass culture and way of life through the media and by means of information technologies.

At a meeting with the participants of the Valdai International Discussion Club in 2013, Vladimir Putin for the first time clearly stated that Russia was standing up to the West's decadence. He said, "We see many Euro-Atlantic countries actually take the way of rejecting their roots, including Christian values that make up the basis of Western civilization. The moral fundamentals and any traditional identity, whether national, cultural, religious or even gender, are denied. The policies conducted there place on a par a family with many children and a same-sex partnership, belief in God and belief in Satan. I am confident that this is the way to degradation and primitivism, a profound demographic and moral crisis" [Rossiyskaya gazeta: 19.09.2013]. The Russian President maintains that the new ideological struggle under way at present is between the corrupt West with the United States at the head and the world of traditionalism, which Russia would be proud to spearhead. In the war of cultures for the future of humanity Putin is firmly and confidently hoisting the Russian flag on the side of traditional values.

In the circumstances, the influence of Russian culture on its Vietnamese counterpart would be most important. But now, unlike the previous stage in Russian-Vietnamese cooperation, this influence is very insignificant. And this saddens Vietnamese culture figures.

Until the 1990s, the foreign literature enjoying the most popularity among Vietnamese readers was Russian. In 1945—1990, over 900 books by Russian and Soviet writers were translated and published in Vietnam, with an emphasis on Russian classics. Thanks to gifted translators of the time, Vietnamese readers were introduced to the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Yesenin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Dostoyevsky, Sholokhov, Pasternak, and Paustovsky. Books by Russian authors living abroad were also translated, among them Bunin, Solzhenitsyn, and Brodsky. Translations of Russian prose and poetry were done by such well-known experts as Cao Xuan Thao and Nguyen Thuy Ung, Pham Manh Hung and Nhi Ca, Xuan Dieu and Hoang Trung Thong, Te Hanh and Hoang Thuy Toan, Pham Hong Giang and Vu The Hoi, Le Duc Man and Pham Vinh Cu. Works by Russian critics, theoreticians, and culture experts came out in translations of scholars trained at Soviet universities, Trinh Ba Dinh, Tran Ngoc Vuong, Tran Nho Thinh, Tran Thi Phuong, Tu Thi Loan.... With their help, Vietnamese readers could get to know works of Bakhtin and Konrad, Lotman and Jakobson.

At present, the situation is very different. The Russian language and literature have lost their leading position in Vietnamese society. The most popular foreign language in Vietnam now is English. Book shops are inundated with literature from the United States, Western Europe, and advanced countries of East Asia. The number of students learning Russian has dwindled. Moreover, after graduation many of them were forced to take up a different job unrelated to Russia.

And yet, the business of translating Russian literature into Vietnamese continued. And side by side with *The Luminaries* there are now new names, Nguyen Thi Kim Hien and Dao Tuan Anh, Ha Viet Anh and Ngat An, Truong Hong Hanh and Thuy Anh, Phan Thanh Thuy and Nguyet Vu, Vu Xuan Huong and Chau Hong Thuy, Ngo Thanh Tam, Phan Xuan Loan and Quynh Huong. Thanks to them the Vietnamese got a chance to get acquainted with the works of Nabokov and Zoshchenko, Platonov and Bykov, Astafyev and Bondarev, Ulitskaya and Petrushevskaya, Tokareva, Metlitskaya, and Minayev. Attached to The Vietnam Writers' Association is now the Center of Artistic Translation where poetry by Pushkin, Rubtsov, and Tsvetayeva continues to be translated and issued. In September 2016, the Kim Dong Publishing House issued a Library of Selected Works of Russian Literature which included the best works by Soviet literary classics who wrote for younger readers. *The Steel Ring* by Konstantin Paustovsky, *My Daghestan* by Rasul Gamzatov, *How the Steel Was Tempered* by Nikolai Ostrovsky, *Maximka* by Konstantin Stanyukovich, *The Amphibian Man* and

Eternal Bread by Alexander Belyayev, *Timur and His Squad* and *The Drummer's Fate* by Arkady Gaidar. And in 2017, the Children's literature Publishers issued a collection of modern Russian prose by women writers, *The Games of Beauties*.

As to the translations of Vietnamese literature in Russia, its acme was in the 1960s—1980s. By 1970, over 50 works by Vietnamese writers had been published in the Soviet Union with a total run of some six million copies. And from 1979 to 1985, five leading Soviet publishing houses put out the 15-volume Library of Vietnamese Literature that incorporated translations of Vietnamese prose, poetry, and drama.

Soviet readers were introduced to Vietnamese literature from antiquity to the present day largely thanks to the brilliant trio of N. Nikulin, M. Tkachev, and I. Zimonina. They are responsible for the bulk of translations of works by The Luminaries of Vietnamese prose, although quite a few pieces came out in translations by other connoisseurs of the Vietnamese language, I. Bystrov, D. Perevalov, E. Kobelev, E. Glazunov, E. Knorozova, A. Sokolov, T. Filimonova, and other experts of Vietnam. But in the early 1990s, Russian-Vietnamese relations reached an all-time low, and that also affected translations of Vietnamese literature. For 20 years no one new work by a Vietnamese author appeared in Russian.

The first Vietnamese book that saw light of day in Russian after the lengthy decline was the *Vietcong Doctor's Diary of War, Sacrifice* issued by Vietnamese Globus Publishers in 2012 [Dang Thuy Tram 2012]. This is a diary by the heroic Vietnamese woman doctor Dang Thuy Tram that she kept at the front. Russian became the 19th foreign language into which the diary had been translated. The translation was done by Anatoly Sokolov and Vietnamese Russian language expert Le Van Nhan. The *Vietcong Doctor's Diary of War* in Russian had a print run of 3,500, and all the copies were distributed among libraries and public organizations, and to those whose job was related to Vietnam.

To return Russian literature to Vietnam and Vietnamese literature to Russia, the program Dmitri Medvedev started went into operation in 2012. In Vietnam, to assist the program implementation, a Fund for Encouraging Dissemination of Vietnamese and Russian Literature was set up with prominent popularizer of Russian literature poet Hoang Thuy Toan at the head. The program is funded by Vneshekonombank and is to work until 2020. By 2017, 25 books by both classics and modern Russian writers had been published. The first Vietnamese book published in Russian under the program was the novel *Butterfly Fairy* by Khai Hung that came out at the end of 2012 in translation by Inessa Zimonina [Khai Hung 2012]. In 2015, a collection

of short stories by contemporary Vietnamese writers, *Wormwood Grows in the Mountains*, came out [Do Bich Thuy 2015]. The book shows both today's life in Vietnam and the image of modern Vietnamese literature comprehensively and vividly. It consists of 23 stories by 12 authors. The program is noncommercial; the books are distributed among libraries, universities, colleges, and public organizations.

In 2015, a poetic translation into Russian of the most famous work in Vietnamese literature, Nguyen Du's poem *The Tale of Kieu*, came out in Hanoi [Nguyen Du 2015]. Young Russian poet Vasily Popov rendered in verse the literary translation by prominent Vietnamese Russian language expert Vu The Khoi that had taken two years to complete, while well-known Russian Vietnam scholar Anatoly Sokolov carried out scientific preparation of the edition. In 2016, Kluch-S Publishers in Moscow issued the novel *Cold* by Nhat Linh in an annotated translation of M. Syunnerberg and E. Marchenko [Nhat Linh 2016]. That was the first edition under the *Women in Vietnam's History* project whose authors plan to acquaint Russian readers with many works of Vietnamese literature. In the same year 2016, a collection of poems by Vietnamese poet Mai Van Phan, *Two Wings*, came out in translation by Elizaveta Kozdoba [Mai Van Phan 2016].

When implementing the program of disseminating Russian literature in Vietnam and Vietnamese literature in Russia the main problem is lack of translators both into Vietnamese and into Russian. Old school translators are leaving us, while the new-generation members are too few. The problem could be solved if the state interested in its literature gaining readership stimulated the work of translators. It is necessary to settle the issue of training translators at the M. Gorky Moscow Literary Institute which is something the Vietnamese side has been requesting for years. Interest in Vietnamese literature in Russia can be enhanced by quality translations of interesting and significant works. The Vietnam Writers' Association should help select such pieces.

The formation of contemporary Vietnamese theater and music was largely helped by the Russian school. Soviet and Russian art schools trained hundreds of Vietnamese stage directors, artists, and critics, choreographers, composers, conductors, and music theoreticians. Since the late 1950s and until the 1990s, Vietnamese and Soviet directors staged classic Russian and Soviet plays in Vietnamese theaters, such as *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol, *Lyubov Yarovaya* by Konstantin Trenev, *An Irkutsk Story* by Alexei Arbuzov, *Masha* by Alexander Afinogenov, *The Kremlin Chimes*, *The third: Pathetic*, *The Man with a Gun* by Nikolai Pogodin, *Platon Krechet* by Nikolai Korneichuk, *Blue Horses on Red Grass* by Mikhail Shatrov, *The*

Minutes of One Session by Alexander Gelman, and others. Stage directors V. Vasilyev, V. Monakhov, V. Lepshin, and A. Goltsov arrived in Vietnam to stage plays and teach students there.

Research works by Russian theater experts and stage directors were translated into Vietnamese; like the Stanislavsky system, they are widely used in teaching at Vietnamese drama schools.

Over the last 20 years, the number of Russian plays in Vietnamese theaters has dwindled sharply. Russian directors did not go to Vietnam and Vietnamese students did not take courses in drama specialties at Russian schools. It was not till 2014–2015, that Vietnamese students started coming to Moscow's drama schools again.

Speaking of the Russian audiences' knowledge of the Vietnamese theater, one should mention performances by the Vietnam National Tuong Theater shown in Moscow that attracted a lot of interest among the Russian public. In 1990, at the Moscow International Theater Festival the first prize went to the production of *Truong Ba's Soul in the Body of a Butcher* staged by director Nguyen Dinh Nghi, a GITIS drama school graduate.

In the recent years, Russian viewers have had a chance to get acquainted with that unique phenomenon in world theater art, the Vietnamese Water Puppet Theater. That theater came to Moscow several times within the framework of Hanoi Days held in the Russian capital. Along with Hanoi Days, there are Vietnam Culture Days held in Russia that introduce the public in Russian cities to Vietnamese folk music, dances and songs. In the 2000s, Vietnam Culture Days were held five times. Russian dance and music collectives and soloists went to Vietnam four times under Russia Culture Days, and in September 2015, Hanoi hosted with flying colors the Feel Russia Festival that presented the new generation of Russian musicians and actors. This form of cultural cooperation between the two countries is effective, but certainly not enough. A major event in the cultural cooperation of Russia and Vietnam was the May 2017 tour of the Drama Theater of the Vietnamese People's Army that showed productions on the stage of the Central Academic Theater of the Russian Army, *The Dawns Are Quiet Here* after the story by Boris Vasilyev, and *Under Sand There Is Water*.

Part of Russia Culture Days in Vietnam and Vietnam Culture Days in Russia is Russian Cinema Weeks and Vietnamese Cinema Weeks. At the moment, this is probably the only chance for the Vietnamese viewers to see modern Russian movies on the wide screen, and for Russian audiences to see Vietnamese productions.

Prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Soviet cinema was well represented in Vietnam. The first Soviet documentaries and feature movies

were shown in Vietnam during the war of resistance to French colonizers in the early 1950s. Such films that are now classics of the Soviet cinematography as *Chapayev*, *The Baltic Deputy*, *Lenin in October*, *The Young Guard*, *The Communist*, *A Simple Story*, *The Ballad of a Soldier*, *Cranes Are Flying*, *The Destiny of a Man*, *1941*, *War and Peace*, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*, *A Railroad Station for Two*, and many others were well known and loved by Vietnamese viewers.

The Russian school of cinematography exerted a good deal of influence on the establishment of Vietnamese national cinema. The first Vietnamese students were sent to study at the State Cinematography Institute in Moscow in 1955, immediately after the first war of resistance was over and peace returned to Vietnam. Trained as scriptwriters, film directors, artists, cartoonists, and movie critics at the Institute, and qualified as technicians after a course at the Leningrad Institute of Cinema Engineers, Vietnamese graduates made a tangible contribution to the development of cinema art in their country, while many became top managers of the Vietnamese movie industry.

The first instance of cooperation between Soviet and Vietnamese moviemakers was the documentary-feature film *Vietnam* (alternatively called *Vietnam on the Way to Victory*) made by film director Roman Karmen in 1954. From 1959 to 1962, director A. Ibragimov and cameraman M. Kayumov worked in North Vietnam on an assignment from the USSR Ministry of Culture. They created a movie school, that eventually grew into the current Institute of Cinematography, and taught there film directing, acting, and camera work. Together with his students A. Ibragimov made three feature films, a full-length movie, *One Day in the Early Fall* (1961), and two shorts, *The Little Titmouse* (1962) and *Two Soldiers* (1962). These two short movies were warmly received by the audiences and highly acclaimed by the panel of judges at international film festivals at the time, which earned A. Ibragimov the DRV Order of Labor.

A major success of the young Vietnamese cinema was the Silver Medal at the Moscow International Film Festival awarded to the movie *A Woman from the South Coast* in 1963. Ten years later, Vietnam's People's Artist Tra Giang was pronounced the best actress of the festival, and in 1981, the Vietnamese film *The Abandoned Field: Free Fire Zone* by director Nguyen Hong Sen won the Golden Prize of the 12th Moscow International Film Festival.

The first Soviet-Vietnamese full-length coproduction was the feature film *Coordinates of Death* directed by S. Gasparov and Nguyen Xuan Chan that was released in 1985. In the same year, Yuri Ozerov's film *The Battle of*

Moscow was shown; taking part in the work on the film had been Vietnamese cinematographers.

Vietnam's struggle for independence was the subject of documentaries by director E. Vermisheva, *His Name Was Ho Chi Minh* (1969) and *The Story of the First Spring* (1973), that won a prize at the All-Union Film Festival in 1974, and also at the Leipzig International Film Festival. One more movie on the same theme was *The Jungle Is Cooling Off after the War* (1974).

Over the last few years, with Vietnam's movie shooting and film distribution now in the hands of numerous private Vietnamese and foreign companies, the position of the Russian cinema has been all but lost. The situation is aggravated by the increasing interest of the young Vietnamese in the action genre. In the circumstances, showing high-quality Russian films in the SRV, e.g., *Stalingrad* by Fedor Bondarchuk, which was already shown well across the world, could promote modern Russian cinema, adventure movies included.

To mark the 90th anniversary of Mosfilm, Russia's biggest film studio, a Week of Mosfilm Movies of various years was held in Vietnam in the spring of 2014, while 90 best films by the studio were handed over to Vietnamese television for broadcasting.

Vietnamese moviemakers are interested in Vietnamese films participating in the Moscow International Film Festival, and in Russian movies shown at the Hanoi International Film Festival, in Russian-Vietnamese cooperation in the business of moviemaking, and in training professionals for Vietnamese cinema at Russian institutes.

Like in other areas of artistic work, Russian-Vietnamese cooperation in visual arts flourished in the 1950s–1980s. Both countries held art workshops and shows; Soviet art critics and historians studied Vietnam's artistic handicrafts; Soviet art schools trained Vietnamese artists.

The first contemporary lacquer picture *Nghe Tinh Councils* appeared in Moscow in 1957. That was a present from DRV President Ho Chi Minh to the Soviet Government on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the October 1917 Revolution. In December 1958, at a Moscow art exhibition of 12 socialist countries, Vietnam presented 217 paintings and sculptures by 96 of its contemporary artists. The show was the first major official display of Vietnamese art that Soviet viewers saw. After it was over, many of the lacquer pictures remained in Moscow, in the State Museum of Oriental Art.

In the 1960s–1970s, the Vietnam section of the museum collection was actively replenished thanks to various state and public organizations, Vietnam's Ministry of Culture and the Embassy of Vietnam in Moscow, and the

All-Union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Exhibitions were exchanged with the Hanoi Fine Arts Museum.

During the second war of resistance in the 1960s—1970s, Soviet artists and sculptors worked in Vietnam at the Central Poster Workshop and Art School in Hanoi. For instance, Vladimir Kuznetsov for years taught academic drawing at that school. Since the early 1960s, many gifted Vietnamese boys and girls were sent to Soviet arts academies and institutes to study, particularly in Moscow and Leningrad. Eventually they became well-known artists, Le Lam, Duong Ngoc Khanh, Le Thi Kim Bach, Le Duy Tiep, Dao Trau Hai, Le Thong, to name but a few, and teachers and art experts, such as Nguyen Phi Hoanh, Nguyen Tran, Nguyen Ngoc Dung, and Trinh Dung.

In the 1980s, the practice of art exhibition exchange between the USSR and Vietnam was on the up. A monument to Lenin was unveiled in Hanoi, and one to Ho Chi Minh in Moscow. The Vietnamese *Fine Art* magazine frequently carried articles on Soviet art, while Soviet scientists and art critics wrote articles and books on Vietnamese traditional and modern art. The Museum of Oriental Art organized thematic exhibitions dedicated to visual, decorative, and applied arts of Vietnam, and took these exhibitions to various cities in Russia and union republics. Russian art lovers got acquainted with Vietnamese silk paintings, lacquer pictures, and popular prints, items of decorative and applied arts and Buddhist art works.

That activity was drastically diminished in the 1990s under the conditions of a general recess in Russian-Vietnamese relations. A new impetus to the development of cultural exchanges was given by the appearance of the Russian Center of Science and Culture (RCSC) opened in Hanoi in 2003. In 2009, 2010, and 2012, the RCSC held exhibitions of artists from Russia and displayed works by Vietnamese graduates of Soviet and Russian art schools. In December 2011, Hanoi welcomed a show by the Russian art group Sun Square.

Artistic work was interestingly presented during Russian Culture Days in Vietnam. For instance, the exhibitions “Nikolai Roerich, a Link between Nations,” and “Russian Beauties and the National Spirit” organized in 2013 deeply impressed Vietnamese viewers and helped them better understand the Russian soul and the Russian national character. As for exhibitions of contemporary lacquer paintings and modern silk paintings held as part of Vietnam Culture Days in Russia in 2014 and 2016, they became the most interesting in the practice of the Museum of Oriental Art over the last few years.

An important contribution to the cultural exchanges with Russia is being made by the Fine Arts Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. It held several significant exhibitions of modern Russian artists after each of which the best of their works were added to the Museum collections. In 1997 and 2012, members of the Sun Square art group showed their pictures there; in 2012, it was the artist B. Ilyukhin. In the spring of 2014, twelve artists from Siberia, the Far East, and St. Petersburg showed their works at the exhibition named “A Handshake Again” that drew a wide response. Over 100 landscapes, portraits, and genre paintings showed to the Vietnamese public the entire range of contemporary Russian painting. Taking part in the exhibition were also three Vietnamese artists. It became a follow-up of the Handshake project launched in 2012 on the initiative of Far Eastern artists. The point was to acquaint the Vietnamese public with the works of Russian painters, and its Russian counterparts with those of Vietnamese masters of the brush and palette. The project participants in Russia have already visited Vietnam three times, while those in Vietnam went to the Russian Far East in 2013.

Russian-Vietnamese cooperation in the area of visual arts has excellent prospects. Under the agreement the two countries concluded in 2013, the RF is to assist Vietnam in training experts in culture and arts, which will help to increase the number of places for Vietnamese students at Russian art schools. There is an accord on creative exchanges between the Museum of Oriental Art and the Hanoi Museums of Fine Arts and Ethnology. Russia and Vietnam Culture Days may become veritable feasts of art for the friendly countries. Master classes in making Vietnamese national applied art items can be extremely popular. The Russian Center of Science and Culture in Hanoi has a vast and still unused exhibition potential.

Analysis of the Results and Conclusion

As can be seen from this survey of the past and future of Russian-Vietnamese cultural cooperation, it is going through a less-than-healthy phase. Vietnamese culture figures and leaders, most of whom are graduates of Soviet and Russian art schools advocate greater influence of Russian culture in Vietnam and of Vietnamese culture in Russia, expansion of cultural exchanges, and more Vietnamese students at Russian art schools. To counter the blanket expansion of Western, above all American, culture it is necessary to have serious support from the state, public organizations and business structures can also play a considerable role there. At present, both sides stake their hopes on the Vietnamese multifunction complex Hanoi-Moscow

recently opened in the Russian capital. Besides, it would be a good idea to create a website in Russia that would cover, among others, issues of bilateral cooperation in the area of culture.

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Anatoly SOKOLOV

**The First Soviet-Vietnamese Contacts:
1947—1950 (As Chronicled in USSR
Foreign Ministry Documents)¹**

The paper on materials from the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation examines the history of Soviet-Vietnamese contacts that took place in 1947—1950 in Switzerland and Thailand between representatives of Soviet diplomatic missions and officials of the Vietnam News Agency, special representatives of the DRV government. In the final section, the paper makes conclusions as to the role of those meetings in establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Introduction

After the end of the Second World War there were virtually no contacts between the USSR and Vietnam, for a number of reasons². The documents of international conferences involving the member states of the anti-Hitler coalition that convened in Yalta and Potsdam in 1945 suggest that Joseph Stalin's and so also the Soviet Union's stand on colonial countries and the issue of colonies was fairly reserved. Up to a point, that was due to the fact that the chief concern of the leader whose country had won the Second World War was to restore the destroyed country, repair economic life, and

¹ The paper was first published as Anatoly Sokolov “The First Soviet-Vietnamese Contacts: 1947—1950 (As Chronicled in USSR Foreign Ministry Documents)”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 4 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2014), pp. 170—191.

² Let me remind the reader the following little known fact. The next year after the end of WWII, a Soviet military mission visited Saigon to discuss repatriation matters [Sokolov 2009].

certainly also ensure security of his country's national borders. So the states of the most geopolitical interest to him were naturally those bordering the Soviet Union.

What makes this research **topical** is both sociopolitical and strictly scientific factors. The current invigoration of Russian-Vietnamese relations encourages interest in the history of bilateral relations. A study of the set of factors, issues, and problems of Russian-Vietnamese relations at the juncture of the 1940s and 1950s is essential for understanding the processes that unfolded in Russian and Vietnamese societies and states at the time. Discovering and thoroughly examining the regularities in the development of Russian-Vietnamese relations is conducive to a more profound understanding of contemporary processes and forecasting of their further development.

Research procedure. The research was done in the form of document gathering and analysis at the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation (Moscow), where the documents were collated and supplemented with data from other sources.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by Russian and foreign historians on issues of international relations, and methodological recommendations of archivists. To carry out the tasks set, I used both general theoretical and specialized methods of cognition: comparative historical, problem-chronological, and others.

Research materials. The research relies entirely on documents from the Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AFPRF). They reflect the events of 1947–1950 related to the first Soviet-Vietnamese contacts that took place in Switzerland and Thailand.

Until now, the subject has not been specifically explored either by Russian or by foreign scholars. There are mentions of these Russian contacts in brief memoir items by immediate participants in those events, Soviet diplomats S.S. Nemchina [Nemchina 1975] and I.G. Usachev [Usachev 1986], in works by foreign historians Christopher E. Goscha [Goscha 2006] and Mari Olsen [Olsen 2006], and in articles by Vietnamese journalists [Hoang Nguyễn 1991; Trần Duy Hiên 2005].

The main part of research

The Meeting in Berne. Information about one of the first attempts at establishing connection between the government of Ho Chi Minh and the Soviet Union came from the records of a talk (diary) of Soviet envoy in Switzerland A.G. Kulazhenkov who met there with Pham Ngoc Thach on

September 9, 1947 [AFPRF-1: 33—36]. That prominent public figure, a professional doctor, had been sent abroad to break the diplomatic blockade around the DRV, and establish relations with governments and parties in Europe and Asia. The Soviet envoy received the Vietnamese gentleman at his request and on a recommendation of Leon Nicole, head of the Swiss Labor party.

As Kulazhenkov observed in his diary, Pham Ngoc Thach said that he was a member of Vietnam's government and had arrived in Europe on a commission from the Politburo of the Communist party of Vietnam, chiefly to meet with the leaders of the French Communist party. He had come with a Chinese passport issued in the name of trader Ling Tai. In Paris, he had met with French Communist leaders Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos. Pham Ngoc Thach had arrived in Switzerland on the pretext of treating TB. He decided to visit the Soviet mission in Berne in order to inform the people there of the situation in Vietnam.

Pham Ngoc Thach described in detail the situation in Vietnam. He, therefore, stressed that the government in power in the DRV was practically communist, even though there was no official Communist party in the country. But it did exist illegally and was the strongest party in Vietnam. The Communist party of Vietnam had been officially disbanded in 1945, and "that was done so as to avoid giving the republic an obviously communist nature and thus antagonizing the Americans" [AFPRF-1: 33—36]. According to Pham Ngoc Thach, the Communist party at the time numbered "at least 100.000 members and heads various organizations, including children's, that involve ten million people." On the Communist party's initiative other parties had been set up that were in fact led by communists.

Land in the country had been divided among peasants, that is the government had practically carried out the agrarian reform. At present, the chief objective of the DRV government was organizing resistance to the French army, but the Vietnamese army lacked the necessary armaments, while the government had no foreign currency to purchase weapons. The Vietnamese army was short of leading cadre, and the Chinese Communist party had resolved to send to Vietnam a group of military experts to help them.

Touching on the relationship with the United States, Pham Ngoc Thach pointed out that "the Americans have assumed a wait-and-see position regarding Vietnam, but at meetings with Vietnamese representatives went out of their way to praise the fight waged by Vietnam against the French" [AFPRF-1: 33—36]. The US position was getting increasingly strong; the countries of Southeast Asia were being inundated with US goods. "The Americans pretend that they have nothing against and actually

encourage the national liberation struggle, in the hope that, having shaken off the British, the French, and the Dutch, Southeast Asia countries will fall into the hands of the Americans” [AFPRF-2: 33—36].

He dwelt specifically on the situation in Southeast Asia; in the course of fighting for independence in several countries there had emerged parties with tremendous sway among the population, and Vietnam stood out as the center of spreading communist influence in the region. The Communist party of Vietnam intended in 1947 to convene a congress of all Southeast Asia communist parties in order “to establish contacts and work out a common policy toward Anglo-American and French imperialists” [AFPRF-2: 33—36]. However, the idea had never been realized because of the war between Vietnam and France.

Pham Ngoc Thach observed that the French Communist party paid little attention to the Vietnam issue and had not worked out a definite line. During the Paris meeting, Jacques Duclos said that Vietnam had to exert every effort to fight for its independence and should not make any concessions to French imperialists. Meanwhile, “the French Communist party itself is yet to take up the Vietnam issue and has made no significant steps to prevent the French imperialists from waging war against the republic” [AFPRF-2: 33—36].

In conclusion, Pham Ngoc Thach expressed desire to go to the Soviet Union and handed over to Kulazhenkov three brochures about Vietnam in French: (1) about the Communist party in Vietnam; (2) on international response to the war in Vietnam; (3) on pressing requests of Vietnamese Communists in the current circumstances.

Thailand. The Chronicle of Events. In December 1946, the Soviet Union and Thailand agreed to restore diplomatic relations and exchange missions. A Soviet diplomatic mission was opened in Bangkok in 1948, and until 1950 its head was S.S. Nemchina. The mission became a communication center for the DRV government, and also for other Southeast Asia countries.

1948

In February 1948, Ho Chi Minh wrote a letter addressed to “the comrades setting off on a trip.” Those were the members of the first delegation (seven people in all) from North Vietnam going to Thailand. They were tasked with conducting agitation, propaganda, and diplomatic activity to destroy the hostile blockade around the DRV [Hoang Nguyễn 1991]¹. At the

¹ According to other sources, that DRV government mission appeared in Thailand already in August 1946, and its official activity started in 1948 [Tran Duy Hien 2005].

time, at the height of the Resistance war, the Ho Chi Minh government had to win support of the peoples and patriotic organizations in the region. The Thailand authorities gave their consent to have the DRV government mission representation opened in Bangkok with Nguyen Duc Quy¹ at the head, and the Vietnam News Agency.

The Soviet mission was housed in Sathorn Street, in Bangkok's diplomatic quarter, and the Vietnam News Agency was located in the same area. Soviet mission official I.G. Usachev was charged with establishing personal contact with the Service leaders [Usachev 1986: 90].

The first meeting between Soviet diplomats and Vietnamese representatives presumably occurred on **June 12, 1948**. Taking part were Soviet mission attaché I.G. Usachev and director of the Vietnam News Agency in Bangkok Le Hy [AFPRF-2: 1–5].

As Le Hy reported, “at present, the French are in control of no more than five percent of Vietnam's territory, despite the presence of a considerable army 120.000 to 150.000 strong” [AFPRF-2: 1]. The Ho Chi Minh government coordinated the entire activity in the republic. His whereabouts were a secret, as in the absence of aircraft and with inadequate air defense there is a risk of air bombing or a paratrooper assault party [AFPRF-2: 3]. There were newspapers and brochures published in the DRV, and ten radio stations in operation.

The Vietnam News Agency in Bangkok drew information about the domestic situation in Vietnam from broadcasts of the Central Station. The broadcasts were in the Morse code, and the Agency had equipment for recording those. The Agency published a bulletin in English (with a run of several hundred), and in Vietnamese (100.000 copies). The Agency in the person of Le Hy maintained ties with the TASS News Agency representative in Shanghai, V.N. Rogov, informing him of events in Vietnam. The Agency was subscribed to the Soviet *New Times* journal. Le Hy asked for help in obtaining visas for the Vietnamese going to Czechoslovakia and Poland.

On **July 2, 1948**, Soviet envoy in Thailand S.S. Nemchina met with Director of the Vietnam News Agency Le Hy who informed the former of the work done by the Agency and the situation in Vietnam [AFPRF-2: 6–9].

The Vietnam News Agency had existed in Bangkok for over two years. Le Hy was simultaneously a member of the DRV government mission in

¹ Nguyen Duc Quy (born 1914) was a Vietnamese party official and a diplomat. In 1936, he was secretary of the party organization in the Province of Hanam. Until mid-1951, he headed the DRV government mission in Thailand. In 1952, he was appointed first secretary of the DRV Embassy in the Soviet Union. He was fluent in Chinese and Thai, as well as speaking French and English [Tran Duy Hien 2005].

Southeast Asia headed by Nguyen Duc Quy. The delegation comprised five members and was permanently stationed in Thailand. The Vietnam News Agency was functioning independently from the representation and was subordinated directly to the government of Vietnam. The Agency, with permission of the Thailand government, maintained radio communication with the Ho Chi Minh government for which it had a small radio station of its own [Usachev 1986: 90].

Le Hy also reported that the DRV government had decided to send its representatives to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and North China. The reason was that the situation in Thailand (about the Service and Vietnamese representation) was volatile (because of concessions to Americans), so the Ho Chi Minh government was already taking measures to provide new bases for ensuring external communications for Vietnam. Later, in a letter dated **July 5, 1948**, and addressed to S.S. Nemchina, Le Hy listed the members of the group setting off for Czechoslovakia¹.

On **July 7, 1948**, S.S. Nemchina met with Le Hy for a second time [AFPRF-2: 10–12]. The Soviet envoy was informed that a delegation of two or three, including Le Hy, would go to Prague. In conditions of a worsening situation in Thailand, the government of Vietnam had decided to disperse the Vietnam News Agency in Bangkok and bolster the representation in Burma with its members, as well as delegating a small group to Europe. Also, Le Hy expressed the DRV government's wish to send Vietnamese students to be educated in the Soviet Union.

On the same day, **July 7, 1948**, I.G. Usachev talked to Alexander Brotherton, translator of the Vietnam News Agency [AFPRF-2: 13]. The Czechoslovakia group had been formed by then; journalist Ngo Van Huy was already in China, Brotherton was flying to Hong Kong on July 7. Le Hy (under the soubriquet of Le Vinh Loi) and Agency secretary Le Van Diem were to fly to Shanghai roughly on July 12.

At the **July 30, 1948** meeting, S.S. Nemchina and Le Hy discussed the situation in Laos [AFPRF-2: 16–19]. Also, Le Hy, touching upon the events of 1947, reminded his interlocutor that the Vietnamese had initiated the establishment of the League of Southeast Asia [AFPRF-2: 18].

¹ Originally, the group comprised (1) Le Vinh Lua / Le Vinh Loi (Le Hy), aged 35, representative of the DRV government, provisional chairman of the Vietnam government delegation in Southeast Asia; (2) Le Van Diem, aged 28, secretary stenographer of the Vietnam News Agency; (3) Alexander Brotherton, aged 29, Australian Communist, translator of the Vietnam News Agency; (4) Ngo Van Huy, aged 29, translator of the Vietnam News Agency [AFPRF-2: 14–15].

On his way to Prague, in late summer of 1948, Le Hy made a stopover in Moscow where he met with representatives of various Soviet departments. On **August 31, 1948**, he was received by M.Sh. Bakhitov, aide to the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Southeast Asia Department [AFPRF-1a: 1]. Describing the situation in the country, Le Hy emphasized that “Vietnam, owing to its geographical position and international situation, had to fight without any external assistance, except the moral kind. The leadership of the Vietnamese Communist party, for tactical considerations (so as to deprive the international reactionaries from a chance to wage hostile propaganda), decided to disperse the Communist party members among various democratic and mass organizations so that it would not speak out officially as the leading force of the state and the masses.” According to him, a typical feature of Vietnamese reality was the fact that the Communist party had managed to rally and stir to action the broadest masses, intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie and even senior government officials, mandarins, while in mass and sociopolitical organizations of the Vietnamese republic Communists played the leading role.

The point of Le Hy's trip to Prague was to set up a news agency there, in order to implement the “policy of Vietnam's government of consolidating ties and contact with progressive and democratic powers.” He would be its head, and three other staff members were in Shanghai.

Le Hy maintained that he was “unofficially entrusted with negotiating a chance of the Soviet Government and Bolshevik Communist party rendering help to the Vietnamese Republic with weapons, ammunition, materiel, equipment, and loaning it money to pay for all that, on behalf of Vietnam's Communist circles. In the event of a positive answer, a plenipotentiary delegation of Vietnam could arrive in the USSR for corresponding negotiations” [AFPRF-1a: 2–3].

He reminded his audience that President Ho Chi Minh had lived for nine years in the Soviet Union and was a sincere and devoted friend of that country. Currently, the Vietnamese government deemed it unsuitable, until clearing up things in advance, to turn for help to the Soviet Union. Precisely for that reason he (Le Hy) was charged with sounding out unofficially, on behalf of the Vietnamese party and government circles, whether the Soviet government would agree to render assistance in the form it would consider expedient. “And if this cannot be found out through the Soviet government, whether this could not perhaps be done through the Bolshevik Communist party” [AFPRF-1a: 2–3].

Le Hy also wondered whether the Soviet government could allow several Vietnamese students to come to the Soviet Union for studies. And he

would be reluctant to leave Prague until these questions were matched with answers.

The memorandum compiled on the results of Bakhitov's talk contains information about Le Hy himself; he was 35, a member of the Communist party of Vietnam, had spent six years doing hard labor on the Con Dao Islands, did party and journalistic work.

There is also another fact connected with Le Hy's stay in the Soviet Union. In 1948, the Foreign Literature Publishing House (Moscow) issued a smallish book, *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Documents and Materials* (translated from the French). The preface for the book was by Le Hy.

Meanwhile, I.G. Usachev had a meeting with Nguyen Duc Quy on **September 10, 1948**, in Bangkok. The Vietnamese was surprised to learn that Le Hy was in Moscow [AFPRF-2: 20—21]. Nguyen Duc Quy said that he was unaware of the assignments that Le Hy intended to carry out, and that he had learned of Le Hy's departure from his letter left at the Vietnam News Agency in Bangkok. He had always been against Le Hy's departure, as that could create an unfortunate impression among the local Vietnamese who could interpret the move as Le Hy fleeing from Thailand because of the dangerous situation there. Nguyen Duc Quy would report on Le Hy after consultations with the Vietnamese government. He also touched upon the matter of Vietnamese students taking courses in the USSR.

On **September 21, 1948**, I.G. Usachev talked to Nguyen Duc Quy who announced that the Vietnamese government was going to recall Le Hy from Moscow [AFPRF-2: 22]. Moreover, he stressed that his departure without notifying the DRV governmental mission had made an unfavorable impression on the Thailand government and might entail untoward consequences for the Vietnamese community in that country.

On the same day (**September 21, 1948**) S.S. Nemchina had a talk with Nguyen Duc Quy who asked for communication with Soviet Communist party representatives in Thailand [AFPRF-2: 23—26]. S.S. Nemchina explained that there was no Bolshevik party representative in Thailand, while he (Nemchina) was a representative of the Soviet Union.

Nguyen Duc Quy informed him that the previous year (1947) Vietnamese government and Vietnamese Communist party spokesman Pham Ngoc Thach had turned to the Soviet envoy in Switzerland on behalf of the Vietnamese government with a request for Soviet help to Vietnam¹. At the same meeting, the Soviet envoy was given a message from Ho Chi Minh who

¹ The reference is to the meeting of Soviet envoy in Switzerland A.G. Kulazhenkov with Pham Ngoc Thach that took place in Berne on September 9, 1947.

“appealed to the Soviet Union for assistance in getting the United Nations Organization on the side of Vietnam in the Franco-Vietnamese conflict.” The Soviet envoy allegedly promised to pass to his government a detailed report on the matter. Yet Pham Ngoc Thach received no reply and returned to Vietnam. At present, a member of the DRV government, one of the Vietnamese Communist party Central Committee secretaries, one Phong¹, was resident in Bangkok. He had arrived in Bangkok about a month earlier as official representative of the Vietnamese government. However, the situation in Thailand made any further legal activity by Phong impossible, and his mission was not publicized. Now Phong was urged to go to Moscow for establishing connection with the Bolshevik Communist party and the Soviet government.

Nguyen Duc Quy expressed a wish to see the Soviet mission in Bangkok act as an intermediary between the Vietnamese Communist party and the Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union, and also help Phong to obtain an entry visa to the Soviet Union. He added likewise that if Phong could contact the Bolshevik representative in Bangkok he would not have to go to Moscow.

According to Nguyen Duc Quy, Phong was tasked with two missions: (1) inform the Bolshevik Communist party of the real state of affairs in Vietnam, and (2) negotiate with the Soviet government aid to Vietnam on the part of the Soviet Union.

When asked by S.S. Nemchina to inform him of the actual situation in Vietnam, Nguyen Duc Quy said that “the struggle has now entered a phase where it is vital to get help from a foreign power. We lack heavy weapons to fight ... help implies looking for money needed to purchase heavy weapons from US smugglers. It may be about giving Vietnam 2.5 million US dollars” [AFPRF-2: 24]. The Vietnamese side knew of US companies that could sell torpedo boats and hunter boats. With the help of similar vessels, the Vietnamese intended to smuggle in heavy weapons, heavy machine guns, light guns, mortars, etc. [AFPRF-2: 25].

During the talk Nguyen Duc Quy repeatedly stressed that the Communist party of Vietnam was managing the entire life of the country. As to the presence of Le Hy in Moscow, he said that Le Hy's mission was confined to organizing propaganda work in support of Vietnam in Europe. Le Hy,

¹ In various documents this person goes under different names, Phong, Hong, Hong Van Hon, etc. My guess is that he was Hoang Van Hoan, a prominent Vietnamese Communist party official, who eventually became the first DRV ambassador to China. Besides, in the course of the talk Nguyen Duc Quy added that Phong had served in the Red Army for seven years under Mao Zedong and was fluent in Chinese.

therefore, was not a Vietnamese government spokesman and could decide what to do on his own.

During the talk that occurred on **September 28, 1948**, Nguyen Duc Quy related to I.G. Usachev additional facts about the Vietnamese government and Communist party representative, Phong, in Thailand [AFPRF-2: 27—28].

Phong was born in the province of Nghe An worked in China, and in Thailand (then Siam) back in 1927, and was a close friend of Ho Chi Minh. He had been sent to Thailand as an official representative of the Vietnamese government and Communist Party Central Committee. At present, he could not work in Thailand as it was rumored that a prominent Comintern functionary educated in Moscow, etc. had arrived there [AFPRF-2: 28]. Nguyen Duc Quy requested help with visa issuance for Hoang to go to Moscow.

Nguyen Duc Quy also said that “the other day Vietnam's Communist party Central Committee sent a telegram to the Chinese Communist party Central Committee asking for help to Vietnam in obtaining mountain and heavy weapons, and also sending to Vietnam two senior officers to control military operations” [AFPRF-2: 28]. Also, the Vietnamese and the Burmese governments had agreed to allow Vietnamese aircraft to land on Burmese territory. In this connection, the Vietnamese government intended to purchase weapons from Burma out of US surplus and drop them on parachutes over Vietnam's territory [AFPRF-2: 28].

During the talk on **October 3, 1948**, Nguyen Duc Quy informed S.S. Nemchina that Le Hy had cabled to him from Prague [AFPRF-2: 29—31]. The Vietnamese government had allowed him to go to Moscow for studies at one of the Soviet universities. Having noted that Le Hy was a private person, Nguyen Duc Quy nevertheless asked for helping the man with the trip to Moscow from Prague. S.S. Nemchina said that first Le Hy was to obtain the Soviet authorities' consent for his trip to Moscow in Prague.

Nguyen Duc Quy again touched upon the issue of Soviet help to Vietnam in the military sphere. For example, “the Vietnamese government wishes to learn whether it is possible to send to the Soviet Union 50 officers in the rank of captain and lieutenant to be trained at higher commander courses. The Vietnamese army does not have at present military academies and cannot train senior officers that Vietnam needs to lead future military operations against the French” [AFPRF-2: 29—30].

He asked to probe the matter of a chance “to send to the Soviet Union 50 young Vietnamese who could be educated as civilian specialists to head national economy. Is it possible to get 100 (50 + 50) grants?” [AFPRF-2: 29—30].

In conclusion, Nguyen Duc Quy said that “on the instructions of the Communist party of Vietnam” he asked to pass to the Bolshevik Communist party a request for assistance to Vietnam in money and weapons. Soon there will be a decisive fight with the French, and if the Bolshevik Communist party is unable to help Vietnam’s Communist party, no one else will help, as Vietnam is surrounded by hostile states” [AFPRF-2: 29—30].

On **October 7, 1948**, I.G. Usachev was given a memorandum in French by messenger, which, supposedly, could have been written by Phong or Nguyen Duc Quy, or else by the two men jointly [AFPRF-2: 35—40]. The note touched upon matters related to the political, economic, and military situation in Vietnam. Singled out separately were the “weak points” above all in the military sphere (lack of senior officers, weapons, and money) [AFPRF-2: 37—38], and the needs (foreign currency, dollars and pounds sterling, medicines, AA guns, mountain weapons, heavy mortars, large-caliber machine guns, automatic rifles, explosives, portable radio transmitters, surgical instruments) [AFPRF-2: 38—39].

The note also contained a request for specific aid: five million US dollars or two million pounds; several submarines and a quantity of antiaircraft guns and mountain weapons; 50 grants for training officers; several dozen grants for teaching students in other areas. There was also a request for help with the World Federation of Democratic Youth sending a certain number of lecturers in political economy and finance to Vietnam to train party staff in these disciplines. The note ended with the phrase, “My next letter will be signed Jean Lecourt” [AFPRF-2: 39].

During the talk on **October 16, 1948**, Nguyen Duc Quy informed S.S. Nemchina that Le Hy had opened a News Agency in Prague, established connection with the Vietnam News Agency in Burma and with the Vietnamese government mission in Thailand [AFPRF-2: 32—34]. The Vietnamese government decided to leave Le Hy in Prague to head the News Agency there¹. Le Hy had carried out the assignments of Vietnam’s government about printing money for Vietnam in Czechoslovakia; they would print 600 million Vietnamese notes there [AFPRF-2: 40].

It followed from what Nguyen Duc Quy had said that the decision to turn to the Bolshevik Communist party for help was allegedly taken by the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist party, whereas the DRV government considered it premature to raise the issue. By way of an argument, he cited the position of Premier Ho Chi Minh, namely, that the Viet-

¹ S.S. Nemchina made an entry in his diary to the effect that Nguyen Duc Quy had several times made discrepant statements with regard to Le Hy.

name should first count on their own forces and desist from asking friends for help, as Vietnam's friends had their own important objectives to consider.

During the talk on **October 29, 1948**, Nguyen Duc Quy told S.S. Nemchina that he was leaving Bangkok because the situation there was worsening, and his place would be taken by Hong who had then gone underground, and also asked for rendering assistance to Le Hy [AFPRF-2: 41—42].

On **November 4, 1948**, S.S. Nemchina talked to Nguyen Duc Quy and Hoan¹. They reiterated their request for help to Vietnam and to Hoan in his trip to Moscow. They wondered whether the Soviet side thought it worth Vietnam's while to apply to the UNO and Security Council with a request for discussing the Franco-Vietnamese conflict. Nguyen Duc Quy also asked for financial help on a personal basis, but S.S. Nemchina refused.

During the talk on **November 29, 1948**, I.G. Usachev handed over to Nguyen Duc Quy a letter from Le Hy which the latter had left for him during his trip to Moscow [AFPRF-3: 45—46].

1949

During the talk on **February 20, 1949**, I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy discussed Vietnam's accession to the UNECAFE, the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, and activity of Lieutenant William Hunter, aide to the US naval attaché and Indochina expert [AFPRF-3: 1—2].

On **March 10, 1949**, I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy discussed US policies in Southeast Asia and in Thailand. According to Nguyen Duc Quy, "Americans are now reviewing their policies in Southeast Asia, staking their hopes on the moderates, and taking the struggle to the economic and political level. The United States is interested to know how the Red China is helping Vietnam" [AFPRF-3: 3—7]. Especial attention was paid to the activity of Lieutenant Hunter and Americans in Vietnam. The same issues were discussed at the meeting on **March 8, 1949**; I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy talked about the rising US activity in Thailand and Vietnam [AFPRF-3: 9—11].

On **June 6** and **July 2, 1949**, I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy discussed the purchase of Soviet movies for Vietnam [AFPRF-3: 12—16].

At the meeting on **November 9, 1949**, Nguyen Duc Quy asked I.G. Usachev to thank the Soviet Union for assistance to Vietnam, which had become a member of UNECAFE with a deliberative vote.

¹ A.k.a. Phong and Hong [AFPRF-2: 43].

In the talk on **November 27, 1949**, Nguyen Duc Quy informed I.G. Usachev of the Thailand situation and potential development of events for the Vietnamese community. As the Vietnam News Agency believed, “Americans had worked out a plan of making Burma and Indochina the first belt of the sanitary cordon against China. The second belt being Bangkok, and the third one, India” [AFPRF-3: 27–29]. According to Nguyen Duc Quy, “Americans wish the French out of Indochina as, they believe, it is impossible to create a solid barrier against the Communist China while the French stay in Indochina, which exacerbates the situation and hampers creation of a third force around Bao Dai. At the same time, Americans realize that the withdrawal of French troops at the moment may result in an instant collapse of the Bao Dai regime. This is the reason why they dawdle over the recognition of Bao Dai” [AFPRF-3: 27–29].

At the meeting on **November 28, 1949**¹, Nguyen Duc Quy resumed discussion of the Le Hy situation [AFPRF-3: 30–36]. He told I.G. Usachev that Le Hy had left at his own discretion, and was not authorized by the DRV government to go to Prague. The DRV mission in Southeast Asia had been against it, and so was Nguyen Duc Quy. “The departure of Le Hy had negative consequences” [AFPRF-3: 30]. After the Vietnam News Agency in France was disbanded, its head Tran Ngoc Danh moved to Prague and was working there with Le Hy. As Nguyen Duc Quy announced, “because Le Hy does not possess proper powers, and presumably owing to his lack of discipline, there was certain friction and misunderstanding between the Vietnam News Agency in Prague and the authorities of Czechoslovakia” [AFPRF-3: 31].

In the circumstances, as far as Nguyen Duc Quy knew, the DRV government had decided to send its representative to Prague with due powers to settle the misunderstanding and organize properly the work of the Vietnam News Agency in Prague. The person chosen for that was Phong² who, moreover, was to go to Beijing to take part in the Asian Trade Union Economic Conference. He also was tasked with establishing contact with China’s Communist Party Central Committee. His route would go via Burma and India, and he had been issued a Vietnamese passport.

I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy also discussed the situation in Laos, the matter of Bao Dai and his support on the part of the United States.

¹ The meeting took place on November 28, 1949, but the entry in the diary was made on November 30.

² Apparently, Hoang Van Hoan.

1950

The year 1950 marked the conclusion of the phase of first Soviet-Vietnamese contacts, which were not direct but occurred through the Soviet diplomatic mission in Thailand. In the first days of January President Ho Chi Minh left Vietnam and set off on his trip abroad in the course of which he visited China and the Soviet Union, and the result of which was a breakthrough of international isolation and establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, the USSR, and other socialist countries.

On **January 14, 1950**, President Ho Chi Minh appealed to all governments of the world with a declaration of his government's readiness to "establish diplomatic relations with any state that respects Vietnam's right to equality, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty."

As S.S. Nemchina recalled later, given Vietnam's isolation from the outer world, "it was no easy matter to get Ho Chi Minh's message to the Soviet government. Special couriers took five days to travel through the areas of hostilities, over mountains and through the jungle, to deliver this message to Bangkok where the Soviet mission in Thailand then was, the only Soviet representation in Southeast Asia at the time.

On **January 19, 1950**, a DRV government spokesman handed to the Soviet envoy the document requesting urgent delivery of the paper to Moscow. The direct connection between the DRV and Moscow was, therefore, established" [Nemchina 1971: 7; AFPRF-4: 9].

A record about that meeting between S.S. Nemchina and Nguyen Duc Quy is dated **January 27, 1950** [AFPRF-5]. The latter said that he had handed the address of President Ho Chi Minh to all ambassadors in Bangkok, including the US and the British ones.

On **January 31, 1950**, second secretary of the Soviet mission I.G. Usachev met with Nguyen Duc Quy who handed to him the letter by the DRV foreign minister with an offer of establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR [AFPRF-5].

On **February 1, 1950** (the date in the journal is **February 10**), S.S. Nemchina met with Nguyen Duc Quy [AFPRF-5: 8–11]. S.S. Nemchina informed him of the Soviet government's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the DRV and exchange envoys, and gave him a telegram from the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, A.Ya. Vyshinsky, of January 30, 1950, addressed to his Vietnamese counterpart Hoang Minh Giam.

During the talk of I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy that occurred on **February 28, 1950**, the former gave the latter a telegram of greeting from the Antifascist Committee of the Soviet Youth addressed to the 1950 Congress

of Vietnam's Youth [AFPRF-5: 8—11]. They also discussed the situation in Thailand and Vietnam, and the government of Bao Dai.

During the talk on **March 3, 1950**, I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy talked mostly about the “conciliatory conference” [AFPRF-5: 16—19]. Nguyen Duc Quy expressed his apprehension lest the French and the Bao Dai people insist on having the Vietnamese government delegation removed from Thailand.

At the meeting on **April 6, 1950**, I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy discussed the visa for Vietnamese engineer Le Viet Hung who would go to Moscow from Brussels via Prague [AFPRF-5: 20—21]. Nguyen Duc Quy also requested a five-kilowatt radio telephone shortwave transmitter.

During the talks on **June 10** and **September 15, 1950**, I.G. Usachev and Nguyen Duc Quy discussed repressions against the Vietnamese in Thailand [AFPRF-5: 22—23, 85—87].

On **August 14, 1950**, Nguyen Duc Quy informed I.G. Usachev of the likelihood of the Vietnam News Agency operating in Indonesia [AFPRF-5: 29]. They also discussed the situation in Indonesia, persecution of the Vietnamese in Thailand, etc. [AFPRF-5: 30]. They made particular emphasis on the issue of exchanging ambassadors; Chinese party functionary Liu Shaoqi suggested that the DRV government appoint their ambassadors to China and the Soviet Union and announce the fact in the press, while information about Chinese and Soviet ambassadors appointed and sent to the DRV be publicized later when the actual conditions were conducive to that.

During the talk between second secretary of the Soviet Embassy in the People's Republic of China I.G. Kalabukhov and acting spokesman of the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee in China Wu-Tien that took place on **September 12, 1950** in Beijing, the matter discussed was Vietnamese specialists to be sent to Moscow for work at the Radio Committee [AFPRF-5: 33—34]. For the job of radio announcer in Vietnamese they suggested Vietnamese student at the Marxism-Leninism University in Beijing Do Trong Tuan who at the time was in Beijing and was ready to leave for the USSR.

In one of the subsequent talks, Nguyen Duc Quy told I.G. Usachev that at the end of May 1951 the Vietnamese mission in Bangkok was closing. By then, the Thai authorities had officially recognized the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and the Bao Dai government, as well as giving consent to the South Vietnamese embassy opening in Thailand.

The issues discussed in later talks between I.G. Usachev and representatives of the Vietnamese government mission in Thailand (**October 7, 1950** [AFPRF-5: 38—40], **November 21, 1950** [AFPRF-5: 41—42], **December 23,**

1950 [AFPRF-5: 43—54] were of a general nature, mostly to do with the position of Vietnamese refugees in Thailand.

By the end of 1950, S.S. Nemchina had concluded his work in Thailand. In mid-1951, the Central Committee of the Communist party of Indochina and Ho Chi Minh instructed their government mission in Thailand to discontinue its activity, and in August it returned home, to the district of Viet Bac.

The official recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by the Soviet Union gave official status to the relations between the two countries. Thus, began a new phase in the history of Soviet-Vietnamese relations.

Analysis of the Results and Conclusion

Once the Communist forces triumphed and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the geopolitical situation in Asia started changing. After Mao Zedong arrived in Moscow in 1949 and had talks with J. Stalin there appeared real conditions for diplomatic recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and its integration in the international Communist movement, which made possible rendering proper assistance (military aid included) to the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people against the French colonizers. And that was the main practical outcome of Ho Chi Minh's visit to Moscow in 1950.

The Soviet mission in Thailand made substantial contribution to the establishment of relations between the USSR and the DRV. As the immediate participant in the events I.G. Usachev pointed out, “Contacts between the USSR mission and the Vietnam News Agency took on a regular nature. The Mission (Soviet) and the Agency (Vietnam News Agency) became a species of channel through which communication was maintained and information was exchanged between Moscow and the DRV government. These contacts had played a significant role in the USSR recognizing the DRV in January 1950 and establishing diplomatic relations with that country” [Usachev 1986: 91—92].

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PART TWO

POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIETNAM AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

Vladimir KOLOTOV

Analysis of Domestic Political and International Situations before and after the 12th Congress of the Communist party of Vietnam¹

Introduction

In 2015, political life in Vietnam was keynoted by the preparations for the 12th Congress of the CPV, which took place on January 20—28, 2016. The congress elected a new leadership of Vietnam, which would be responsible for the country's destiny in the near future. In this context, it seems expedient to analyze the domestic political situation, as well as the international situation on the eve of and after the CPV congress and determine the main trends of changes in them, as well as the new threats to the country's security. In recent years, American information impact on the political and information spheres in Vietnam has grown considerably, which resulted in increasing U.S. influence in the country. A sociological survey carried out by the Gallup International in 2017 showed that in case of war 66% of Vietnam's population would like to see the United States as their ally [Polunin 2017]. Evidently, such rapid change of public opinion in the country regarding the relatively recent bitter enemy merits close attention.

The theoretical basis of the research was provided by well-known approaches and technologies of impact on public opinion elaborated by au-

¹ The paper was first published as Vladimir Kolotov “Towards the XII Congress of the CPV: an analysis of the domestic political situation and the international environment”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 6 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2016), pp. 107—122.

thoritative specialists in the field of information wars A. Dulles [Dulles 1953], J. Overton, D. Mezentsev [Mezentsev 2012], I. Panarin [Panarin 2015] and S. Rastorguyev [Rastorguyev 2005].

Research methodology consists of a consecutive examination of the following subjects: 1) Alignment of forces in Vietnam's leadership on the eve of and during the congress; 2) Specific features of the domestic political and economic situations in Vietnam: public protests and the activity of the U.S. Ambassador; 3) American cybertechnologies and new threats to security. In examining the domestic political situation before and after the congress special attention is devoted to a detailed analysis of the alignment of forces in the Politburo of the CC CPV based on the voting results on trust to the supreme leaders of Vietnam, as well as the efficient activity of Ted Osius, new U.S. Ambassador to the country, who has done much for increasing American influence in Vietnam within a very short time. The article examines the most effective PR-actions of the U.S. Embassy, and also cites an example of an inadequate publication of the ex-Ambassador of Vietnam in the U.S.A. In conclusion, this article dwells on certain little-known results of investigations of experts in the field of security and information technologies Edward Snowden and Yuri Krutov, which are used in the assessment of the new risks of using modern cybertechnologies for private collection of information and remote suppression of the latest weapons systems created with the use of big integrated networks.

The theoretical basis of the research. The investigation has been carried out on the basis of the latest publications by authoritative experts in the sphere of foreign and domestic policies of Vietnam Dr Lê Hồng Hiệp, official voting results on trust to Vietnam's supreme leaders, material of the country's mass media about the activity of the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Ted Osius, as well as the article by the former Ambassador of Vietnam Lê Văn Bàng to the USA. Materials of the former CIA employee Edward Snowden and the Russian expert in the field of defense Yuri Krutov are used for the first time in analyzing the new threats to Vietnam in the sphere of information technologies and the development of military-technological cooperation with the United States and its allies.

The main part of research

Alignment of forces in Vietnam's leadership on the eve of and during the congress. The Politburo of the CC CPV is the center of adopting decisions on the development strategy of the country. This body elects the four su-

preme leaders of Vietnam: Secretary General, President, Prime Minister, and Chairman of the National Assembly [Lê Hồng Hiệp: 18.05.2015].

In this context, the composition of this body plays the most important role. By the present rules, the CC members elected for the first time should not be older than 55. The working CC members claiming a new term of office should not be older than 60. According to the rules, 80 of the present 154 CC members should leave the office due to age after the congress. The Politburo member elected for the first time should not be older than 60. And the age of the working Politburo member should not exceed 65. For Politburo members, who are candidates to the four key posts (Secretary General, President, Prime Minister, and Chairman of the National Assembly) a proposal is discussed to raise the age limit to 67 [ISEAS Perspective 2015-24].

In January 2015, one year before the congress, an unprecedented decision was adopted on holding secret ballot of trust to the Politburo and Secretariat members (20 persons in all) by the Central Committee (154 persons). It was reported in analytical literature on the subject that the present Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng received the biggest number of votes on trust [ISEAS Perspective 2015-24].

However, if the situation is analyzed more thoroughly, it will be possible to see some interesting data, which are not seen in an ordinary comparison of the number of figures.

The participants in the vote were asked to express their attitude to the Politburo members by dropping into the ballot box one of the three cards: high trust (blue diagram), trust (red diagram), low trust (green diagram). In the diagram on the analysis of voting, we shall examine only 16 key Politburo members. The maximally possible number of votes is 197. The number of all cards of the three types is moved from the center toward each Politburo member and is not put together. We, therefore, see well enough that the level of “high trust” to all Politburo members absolutely surpasses the small number of votes of “trust” and “low trust,” which vividly shows the high level of consolidation of the elites on the eve of such important congress. The highest level of trust was shown to Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng (152), President Trương Tấn Sang (149), and Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân (145).

In the “stars” around the “web” is the age of each Politburo member in 2016: in red — too old, in blue — allowing to claim membership in the supreme body for the next term. According to the existing rules, two persons (Secretary General of the CPV and Chairman of the National Assembly) of the four supreme leaders of Vietnam should leave. This was why before the congress the possibility of establishing the new age limit of 67 for Trương Tấn Sang and Nguyễn Tấn Dũng was widely discussed. According to the ex-

isting rules, exactly half of the Politburo members (8 of 16) should retire due to age, which is shown on the diagram by “star” beyond the framework of the drawn circle. Inside the circle are “stars” of those who have good chances for reelection (*see* color drawing 1).

Based on voting result and some other information, the Vietnamese analyst Lê Hồng Hiệp believes that the present Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng has been the most influential political figure in the country for thirty years since the departure of the General Secretary Lê Duẩn [Lê Hồng Hiệp: 18.05.2015]. When this article was written, Lê Hồng Hiệp was an external researcher at the Singapore Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS).

During the preparations for the congress, analysts oriented to the West, judging by their numerous publications supported Nguyễn Tấn Dũng. Articles and commentaries by Western and pro-Western experts in their analytical forecasts supported the Prime Minister. They wrote about how fruitfully he would work on the post of the new Secretary General of the CPV. The authoritative Australian expert on Vietnam Carl Thayer wrote, among other things that “Dung would bring unparalleled economic and international experience to the post of party Secretary General as a result of his two terms as Prime Minister. Dung is not likely to let ideology bind the hands in dealing with China. He was outspoken during last year’s oil rig crisis in defending Vietnamese sovereignty and raising the possibility of taking international legal action against China” [Thayer 2015].

In real fact, the Western information campaign regarding Nguyễn Tấn Dũng could well be taken by part of the Vietnamese elite as an attempt to create an atmosphere of factionalism with a view to influencing the personnel policy of the party on the eve of the CPV congress, which would elect the party leadership.

The congress passed in a stable, but complex international situation. Despite the challenges and difficulties of the present situation, the history of the past decades convincingly shows that the leaders of Vietnam find an optimal way out of seemingly hopeless situations, when the country finds itself before a crucial choice. That has practically been the case at each CPV congress.

The change of the generation of the country’s leadership had to take place at the 12th party congress, and it did. Under the growing pressure of Beijing and Washington, the desire of the outside forces to exert influence on the leading personnel selection has been seen especially clearly. The results of the 12th CPV Congress, which promised to be of crucial importance, exerted the decisive influence on the elaboration of the main directions of the country’s economic development, and domestic and foreign

policies, that is, the future of Vietnam. Its new leadership will have to tackle all these tasks in the context of the aggravating geopolitical rivalry between Beijing and Washington.

The congress results have demonstrated that the attempts to influence the election of the new leadership of Vietnam undertaken outside were efficiently blocked, and nobody from among foreign analysts could predict the composition of the new generation of Vietnam's leaders.

Specific features of domestic political and economic situations in Vietnam: protests and the activities of the U.S. Ambassador. Overall domestic political and economic situations in Vietnam on the eve of and during and after the congress remained stable enough; the country continues to develop steadily. However, in connection with the alarming developments in the South China Sea there is the growing wave of anti-Chinese sentiments, which is also felt during discussions within the party. The aggravation of the international situation in the South China Sea augments anti-Chinese rhetoric and stirs the political activity of the forces oriented to Washington.

In the spring of 2015, the pilot stress-test of the regime took place in Hanoi. Evidently, its organizers wished to see and feel the reaction of the authorities to the actions of the population protesting deforestation. The attempts to bestir the political situation under the guise of protest actions of the ecological movements are well-known in political technology. Such actions continue to grow after the congress, which was shown by the incident with the Taiwan enterprise "Formosa," which polluted seawater in spring 2016. Ecological activists demonstrated under the political slogans like "Fish need clean water and people need honest power."

The factor of Vietnam is gaining momentum in the geopolitical situation in the East Asian region. Vietnam's foreign policy seems to be an important factor in the alignment of forces and security of the entire region and this is why the outside forces will strive to influence the personnel decisions in that country prior and even after the congress. At present, an active rivalry is going on between Washington and Beijing for influence on Hanoi.

The "reforms" in the Russian Federation have considerably weakened Moscow's positions in Vietnam, which was seen not only in lower trade turnover, but also in lesser involvement of Russia in the affairs of that country. We should note that in 2015 Vietnam's commodity turnover with China amounted to 60 billion US dollars, with the U.S.A. — 40 billion US dollars, and with Russia — only 3.9 billion US dollars, which vividly shows the low efficiency of economic interaction between our two countries. On the other hand, it is too early to write off Russia, inasmuch, as we have repeatedly said and written, Moscow is still able to change the strategic balance in its inter-

ests in the regions which it thinks fit [Kolotov 2012]. The recent military campaign in Syria is a case in point.

The active and successful U.S. policy in Vietnam is especially vivid against this background. Above all, we should note the hyperactive and creative efforts of the U.S. Ambassador Ted Osius, who has burst into Vietnam's political life. Such approach markedly increases the efficiency of the "soft power" of the United States in Vietnam, which can be seen, among other things, in the growing presence of the U.S.A. in the information environment.

The U.S. Ambassador carries on various PR-actions with the use of new information technologies and social networks in quite a few cities of Vietnam, which draw broad attention of the public. They include visits to Buddhist temples, cooking of Vietnamese national dishes, participation in various traditional ceremonies and rituals, which, according to status and custom, should be carried out either by the heads of the ruling dynasty, or by the supreme state leaders. For example, in 2014, on the eve of the New Year by The Lunar calendar, Vietnam's President Trương Tấn Sang held the ceremony of letting loose fish into the Western Lake in Hanoi in the presence of mass media representatives and members of the Vietnamese community abroad [Minh Hiền 2014], which was duly reported to the U.S. Department of State.

Next year, "a multitude of photos appeared in the Internet about the New Year celebrations by The Lunar calendar in Hanoi, when Ted Osius arrived to the shore of the Western Lake in the center of Hanoi, carrying a tank full of fish in water. He was accompanied by a whole army of journalists, as well as men from the local and foreign TV companies. He pronounced traditional wishes on the occasion in Vietnamese and let the fish loose into the lake so that they might turn into dragons, soar high up into the sky, and, in accordance with age-old traditions, bring his words to the Nephrite Emperor. We should add that the Ambassador was not alone, but with his husband (Ted Osius, a career diplomat, is the first gay ambassador in Asia who has realized the right granted by American law and married his choice, Clayton Bond), the one who holds the child close to his chest (on the photo), whom the happy couple has adopted" [Kolotov 2017] (*see color drawing 2*).

The VN Express portal popular in Vietnam published a special feature about the ceremony with the U.S. Ambassador on the New Year's Day by The Lunar calendar [Trần Huấn 2015]. He was the first ambassador of a foreign country to have taken part in such ritual on the Western Lake in Hanoi. "These photos demonstrate absolutely new trends in Vietnamese society, which regards this as a demonstration of respect for local traditions. Such

public ceremonies have a much greater positive effect than dull statements and reports by official persons” [Kolotov 2017]. Incidentally, such an action carried out by the U.S. Ambassador in the PRC capital, where this holiday is also celebrated and corresponding rituals take place, in the view of Chinese experts, are impossible even to imagine. Hardly anyone could have imagined that the new U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, having stayed in his post only four months, would have committed such spectacular and successful PR-action.

The euphoria around this media person in Vietnam sometimes takes comic forms. For example, on the photo distributed by the popular Youth portal (Tuổi Trẻ online) one can see that helping the Ambassador to cook the Vietnamese noodle soup with beef the local chef became so engrossed in the act that he did not notice that Vietnam's national flag on his headgear was put on upside down. What's going on around Ted Osius interests the public so much that we were the only people who have noticed it. This seems strange inasmuch as preparations for the functions with the participation of such a person as the U.S. Ambassador in Vietnam are made very thoroughly (*see* color drawing 3).

Such rapid change of Vietnamese society's attitude to the United States relates to the use of a very efficient political technology suggested by the American lawyer and political analyst Joseph Overton (1960—2003), whose essence lies in a gradual change of society's attitude to politically important and even sometimes taboo subjects. When using the Overton Window of Political Possibilities technology with the help of purposeful information impact it is possible “to shift the window” of concepts acceptable to society to the necessary side: both to approval and to negation. According to this theory, each idea has a special “window of possibilities,” which is gradually shifting under intensive and purposeful information impact, passing over from one stage of lifting taboo or desacralization of a definite symbol to another. This movement consists of six conditional stages: unthinkable, radical, acceptable, reasonable, standard, and normal. The gradual replacement of some values and models of behavior with others is, therefore, taking place. The process of impact on public opinion is not noticed well enough by unworldly public, inasmuch as these changes occur gradually, take much time and are accompanied with an intensive information and psychological manipulation of special character.

On the eve of the former U.S. President B. Obama to Vietnam and the lifting of embargo on lethal weapons deliveries to that country, the Vietnamese press stepped up an information campaign aimed at discrediting Russian policy in the sphere of military-technological cooperation with Vietnam. The article by Vietnam's ex-Ambassador to the United States Lê

Văn Bàng under the title “Ex-Ambassador Lê Văn Bàng: Russia Only Sells Arms, Whereas the United States Can Help Vietnam” [Hải Văn 03.06.2016] was presented by the present U.S. Ambassador on his site in the Facebook. Sometime later, the heading of the article was changed to more neutral one: “Ex-Ambassador Lê Văn Bàng: the United States Can Help Balance Forces in the South China Sea” [Hải Văn: 14.05.2016]. However, anti-Russian invectives in the article remained (*see* color drawing 4).

As a result of the special technologies use and agreed-on statements in the press by public figures, a considerable increase of American influence in Vietnam is going on practically unnoticed by local residents, which makes it possible to influence public opinion through social networks. Information phantoms are spread about cooperation with the United States allowing Vietnam to strengthen its security and decrease the threats of China in the South China Sea.

American cybertechnologies and new threats to security. Under these conditions, new information technologies playing an important role in international relations, forming the necessary public opinion in geopolitics and largely determining the level of “digital sovereignty” and the country's security call for special attention. At present, the technical possibilities to collect various information have considerably increased, which is, of course, used by the U.S. special services regarding its foreign partners.

The book by Glenn Greenwald, who has published the material of the ex-employee of the CIA Edward Snowden, asserts that the U.S. government can switch on mobile phones by remote control, turning them into bugging devices. The government has used this technology for many long years [Greenwald 2015: 50]. According to the American legal practice, “the use of “roaming bugs” by the FBI, turning mobile phones of private persons into bugs by remote activation is quite legitimate” [Greenwald 2015: 50].

Snowden's material contains proof that “the National Security Agency (NSA) has access to several most popular online services, including SkyDrive, Skype, and Outlook.com” [Greenwald 2015: 143].

“The biggest Internet companies, according to NSA documents, have granted it, within the PRISM framework, direct access to their servers: Facebook, Google, Apple, YouTube, Skype, and others” [Greenwald 2015: 98]. Moreover, “in addition to these programs of total shadowing, the NSA also uses the so-called CNE — the method of employing computer networks: a virus is implanted into computers with the help of which a person is placed under surveillance. After computer is plagued with a virus, the NSA can see each screen opened on this computer. In actual fact, it means that the Agency has its own team of hackers” [Greenwald 2015: 149].

In Greenwald's view, "the main tasks of surveillance are gathering, storage, shadowing, and analysis of all electronic communications of the entire population of the globe" [Greenwald 2015: 121]. Evidently, the creation and improvement of such system is used not only for satisfying simple interest, but also for exerting pressure to bear on "obstinate" countries and key political figures. The information thus obtained can be used for recruiting or blackmailing the necessary persons, as well as for compromising them. At present, manipulation technologies have been considerably modernized and used practically on a global scale.

It would have been strange if in our days Vietnam had been outside the zone of interest of the surveillance and bugging system. As follows from the material presented by E. Snowden, Vietnam's mission in the UN, as well as the consular office in Washington have been the object of constant surveillance of the U.S. special services, which includes "collection of the data from transmitters in electronic devices, data from computer screen", and "projection of the hard disc" [Greenwald 2015: 184], etc. It would be interesting to know whether the Ambassador of Vietnam to the United States was aware of this. "In this connection, we have noted that the competent persons in Vietnam realize well enough the character of modern cyberthreats, and in August 2014, a special Department of Network Security was set up at the Ministry of Security of the country" [Kolotov 2015: 235] (in Vietnamese Cuc An ninh mang).

The material published by E. Snowden shows that in the present situation a rank-and-file consumer purchasing household appliances on the market pays money for a contraption which will spy on him and secretly transmit all information about him to the NSA.

We know from history that practically all important innovations, which have been named critical technologies, have first been used in the military and defense sphere. Evidently, the most advanced new technologies are used first in arms production, but it is professionals who become duly informed of their innovations and abilities only after their practical use in real action. The high-tech arms purchased in the West in our day, strange as it would seem, can present a serious nontraditional threat to national security. Yuri Knutov, curator of the military museum of the anti-aircraft defense forces, has told the public about certain special features of Western high-tech arms: "In 1999, Yugoslavia purchased in NATO countries electronic equipment, including radars and radio stations, for its army. All electronic equipment is based on large-scale integrated circuits, of which only about 30 percent are working, and the rest are false so that competitors could not copy them. Then a war begins. American sputniks and aircraft of

long-range radar detection AWACS issue the order, the false sections of the circuit are activated and all electronics goes out of order” [Skoibeda 2014]. It was well known how this sudden breakdown of the army electronic systems ended for Yugoslavia. Sometime later, a similar scenario was used regarding the anti-aircraft defense systems in Iraq and Libya. This is why, in diversifying arms purchases of crucial importance for a country's security a reasonable balance should necessarily be used and experience drawn from the errors of others. In time of peace, when military equipment and hardware are on standby, it is practically impossible to detect such “ruse,” and if the electronic equipment fails on the eve or during combat operation, it is too late to rectify the situation, and the countries, where responsible officials had made such criminal failure, are attacked, divided and ceased to exist.

The lifting of the American embargo on arms, on the one hand, gives the country an opportunity to diversify access to crucial defense technologies, but, on the other, presents a threat to security of a new type.

Results of the research. It was established that even a detailed analysis of the alignment of forces in Vietnam's leadership on the eve of the CPV congress did not allow foreign experts to predict the results of voting and personal composition of the country's leadership, and clumsy attempts to influence the process and promote desirable candidates to key positions in Vietnam's bodies of power have brought opposite results.

Despite this, both before and after the congress, attempts have been made to destabilize the situation in Vietnam under various pretexts, using public protests. The use of anti-Chinese sentiments during these protests and various publications in the mass media intensified propaganda to develop relations with the United States. The creative activity of the U.S. Ambassador has intensified public support of the cooperation development between Vietnam and the United States in the economy and in the field of defense and security.

The development of military and technological cooperation with the United States and its allies, on the one hand, presents an opportunity to diversify access to defense technologies, and on the other, American cybertechnologies and the latest weapons systems are a threat to security of a new type, with which Vietnam has not come across yet.

Analysis of results. During this research tangible results have been achieved in the following fields:

- The futile attempts to influence the election of the new leadership of Vietnam at the congress have not weakened the desire to continue this course.

- The increased activity of the protest movement in Vietnam, which is so far connected with the aim to create an opposition and find ways to see the reaction of the ruling regime to mass actions. The efficient activity of the U.S. Ambassador in Vietnam made it possible to considerably improve Vietnamese-American relations, and also to increase U.S. influence in Vietnam, which was revealed in growing economic relations and opening new prospects for the development of military and technological cooperation.
- The development of relations with the United States with a view to opposing the increased pressure on the part of China contributes to the emergence of new threats to security of Vietnam in the sphere of cybertechnologies and “clever” arms from the new partner, which requires close attention of the Vietnamese authorities.

Conclusion

Both before and after the congress, U.S. influence in Vietnam continued to grow. It is largely due to a clever PR-activity of the U.S. Ambassador in the country, as well as with a high quality of the speeches prepared for the former U.S. President Barack Obama during his visit to Vietnam. American scholars in the field of Vietnam studies, while preparing his visit and consulting him, added to his speeches and statements excerpts from Vietnamese classical literature, which demonstrated respect for the culture of the host country, thereby raising the U.S. prestige. The thorough preparation of visits of state leaders in form and content, able PR-accompaniment, systematic work in social networks and with the local mass media and public figures have brought the desired results. Despite the complex and tragic past, as well as the existing political problems in the sphere of human rights and freedom of conscience, Vietnamese-American relations are now dynamically developing.

“Under the conditions of the growing geopolitical tension in the region, Vietnam has stepped up military and technological cooperation with traditional (Russia) and new (Israel, the EU, the U.S.A.) partners on security.

Territorial disputes between East Asian countries poison the political atmosphere in the region, causing mistrust between neighboring countries and an unprecedented arms race, and also contribute to the drawing of big nonregional states in geopolitical games and local contradictions in their interests.

Despite the serious nature of threats and challenges facing Vietnam, it should be remembered that Hanoi is well able to protect its interests, which certain influential adversaries have had a chance to see for themselves.

The Southeast Asia region is now going through the process of growing geopolitical rivalry and struggle for building a new order, and Vietnam will, no doubt, play the genuinely independent and active role in these processes” [Kolotov 2015: 235—236].

At present, Vietnam is developing confidently and stably, however, dynamic changes in the information space and in high political circles, as well as new threats and challenges to security from outside and within the country require a definite reaction on the part of the authorities, which is evolved and endorsed at CPV congresses. Due to the high efficiency of management, Vietnam has good chances to overcome successfully the main political and economic problems facing it from outside and inside, as the case has been more than once in that country's history during the past decades.

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Grigory LOKSHIN

Crisis Aggravating in 2014 in the South China Sea¹

Introduction

The situation evolving in the South China Sea over the last few years has been increasingly in the focus of attention of the world community. Contradictions between China and ASEAN littoral states received a tremendous boost in the spring and summer of 2014 after China put into operation a large oil rig in Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) near the Paracel Islands. An all-round analysis of the subsequent events, causes, and motives of the parties' behavior and the ensuing consequences is, therefore, nothing if not topical. The first section of the paper concentrates on the growing geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of the region with its maritime communications and resources, notes the persisting risk of contradictions building up in the area and degenerating into a dangerous hotbed of international tension. The next section looks at the events of the spring 2014 proper, following the visit of US President Barack Obama to the countries of East Asia and the putting up of the Chinese rig that occurred shortly afterward in Vietnam's EEZ. After that the paper analyzes actions by the Vietnamese leadership in conditions of mounting tension in relations with China. The next section shows the response of the world community to China's doings, especially of the United States, Japan, and ASEAN countries. The position of Russia is analyzed separately, as it evoked an ambiguous reaction in the public opinion in Vietnam and other ASEAN countries. The two final sections focus on crisis settlement and its consequences.

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The procedure and materials of the research into the crisis development mostly relied on official sources, including statements by several governments, Foreign Ministry spokespersons of relevant countries, and reports by their information agencies. I made liberal use of analytical materials published in the media of China, Vietnam, Japan, and the US. I took into consideration the assessment of the events in works by various foreign experts. At the same time, I offer my own assessment of actions by various participants in the crisis, pointing out that China's choice of that moment for ostentatiously toughening its stand in disputes over sovereignty in the SCS was no chance coincidence with the return of the Crimea, but was carefully calculated in the hope that the attention of the entire world community would be taken by the developments in the Middle East and Ukraine.

Research methodology. In terms of methodology, the South China Sea events in the spring and summer of 2014 are viewed in this paper in the light of the mounting standoff between China and the US in the region. Their dispute there is related not only to energy resources, strategic outposts and waterways. In equal or possibly greater measure that was a continuation of the line of historical requital adopted at the 18th Congress of the PRC Communist party, of fulfilling the "Chinese dream" to shake off the burden and painful memories of the past and restore the country's erstwhile grandeur. The events examined here showed graphically that the replacement of the PRC Communist party's top leadership in 2012 had resulted in a different format of China's international activity, as it started to conduct the great country policy with all the ensuing consequences for its neighbors. China had clearly challenged the US policy of returning to Asia, which it had never really left in the first place. Washington responded merely with token and soothing assurances, but did not go beyond that. Vietnam, like the other countries in the region, saw yet again that the alignment of forces was changing and not in the US favor at that.

For Southeast Asia countries, as well as for the rest of the world, it is critically important that China policies are constructive and predictable. For its part, China and several other states read into the continuing military presence of the US in the Pacific, especially in its western section, Washington's desire to impose its will in a monocentric model of the APR situation, and even increase its arsenal of military hegemony capabilities. This runs counter to its vision of the development prospects for the situation in the region and increasing ambitions.

The theoretical basis of research. I rely on objective analysis of the actual events, their cause-and-effect ties and consequences. The paper highlights the exposed elements of mutual reserve both in China and Vietnam

during the conflict flaring up between the two. Neither party, as the facts suggest, was really set on an armed conflict. Yet, the reaction of Vietnam's public, the upsurge of nationalist sentiment encouraged by purposeful actions of communities abroad showed the real nature of the threat from toughening policies and practices regarding Vietnam that comes from the new generation of China's leaders. The impromptu pogroms of Chinese enterprises that went out of control for a time not only caused great economic damage, but also showed that unrestrained escalation of Chinese expansion is fraught with a "color revolution" and overthrow of the existing political regime in the neighboring socialist country. This was certainly not in China's interests, and the people in charge there must have realized in time that they had gone too far, and so decided to defuse the conflict for the time being.

The main part of research

The hotbed of tension continues to smolder. The importance of the South China Sea has grown noticeably over the last few years, for three reasons. The first reason is its geoeconomic position, with its congested maritime communications vital to all APR countries, especially to the rapidly growing economies of East and Southeast Asia. The second reason is its transformation into a region dubbed the next Persian Gulf because of the supposed reserves of oil, natural gas, mineral and maritime resources. The third reason is the presence of the Spratly Archipelago, the Paracel Islands, the Pratas Islands, the Macclesfield Bank, and the Scarborough Shoal, which can be used for military purposes, and where ships can shelter, rest, and dock. Also, the rivalry between China, the US, and Japan is on the increase, and India is gradually getting involved as well.

The said islands in the SCS are mostly contended for by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, and to a lesser degree by Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, all of which claim sovereignty over them. Together the islands make up the coast of this semienclosed sea, whose legal status remains uncertain. Their claims to the sea area, exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and borders of the continental shelf threaten to turn the region into a dangerous hotbed of a global conflict [Lokshin 2013: 15].

China and Vietnam have for years been protagonists of the territorial disputes in the SCS. The year 2014 happened to be especially difficult in this respect. Relations between the countries hit the all-time low in decades, although as recently as in October 2013, after the Hanoi visit of China's Pre-

mier Li Keqiang, it seemed that the Sino-Vietnamese relations had again taken an upward turn. Then both sides pointed out that they had agreed to continue discussing vexed issues of the sea. But already in November the authorities of the Chinese Hainan province unexpectedly approved a resolution that obligated all foreign fishing and research boats to ask their permission for any activity in the area that took up two-thirds of the SCS waters (see Figure 1). Otherwise, they would have to pay a fine of 500.000 yuan and have their catch and equipment confiscated. The Resolution came into force as of January 1, 2014. That was an undisguised attempt by the Chinese authorities to establish their legal regime over the better half of the SCS water area marked by what is known as the nine-dash line or, as it is called in Vietnam, the cow-tongue line¹. Vietnam and the Philippines instantly raised a resolute protest this act viewing it as a serious violation of their rights to the 200-mile exclusive economic zone provided for by the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Rejecting all protests, the Chinese authorities passed off their demands as a purely technical change in the effective legislation on fishery of 1992 aimed at preserving the region's fish resources allegedly under the adminis-

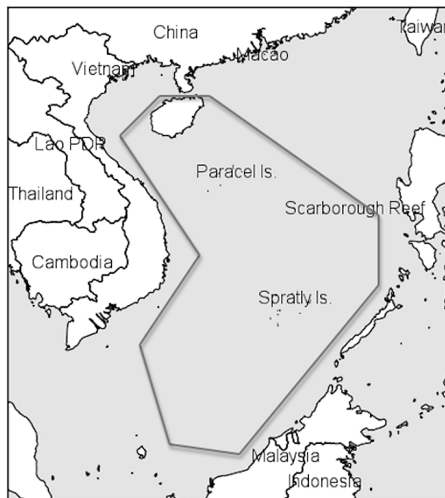


Figure 1. Limitation zone for foreign vessels as of January 1, 2014.

Source: [AP: 7.01.2014].

¹ The nine-dash line officially appeared on the map presented to the UN in 2009. It signifies China's claim to nearly 90 percent of the SCS water area with all its islands.

trative control of Hainan province. But in practice that resulted in several Vietnamese fishing boats apprehended yet again in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands already on January 3, with their entire catch and fishing tackle confiscated. And every such instance naturally caused a storm of rage in Vietnam.

The worsening tension in the SCS that started with the coming to power of the new generation of Chinese leaders, is seen by the Chinese political analysts and propagandists as a response to the declared US about-face in the APR which made the region's smaller and medium-sized states feel encouraged by the US to oppose certain "legitimate national interests" of China. And no amount of reassurance from US politicians that the about-face was allegedly not against China could assuage their Chinese counterparts' conviction to the contrary.

A new rise in tensions in the SCS. On May 1, 2014, China moved its huge HD 981 oil and gas rig toward the Paracel Islands 80 miles into Vietnam's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (*see* color drawing 5). So, expensive and large-scale an operation had naturally been carefully planned and meticulously prepared. The news that China had a new oil-and-gas rig for drilling in the deep-water sections of the SCS had long been stale. What was not known was merely the place and starting time of drilling. The US president's visit to East Asia countries became a convenient pretext for that, and the exact moment was chosen most aptly, when the world's attention was riveted on the events in the Crimea and in the Southeast of Ukraine.

The provocative nature of the operation was not to be doubted. That was the first instance of China violating the SCS status quo so openly and radically.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman described the act as ordinary business practice by China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) that had started probe drilling 17 km from one of the Paracel Islands and within 150 km of Vietnam's coast. Since China considered the islands indisputably its own, the entire operation was seen by the Chinese side as proceeding within China's EEZ, which, truth to tell, it had never officially declared and whose borders it had never discussed with anyone. But that allowed China to posture as the victim of Vietnam's aggressive actions that stalled the normal work of the Chinese rig.

The scale and intensity of the conflict were a good deal greater than during the 2013 conflict with Japan that had aggravated at the time over the Diaoyudao (Senkaku) Islands. But China did not bring into operation its warships that were nearby in the SCS. Aircraft were hardly used at all either. Clearly there was no intention to go to war with Vietnam over the issue. As

always, only paramilitary guard vessels and civilian ships were used, while the warships waited in reserve.

The exact spot near the Paracel Islands where the Chinese rig was put up is known not for abundance of oil and gas, but rather for their minuscule amounts if not indeed total absence. According to the US AEIC energy company, the calculated deposits there are under one million barrels [Contested areas: 26.12.2013]. Official CNOOC spokesmen did not even bother to hide the fact that they had been ordered to bring the rig into Block 143 of Vietnam's EEZ. They cited the exorbitant cost of keeping the rig there with a hundred accompanying vessels from May 1 to August 15, as it had been announced by the Chinese authorities. The decision to move forward the oil rig worth 1 billion US dollars to the area where oil and gas reserves are dubious and so cause a serious diplomatic crisis points to the premeditated political nature of the act.

Observers differed as to the interpretation of China's motives and objectives in the operation. Some thought it China's response to the Maritime Code Vietnam had passed in June 2012, which proclaimed sovereignty over both archipelagos in the SCS. Until its adoption China had been vainly trying to exert pressure on Hanoi. When that failed, the CNOOC announced a bid for nine blocks in the SCS littoral area, which was part of Vietnam's EEZ. No one came forward, and then CNOOC decided to do the drilling. Yet, the statements by CNOOC leaders cited above speak of something different. What was then the true reason for tension escalation on the part of China?

The main explanation of China's actions still appears to boil down to the idea that the act was above all aimed at confirming its territorial claims to the SCS. And this shows yet again that China's entire politics in the western Pacific should be viewed in the light of China-US rivalry. Throughout the last few years, China consistently raised the price smaller and medium-sized littoral states of the East China and South China seas would have to pay for their prospective part in the US plans of China's strategic encirclement. The oil rig operation was a sign of the new Chinese leaders' intention to keep up controlled tension in the region. Most observers also regard this act as yet another attempt at probing the US and ASEAN reaction and testing the likely international response to China's toughening territorial demands in the surrounding seas.

In legal terms, the area where the Chinese rig was put up remains disputed, though China refuses to acknowledge any dispute here and categorically declines any offers of discussion. From the standpoint of international law, China's action was clearly unlawful. The border line of the Chinese EEZ declared to justify the move, measured as it was from one of the unin-

habited Paracel islets, overlapped with half of the Vietnamese EEZ measured from the basic coastline, as dictated by the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. In similar cases, the 1982 Convention demands that the parties begin negotiations, and until then desist from any actions disturbing the *status quo*, to say nothing of use of force and threat of force. The measures that radically change the *status quo* are deemed inadmissible.

The severe protest of Vietnam that followed appeared, therefore, perfectly justified. According to the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman, China had committed a grave violation of international law, the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as well as of the six-point Joint Statement by the parties signed in 2011. That extremely dangerous act has created an immediate threat to peace, stability and navigation security in the SCS, according to the official view of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Vietnam.

One may ask, why Vietnam before any others? The surprise effect was certainly there. Hanoi took no steps that could justify the unprecedented move by China. The installment of the rig suggested that China had given up its smile diplomacy and yet again switched to the politico-diplomatic assault on Vietnam and direct pressure on that country from the position of strength.

Vietnam's diplomacy during the crisis. The Vietnamese leaders kept silent for nearly two weeks, displaying reserve and trying not to dramatize the situation. Some observers interpreted that as a sign of lack of unity among the top leadership of the country regarding China's actions. On May 8, the 9th Plenary Session of the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee opened in Hanoi. Secretary General of the CPV CC Nguyen Phu Trong at the Plenum opening session did not comment on that in his report. And it was not until the Plenum conclusion on May 15, that he said, "The situation in the East Sea¹ is developing in a complex way, and extremely seriously for us. This requires the entire party, people, and army to show exceptional fortitude, wisdom, cohesion, and unanimous readiness to resolutely defend the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of our Motherland, while preserving peace and stability in the region that are crucial to the country's buildup and development" [Nhân Dân: 15.05.2014].

The protracted silence of the top leadership in this case was no sign of inaction. All the time every hot line at the Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministries continued to work nonstop. From May 13 to May 17, Hanoi

¹ The South China Sea is known in Vietnam as the East Sea.

hosted the first talks at the deputy foreign minister level of both countries. Later similar talks were held in Beijing. And, as had been the case on numerous previous occasions, the sides actively brought in interparty communication channels.

In the circumstances, Vietnam did not confine itself to diplomatic means alone. The main thing was to prevent the *fait accompli* situation. The victim state in present conditions has virtually no one to turn to for compassion; neither the UNO nor ASEAN in their present state can render any practical support. So Vietnam had to enter the international arena and act over the head of the governments.

In Vietnam itself China's move caused a veritable storm of emotions. Add to this a powerful pressure from the Vietnamese communities in the US and other countries. On May 13–14, mass protest demos were held in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and several other cities of the country. This time the protests were permitted and even initiated by the local authorities, which, as it appeared later, was a grave mistake. The events went out of control and in some areas turned into manifestations by workers at enterprises owned both by China and by Taiwan, Singapore, and other countries. The general discontent with the working conditions and low wages had burst through. Rallies and demos in some places degenerated into pogroms with casualties, which resulted in closure of several enterprises and inflicted considerable damage on the economy. Some 3,500 Chinese workers employed at the construction of major infrastructure facilities left Vietnam.

The country witnessed an active debate where many scholars and politicians called for suing China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, following the Philippines' example. The same proposal was voiced by many foreign experts at several international conferences held in Vietnam and elsewhere at the time. But in the long run Hanoi desisted from any such moves afraid lest China get even more inimical. Any unwary action might have been used by Beijing in the atmosphere of nationalism fomented there. That could have brought about a conflict that both sides seemed to prefer to do without.

The international academic community on the whole gave high marks to the actions of Vietnam's leadership in the course of the crisis. It did not allow itself to be enticed into a trap, and displayed *sang-froid* despite the unprecedented pressure from without and from within on the part of a certain group of domestic intellectuals and university undergraduates.

The response of the world community. Many observers thought that act of China a sort of message to the entire world that Beijing was determined

and able to make the US and ASEAN feel, and finally acknowledge, that it was China that ruled the roost in the region.

In Beijing no one doubted naturally that Washington would respond to the Chinese operation by protests, but without actual countermeasures. And they were right there, Washington's reaction was exactly as expected.

All in all, China's leaders challenged the United States along the main lines of the US strategy, having exposed the gap between Obama's rhetoric and ability to effectively respond to the toughening of China's territorial claims. And that was to show to the countries in the region that the United States was a mere paper tiger.

However, a question arises why China did all that a week before the ASEAN Summit in the capital of Myanmar, although not much earlier, in March and April, at the consultations about the Code of Parties Conduct in the SCS there had been progress, albeit modest¹.

The message to the ASEAN countries in this case was likewise clear, "It's no use waiting, our stand will not change." But on May 10, the foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries replied by expressing "serious concern over the continuing events in the SCS, which caused growing tension in the region." [SRV Foreign Ministry: 11.05.2014]. That was done in a separate Statement and pointed to unequivocal support of Vietnam in the circumstances. All the ten ASEAN countries, for the first time in years, spoke out together against China's actions in the SCS, which was in stark contrast to the failed attempts at taking a similar stand at the 2012 Phnom Penh Summit.

The conflict that had flared up attracted the attention of the world community, the global economic crisis and disquieting developments in Europe and the Middle East notwithstanding. Overall, not one country, not one government volunteered support for China. Obviously, not all of them declared their protest to Beijing, but its action clearly failed to win approval anywhere in the world.

The stand of Russia. On May 15, 2014, the RF Foreign Ministry also issued a statement at the level of its spokesman A. Lukashevich. The statement said that Russia expressed hope that China and Vietnam would find a peaceful solution to the dispute by means of negotiations [RF Foreign Ministry: 15.05.2014]. That position of active neutrality that Russia invariably takes regarding SCS disputes received a mixed reaction both in China and in Vietnam. But it was a logical continuation of the fact that Russia was a

¹ In October 2013, at the China-ASEAN Summit on Bali, China was pressured by ASEAN countries into agreeing to start consultations on making the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS (DOC) into a legally binding Code (COC).

strategic partner of both. Its relations with the two countries were different from those of the US with Japan or South Korea, say. Strategic partnership is not a military alliance against some common adversary.

The Russia-China relations possess a series of important features that bring both sides closer and ensure fruitful and mutually advantageous cooperation in all kinds of areas, but they do not imply an obligation to back each other's policies and wholly share each other's national interests in every case. These interests may not coincide at times, but they both challenge the world order where the United States was the only manager and arbiter rolled into one. And the fact that Russia abstained from supporting the act of China in the SCS proved once more that its policy in the region was independent. Whatever course the events may take in the SCS, it is important that Russia should not find itself between the devil and the deep blue sea but should always be able to influence the situation. Admittedly, that was overlooked in the commentaries by both the Vietnamese and the Chinese media.

Reason and common sense logic prompt the conclusion that sound normal relations and all-round cooperation between two great Asian powers at the strategic partnership level have no alternative. This is one of the biggest foreign policy achievements of today's Russia and a major condition of peace and security for all APR nations. It is inconceivable what the region's smaller and medium-sized states, Vietnam included, might be up against should the events turn in the opposite direction.

Russia's responsible and carefully considered stand on disputed territorial issues in the SCS has no sensible alternative. It suits best the national interests of every state in the region without exception. And so invariably meets with due understanding and support on the part of the Vietnamese leadership.

The crisis is over, but concord is yet to be achieved. Nevertheless, time went by, but tensions in relations remained. Someone had to take the first step back. And China did it. On July 16, the HD 981 oil rig with its escort moved off and headed for the territorial waters of the People's Republic of China. Moreover, CNOOC made a statement for the press to the effect that exploration drilling was over sooner than planned as all the tasks had been fulfilled and the rig was moved out for economic considerations, and not under external pressure. The next stage in the work would depend on the data obtained. Since then, there has been no news of the drilling results.

Many observers doubted that the premature removal of the rig (a month in advance) signified China's retreat or renunciation of territorial claims in the SCS, but whatever the reason, the decision became a sign of yet another adjustment of the course and transition to a more moderate position.

Possibly Beijing realized that the stand toughening was a bit over the top, and in doing so the Chinese pushed their neighbors in East Asia into the US embrace. The most unpleasant thing was the change in Japan's policies, its attempts at revising the peaceful constitution and gradual formation of alliances with India, Australia, and Vietnam. Caution dictated an adjustment of the course, which was duly done. Of the two protagonists, China was, therefore, the most in need of a respite. The 75-day crisis was quickly deflated.

On August 27, Le Hong Anh, a Special Envoy of the CC CPV Secretary General and Permanent member of the Politburo and the CC CPV Secretariat, arrived in Beijing. His visit, as had been announced, was intended to defuse the situation and normalize the relations between the two parties and states. When receiving the Vietnamese guest, PRC Chairman Xi Jinping stressed that China and Vietnam were socialist neighbors, and a neighbor could not be moved somewhere else, so they were interested in peaceful relations with each other [Thông Tấn Xã: 28.08.2014]. The Declaration adopted on the results of the talks was proof that the two parties were resolved to normalize relations and restore cooperation. They agreed to control all SCS contradictions, desisting in the future from any actions that might aggravate the situation and exacerbate disputes [Thông Tấn Xã: 28.08.2014].

The document approved then virtually reproduced the main provisions agreed in October 2011 during the visit to China by Nguyen Phu Trong, the newly elected CC CPV Secretary General. That was particularly true of the Joint Declaration of Basic Principles of Maritime Dispute Settlement. The parties agreed to patiently negotiate disputed issues on the basis of the easy-first-difficult-next principle, and seek fundamental long-term solutions acceptable to both sides. They agreed to take under special control their differences at sea, avoid situation worsening that could affect the relations between the two countries, jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea, and take measures to improve relations between the two parties and states.

Especial attention of the observers was attracted by the sides' consent to actively study opportunities of making interim decisions without changing the sides' positions or political guidelines. It also included "a study and discussion of the issue of cooperation aimed at joint development." Simultaneously, it was decided to brisk up the work of the groups on the Tonkin (*Bac Bo*) Gulf and on cooperation in various other maritime matters set up by the two sides.

In fact, that resembled the well-known initiative put forward way back by Deng Xiaoping, which consisted in putting disputes over sovereignty on

the back burner and starting joint development of the SCS resources. But resources within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Vietnam under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea are its property. Any other country or company can conclude an agreement on joint prospecting and extraction of carbohydrates on the product division principle. But this sea area cannot be viewed as something commonly owned by the two sides. So, to implement this idea without agreements on the legal status of the SCS will be anything but easy.

Consequences and prospects. The Chinese-Vietnamese relations have again taken the way of improvement and normalization, as it were. That was backed by the return visit to Hanoi of Yu Zhengsheng, a member of the CC CPC Politburo Standing Committee, and Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), on December 27–29, 2014. When meeting with him, Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang replied that, despite the various problems and numerous changes in international life, the traditional friendly relations of cooperation between Vietnam and China would remain unaltered [Xinhua: 27.12.2014].

And some of the objectives China had set to itself in the summer of 2014 were indeed attained. The 75-day crisis in the SCS had a number of serious consequences for China itself, Vietnam, and the region at large, namely,

1. Yet another round of the US-China confrontation in East Asia was as good as drawn. Beijing and Washington remained displeased with each other's policy, but a full-blown conflict between them was still unlikely thanks to considerable economic interdependence. It was hardly an accident that after all the critical speeches and statements against each other the sides resumed a more peaceful tone in bilateral relations.

2. The crisis threw back the Vietnamese-Chinese relations. Not much had been left of the “four good deeds” and “16 golden hieroglyphs” principles they depended on, although the relations still encompassed a lot of major areas and were not confined to the SCS conflict. Despite the signs of detente, various undercurrents continue to erode these relations that more than once have been declared durable and indestructible.

3. The crisis induced Vietnam to step up military cooperation with other countries, first of all with the United States, and also with Japan, India, and others. The US lifted the ban from sales of lethal weapons to Vietnam, which enabled that country to purchase modern equipment for observation and control in the territorial waters. Vietnam can buy from the United States modern radar systems, patrol boats and sea reconnaissance aircraft. In 2015, Vietnam and the US celebrated the 20th anniversary of es-

tablishing diplomatic relations. And that was no mere pretext for reminiscences. The relationships between the two countries have been on the up, especially after the 2015 visit to Vietnam by President Barack Obama.

India agreed to help with upgrading Vietnam's armed forces, train personnel for the Air Force and the Navy, and continue taking part in oil and gas prospecting and extraction on Vietnam's shelf despite protests from China. In 2014, the relations of Vietnam with Japan also took a boost rising to the level of all-round partnership.

4. Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines consolidated their ties to offset China's activity in the SCS. China's actions began to worry Malaysia after the Chinese Navy intrusions and exercises on the St. James Islands in the southern part of the Spratly Archipelago, which it claims. Malaysia, that until recently avoided friction with China, began to actively build up its Navy to protect its sovereignty, and joined the common ASEAN stand on the latest events in the SCS.

5. The crisis deepened the doubts of the countries in the region as to China's policies, and increased fear that it might move still further south. That caused changes in ASEAN's stand, and helped restore unity in the Association undermined in 2012. The response to China's actions, some analysts believe, can be East Asia countries converging into a single group and forming a new balance of forces in the area.

6. No matter how events evolve, it is already obvious that the territorial dispute over the SCS is a matter for multilateral discussion, which is something China opposed for years. This is borne out by the fact that at the height of the crisis first China, and then Vietnam applied to the UNO with a detailed account of their position and a request to distribute these missives among all the member states as a UN document. At the same time, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague set up under the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea continued examining the Philippines' suit.

Conclusions

Until recently, the United States invariably argued that it supported none of the parties in the SCS territorial disputes. But on December 5, the Department of State published a report with a minute analysis of the issue where it officially raised the matter of the nine-dash line and the doctrine behind it. The document said unequivocally that those claims by China were groundless in legal terms and engendered a threat of confrontation, undermining regional stability and closing the prospects of peaceful settlement.

Unfortunately, there are still no optimistic signs of all parties to the SCS conflict displaying readiness to accept the reality and consider new initiatives for dispute settlement. One can confidently say that stability in the SCS will not come if ships of the US 7th Pacific Fleet continue to ply the waters there and conduct military maneuvers with their allies. Nor will the coveted stability be there until China provides energy security for its sustainable development.

China masterfully combines the smile diplomacy backed by trade agreements, loans, and investment projects worth billions of US dollars throughout the SCS area with a purposeful military strategy that includes numerous projects of military development and patrolling of the entire disputed water area in the SCS, chiefly by paramilitary forces of order maintenance. It, therefore, successfully uses economic levers and diplomatic approaches to foil any attempts by SEA countries at working out a united position. It will take a lot more time before China and ASEAN countries manage to agree on the most general provisions of the Parties' Conduct Code (COC).

The removal of the rig did not prevent China from sending two of its warships to the Philippines EEZ, building a beacon on Phu Mai Island, the biggest one of the Paracels, seizing Vietnamese fishing vessels there, launching large-scale construction work to artificially expand the area of the partially flooded islands and coral reefs in the Spratly Archipelago it had occupied in order to build on them quays, warehouses, and landing strips.

Vietnam's policies in the China-Vietnam-US triangle have been unchanged since they were approved at the 11th Congress of the Communist party of Vietnam in January 2011 and confirmed in the resolutions of the 12th CPV Congress in 2016. They consist in unrelenting independent sovereign foreign policy while keeping international relations multivector and diversified. Vietnam had over the last few years been actively integrated in the regional and global economy based on these principles and for the purpose of consolidating its international position. This takes preservation and furthering of the relations with its two most important partners, China and the United States.

In the circumstances, particularly during the preparation and work of the 12th CPV Congress, Vietnam's leadership endured powerful pressure from without and from within to induce it to radically change its politics. Many foreign "advisers" tried to convince Vietnam via every conceivable channel that the line of nonparticipation in any military alliances against China in the new situation was obsolete, and a military alliance with the United States was vital. They demanded bringing a suit against China following the Philippines' example and revision of the three non-principles,

i.e. nonparticipation in military blocs, nonadmission of foreign military bases on its territory, and nonparticipation in any anti-China alliances.

As invariably happened during aggravation of relations with China, rumors started circulating that the Vietnamese leadership was split into pro-Chinese and pro-Western reformist groups. Although among the country's political elite there are few believers in a radical change for the better in the relations with the northern neighbor in the foreseeable future, but counting which groups predominate in the CPV leadership, the so-called Westernizers or pro-Chinese, would be a grave mistake. It is clear that the dominant group there is the pro-Vietnamese and it is primarily concerned with preserving independence, sovereignty, and political stability in their country, although their vision of the road in that direction may differ.

Ultimately, it has become obvious that the Vietnamese leadership displayed self-restraint in the crisis and did not fall for any provocations. Vietnam continued maneuvering to settle disputes in the SCS at bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Simultaneously, it is furthering cooperation with the states in the region and with all other countries interested in preserving peace in the SCS and able to help Vietnam in solving this problem. There is simply no other sensible alternative for it.

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PART THREE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAM

Vladimir MAZYRIN

Vietnamese economy on the rise: core trends of recent years (2013—2017)¹

The paper sums up the results of Vietnam's economic development in 2013—2017 through highlighting its positive trends and unsolved problems. *Section one* characterizes the general growth dynamic and economic structure, examines the situation in the three sectors of production and services. *Section two* analyzes the monetary and finance system, in particular such aspects as fighting inflation, national budget execution, monetary and investment policies, and the public debt. *Section three* focuses on external economic relations, including foreign direct investment in Vietnam (SRV) and its foreign trade. The author concludes that the Vietnamese economy is embarking on the upward trajectory in the period under examination while its dependence on more advanced countries to increase, and the local business positions and competitiveness get weaker.

Introduction

We have chosen for analysis a specific period in Vietnam's economic development instead of the regular five-year span of 2011—2015. The reason was that the issue of the most interest both to Russia and to all research-

¹ The paper was first published as Vladimir Mazyrin “The Economy of Vietnam on the Rise: 2013—2014 Tendencies”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 182—207. While most of information and analysis are still valid, some parts have been updated in line with recent developments in Vietnam.

chers is the ways by following which the SRV has stopped the recession in economy and effects of the global financial crisis and brought its new rise closer. According to our concept of the economic cycle in that country, it is precisely the period under examination that should have witnessed the recovery and growth phases [Mazyrin 2013: 39]. This hypothesis has been verified by specific facts and phenomena.

Along with objective internal difficulties, like structural disproportions, macroeconomic imbalances, the consequences of climate change, Vietnam went through extremely complicated external conditions. The global economic situation is improving slowly together with foreign trade, including Vietnam's export staples. China should be regarded as one of serious causes stalling the growth of Vietnamese economy in recent years.

Apart from the specific features of this period, something else that makes topical the subject of this research is that it helps check the implementation of major economic theory provisions. Those that were confirmed in Vietnam we take to be correct, those that were not are outdated.

Finally, the scholars' attention is primarily riveted on large rapidly growing economies. And Vietnamese economy is one. Whereas in 2015 it was rated the 32nd in the world in terms of size (according to the purchasing power parity (PPP) of GDP), it is expected to become the 29th already in 2025. The country's population is nearing the 100 million mark, which it will have passed in 2023 [Vietnam 2015: 134].

Add to this that the results of the last few years in Vietnamese economy are very sparingly described in Russian research literature, especially with regard to 2015—2017. While some events and facts have been covered, the trends and development prospects are yet to be revealed.

Research procedure. The research was made by means of gathering and grouping data about the economic development rates and ways in Vietnam, chiefly by comparing the 2013—2014 and 2016—2017 indices. The information from various sources was supplemented by our own computations. Quality conclusions then made rest on statistics, generalizations, and analysis of the material gathered.

Based on the research materials and official Vietnamese policies we checked the implementation of liberal economic growth theory provisions, and the extensive development model of Vietnamese economy. That allowed us to discover not only the spheres and factors, but also the immediate prospects of its development.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was some titles by foreign and domestic scholars on economic growth in backward countries. To solve the tasks set we used general theory

and specialized methods of cognition — qualitative analysis (synthesis, analogy, and comparison, system-structural methods) and quantitative analysis (statistical and graphical interpretation methods), as well as techniques of economics.

Conceptually, by discovering the characteristics of Vietnam's economic growth, we tried to find the extent and peculiarities of its current model functioning. This is important both theoretically and practically, because similar processes are under way in other Oriental countries, in Eurasia, including Russia.

Research materials. The research is chiefly based on current statistical materials from state departments, on Vietnamese and foreign researchers' titles related to SRV economy. In the first group, we would like to single out the data from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (in the form of *Statistical Yearbook*), Vietnam Customs, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Planning and Investment, and Ministry of Finance. Besides, we used materials of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, and of international institutions, like the World Bank, the IMF, and HSBS Bank, Vietnam.

Group two includes highly representative surveys by the Vietnam Institute of Economic Policy Research (VEPR) of Hanoi State University, which highlights in detail the economic situation in the country. Among the Western publications on the subject are titles by such respected scholars as C. Thayer and A. Fforde from Australia. A regular covering of Vietnam's development made by the leading US Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) was used too.

We also resorted to individual and collective works by Russian researchers. These are works by the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies of the RAS Institute for Far Eastern Studies published in recent years [12th Congress 2016], and leading scientists of the RAS Institute of Economics, L.A. Anosova and M.Ye. Trigubenko, who laid the foundations of Vietnamese economy studies in the USSR and Russia. This paper falls back on our previous articles and monograph on the subject [Mazyrin 2013].

The theoretical basis of the research is popular concepts that explain the need of market reforms in developing economies. First, these are the theories of economic growth stages and catching-up development that condition their success on market reforms and integration into the world economy. To understand the engines of external economic activity we explored the theory of international trade liberalization. A different regularity, economic efficiency improving as the scale of production and market increases, was traced with the help of the scale effect theory.

From the vantage point of theoretical postulates we examined two issues. First, how long and successfully the formerly backward economy of Vietnam can develop extensively, and where it will get in this way. Second, what real consequences will be engendered by integration into the world economy on the terms of the most developed countries.

The main part of research

Growth Dynamics and the Economic Structure. In 2013—2016, the SRV displayed sufficiently high dynamics of socioeconomic development. This marks it off rather favorably from many other countries, even the largely well-doing East Asian ones, including in Southeast Asia, and Western states that continue to suffer from global recession.

In 2016, the GDP growth rates reached 6.21 percent; in the first half of 2017, it was 5.73 percent (and 6.17 percent in the second quarter), which makes it possible to reproduce last year's success [BCQ 4-2016, 1-2017]¹. The country is moving away from the highest cycle point of 6.7 percent in 2015, but exceeds the indices of 2012—2014 (*see* color drawing 6) [SYV 2015: 169; TCTK 2016; THKTXH 2016]. There is virtually no chance of repeating the mid-2000s dynamics (of over seven percent), target indices are not being attained (6.3 percent to 6.5 percent for 2016). What we have here is a trend suggesting that it is impossible to revert to the former growth rates as the reserves of explosive extensive development from zero base have been exhausted. At the same time, Vietnamese economy is growing faster than predicted by WB and IMF experts and looks better than do other ASEAN-5 countries, barring the Philippines. IMF and HSBC forecasts of Vietnam's economic growth rates for 2017 are 6.3 and 6.0 percent, respectively, while the planned figure is 6.7 percent².

When analyzing growth rates by production and services sectors one can see that indices in agriculture and related sectors in 2014—2016 fell by one percentage point each year, but started going up in 2017. The growth is due chiefly to the tertiary sector activities, and also industry and capital construction. The tertiary sector proved to be a veritable bastion of stability; its dynamics have been on the up for a fourth year running. The secondary

¹ Vietnam's economy grows 5.73 pct in first half / VNA. <http://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-economy-grows-573-pct-in-first-half/114079.vnp>, 29.06.2017.

² Vietnam expects foreign investment to reach a record US\$ 16 billion. <http://asia-vietnam.ru/business-category/vietnam-ozhidaet-cto-v-etom-godu-inostrannye-investit-sii-dostignut-rekordnyh-16-mlrd-usd/4.08.2017>.

sector experienced bouts of serious instability; it has again moved to the front in terms of dynamics, coming second to the tertiary sector only in 2017 (*see* Table 1), because at the start of the year industry and capital construction suffered a setback.

Table 1

**Vietnam's GDP growth rates and structure* by production and services sectors
in 2005—2017, %**

Year	GDP growth rates per year	Primary sector		Secondary sector		Tertiary sector	
		Growth rates	Share in structure	Growth rates	Share in structure	Growth rates	Share in structure
2005	7.55	4.2	19.3	8.4	38.1	8.6	42.6
2006	6.98	3.8	18.7	7.3	38.6	8.4	42.7
2007	7.13	4.0	18.7	7.3	38.5	8.5	42.8
2008	5.66	4.7	20.4	4.1	37.1	7.6	42.5
2009	5.40	1.9	19.2	6.0	37.4	6.6	43.4
2010	6.42	3.3	18.9	7.2	38.2	7.2	42.9
2011	6.24	4.0	20.1	6.7	37.9	6.8	42.0
2012	5.25	2.68	19.7	5.75	38.6	5.90	41.7
2013	5.42	2.64	18.4	5.43	38.3	6.57	43.3
2014	5.98	3.44	18.2	6.42	38.4	6.16	43.4
2015	6.68	2.41	17.5	9.64	38.9	6.33	43.7
2016	6.21	1.36	17.0	7.57	38.6	6.98	44.4
2017**	5.73	2.65	n/a	5.81	n/a	6.85	n/a

Compiled according to: SYB 2013: 145—147; 2015: 170; TCTK 2014; BCQ 4-2016; VNA. <http://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-economy-grows-573-pct-in-first-half/114079.vnp>, 29.06.2017.

Notes: * Growth rates of GDP and economic sectors have been computed from 2010 fixed prices; the GDP structure, on the basis of current prices. We tentatively took the total share of these sectors from 2015 on to be 100, although the General Statistics Office of Vietnam singled out the production and services taxes as an additional GDP component, therefore the core sectors share in the total went below 90%.

** Data for the first half of the year.

The GDP structure has been changing to reflect shifts toward economy industrialization. The contribution of traditional branches continued to diminish reaching 17% in 2016 that of industry and construction stayed above the 39% level, and that of services exceeded 44%, but its growth was exceedingly slow. The secondary sector share in GDP has almost doubled in the 30 years of reform in the SRV, while the share of the primary sector dropped by the same amount, and that of the tertiary sector grew by six percentage points. Together the share of industry and services in GDP has grown from 80% in 2011 to 83% in 2016; while that of agriculture, fishery, and forestry fell from 20% to 17% [SYV 2014: 148, 2015: 170].

The compression of the agrarian and related branches while the secondary sector's position continued to be consolidated thanks to its higher productivity, confirms the success of industrialization. But in Vietnam's economy the trend toward service sector development is clearly yet to mature in contrast to other SEA countries, which is what Australian scholar A. Fforde argues [Fforde 2016: 7–8]. The contribution made to the economy by the tertiary sector is still a long way from the indices in leading ASEAN countries, where it accounts for 50% to 60% of GDP. Those countries have outpaced Vietnam for objective reasons.

Let's describe in more detail the situation in basic economic sectors (*see* color drawing 7). The weakest one in terms of dynamic and contribution to GDP is the **primary sector**, which incorporates agriculture, forestry, and fishery. Its growth rates have fallen from roughly 4–5 percent in the pre-crisis years to 1.5–2.5 percent. The year 2016 witnessed the lowest rate increase in the last six years, of 1.36 percent, while in the first half of 2017 the figure rose slightly to 2.7 percent. The local economists name the depletion of labor productivity reserves in traditional branches (especially in plant breeding), and a weaker base for agriculture expansion than in the other two sectors as the cause of stagnation [SYV 2013: 147, 365; TCTK 2014; BCQ 2-2017: 11].

The downward trend in growth rates is typical of agriculture and the fishing industry, while forestry has been experiencing an upturn since 2006. This trend in agriculture, which provides 11% to 13% of GDP and nearly 75% of the primary sector gross output hampers the development not only of agriculture itself, but also of the entire Vietnamese economy, since it employs almost half of the country's workforce. In 2016, it produced just 0.72 percent more products than in the previous year (in 2014 the growth was 2.9 percent) and contributed a mere 0.09 percentage point to the overall economic growth. The fishing industry's output grew by 2.8 percent (against 6.8 percent in 2014), adding to the GDP growth 0.09 percentage point,

while forestry went up by 6.1 percent (against 7.1 percent in 2014), although its modest total size confined its contribution to GDP to 0.04 percentage points [BCQ 4-2016: 4; TCTK 2016].

The plant growing activities are displaying diminishing indices for cereals, apparently because the demand has been met and natural disasters are on the up. The annual take of cereals in 2016 was 48.8 million tons (against 50.2 million tons in 2014–2015), including some 43.6 (45) million tons of rice (a drop by 1.4 million tons), moreover, the yield level fell from 57.6 metric centners per hectare to 56 centers. Also, they produced 5.2 million tons of maize, on a par with the previous years [SYV 2013: 372, 373, 422, 432, 438, 455; TCTK 2014, 2016; THKTXH 2014].

Not only the rice yield has decreased, but so have the rice-planted areas, by 40,000 hectares in 2016, which land was used to grow other agricultural and aquatic crops, and for animal husbandry. Fruit harvesting continued to grow, including grapes, oranges, mangos, and other crops. The yield of technical crops also went up, tea up to one million tons, coffee hit the 1.5-ton mark, the pepper yield was 193,000 tons, and one million tons of the rubber tree juice, which was due to increase in the planting areas for these crops (up to 2.2 million hectares in 2016).

Animal husbandry and seafood growing, conversely, enhanced efficiency thanks to increased output and to ousting small family businesses. Dairy husbandry is growing fast (in 2016, the livestock population reached 283,000 heads), but beef animal husbandry has not been doing quite so well. In the same year, the slaughter weight of fresh-killed meat reached some 309,000 tons for beef, and 3.7 million tons for pork; there was 962,000 tons of poultry, and 9.45 billion eggs produced. The production of seafood amounted to 6.73 million tons, including 4.84 million tons of fish and 824,000 tons of shrimp, 2.5 to three percent more than in 2015. Aquatic farming yielded nearly 3.6 million tons of sea products, including 2.6 million tons of fish.

The upturn in forestry was due to growing demand for woodwork and timber industry products and reforestation; trees were planted in 2016 on 231,000 hectares, a slight increase against 2014, but less than in 2015; timber production neared 9.5 million cubic meters, three million more than in 2014 and 10 percent more than in 2015 [TCTK 2014, 2016].

Indices in the **secondary sector**, i.e. industry and capital construction, remain high boosting economic growth. Its dynamics keep at six to seven percent a year. The start of 2017 was causing some anxiety, when the rate fell to four percent. The industrial production increase (the IPI index) was

7.5 percent in 2016, noticeably less than the 2015 9.8 percent, but better than the 2013 index [BCQ 1-2017: 11–12].

The manufacturing and mechanical engineering act as the main economic motors accounting as they do for up to 90 percent of production expansion in the entire branch. The growth rates in this segment are the highest of all (11.09% in 2016, and 10.5% in 2017), as is its contribution to GDP growth (1.83 percent in 2016). At the same time, the mining has been stagnating; in 2016, it fell by four percent (having pushed down economic growth by 0.33 percentage points), which occurred for a fourth time since 2011. This industry accounts for 28.4% of the country's gross industrial production and thus slows down industry and economy as such [BCQ 4-2016: 11]. The reason for the downswing is the fall in world prices of energy carriers, which caused oil extraction in Vietnam to go down by 1.67 million tons (to 15.2 million tons) in 2016 alone while the decrease in coal production was by 1.26 million tons (to 39.6 million tons). Still, Vietnam remains a major exporter of fuel resources in its region. On the other hand, the expanding processing and finished products output, and diminishing dependence of industry on resource production is a trend reflecting the process of industrialization [BCQ 4-2016: 11; TCTK 2014; THKTXH, 2014].

The construction industry has resumed growth; the cost of work there had been growing steadily in 2016 as well, amounting to 10%, which increased GDP by 0.6 percentage points that year. The state sector's contribution to this growth decreased substantially, while that of foreign capital matched the contribution of private enterprises. Given the important role of capital construction in the rise of Vietnamese economy, the trend appears symptomatic.

The situation in industry is characterized by trends in marketable production movement. The production index, having peaked in early 2015, went on to fall until the start of 2016, but then resumed tentative growth. The finished products sales index changed in much the same way, and stabilized in mid-year, although weak external demand prevented it from getting noticeably higher, like in 2013. The inventory index, after the mid-2015 peak, gradually went down; the overstocking in the manufacturing industry increased. In the first quarter of 2017, the sales plummeted, and then so did the output, while the inventory decreased accordingly.

Despite the slowdown in growth rates, business activity in the production sector measured by the PMI index (Purchasing Managers' Index) has remained steady in the positive zone since October 2013, over the 50-point mark (55 points in May 2015, 54 at the end of 2016 and March 2017), having broken the negative trend of the three previous years. As SRV ex-

perts expected, this reflected a recovery in industrial activity [Nguyen Duc Thanh 2014: 15–17; HSBS 2013–2014]¹. Yet, the profits of enterprises fell owing to higher prices of primary goods and materials while the prices of finished products went down. It was hardly an accident that the General Statistics Office's survey of manufacturing industry enterprises revealed an obvious trend toward weakening business incentives. A mere third of the pollees said that the business environment in the first quarter of 2017 was better than in the fourth quarter of 2016, while one fourth admitted that it had deteriorated [BCQ 1-2017: 13–14].

The **tertiary sector** is displaying steady growth, having overcome a slow-down at the start of the period. At the same time, there is evidence of fluctuations in various industries. The bulk of the contribution to the development of the services sphere is made by retail trade (76 percent of its turnover). The hotel and catering business comes second, providing as it does some 12 percent. Closely linked to the latter is the tourism business which is expanding rapidly, as is the influx of foreign visitors, thanks to stimulating measures by the state; in 2016, the country received 10 million visitors, two million more (26%) than in 2014–2015. So far, the contribution of this sector does not exceed one percent. Post and telecommunications account for another 10.4 percent of the total turnover of consumer services [THKTXH 2014; TCTK 2016].

Retail trade and the cost of consumer services grew rather modestly, by some 10 to 11 percent a year (minus the inflation constituent, by 8 percent), indicating that the purchasing power of the people increased and the economy *per se* was on the rise. That is higher than the 2011–2012 level, but lower than the 2010 figures (of 14 percent) [SYV 2013: 517; TCTK 2014; THKTXH 2014]. The absolute turnover reached \$156 billion, or 72 percent of GDP. The smallish net increase in the services turnover, given the consumer price rises, and its modest share point to the limitations of domestic demand and in part reflect the glut in the market. Let us observe that public services are rendered chiefly at the expense of the state budget.

The Currency and Finance Sphere. This sector of economy continues to face serious risks and imbalances, and it is in particular need of restructuring, according to the estimates of the Communist Party of Vietnam [12th Congress 2016: 272].

¹ The PMI index is computed in Vietnam on the basis of inspecting 400 industrial enterprises, and its growth reflects only their positive estimate by the business milieu, but cannot serve an indicator of the general mood among businessmen in all economy branches.

The **state budget** revenues against 2013 have grown by 10%, including by 12% from tax collection, and by 17% from foreign trade. Revenues from oil exports fell more than any other kind, and so did their share (3 percent in 2017 instead of 12 percent in 2014), owing to the sharp drop in world prices. Similar developments caused a decrease in activity by small and medium-size business. In these circumstances, the government had to resort to mobilizing internal sources of income. In 2015–2017, their share in the budget revenues grew from 70 to 82 percent. Several taxes and duties were raised, including the environment tax (to 4 percent), the land utilization tax (from 5 to 8 percent), and also the national corporations' profit tax [BCQ 4-2016; TCTK 2016]. Nevertheless, the revenues cover only the current expenses, while on the whole expense items are growing apace.

The authorities are trying to cut the budget expenses, chiefly by cuts in capital spending. Its share fell from 29 percent in 2001–2010 to 20 percent in 2016. The current expenses have been reduced from 78% to 70% of this budget section since 2013, due to more strictly control on state consumption. The biggest rise is in spending on defense and security (accounts for 13 percent) and other special items, and also on education and economic objectives (over 8 percent). The factor there was the annual rise in minimum wages and allowances. So, to support capital construction they had to resort to more borrowing, which caused the national debt to increase¹. As a result, the budget deficit stays on a fairly high level, up to 6–7 percent of GDP (*see* Table 2) [BCQ 4-16: 20; BCT, 2014; SYV 2013: 161–162; TCTK 2014].

Table 2

Main economic development indices of Vietnam in 2010–2016

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP growth rates, %	6.42	6.24	5.25	5.42	5.98	6.68	6.21
Inflation according to CPI, %	11.75	18.58	9.21	6.04	4.1	4.2	4.7
Public investment, % of GDP	41.9	36.4	33.5	30.4	30.0	32.6	33.0
State budget deficit, % of GDP	5.60	4.90	4.80	5.15	5.30	7.1	5.6
Foreign trade balance, \$ bn	–12.6	–9.8	0.75	0.10	2.37	–3.56	2.31
Public debt, % of GDP	56.5	54.9	55.7	56.2	58.4	61.3	63.7

Source: BCT 2014; SYV 2013: 147; VEPR 33-2014: 7.

¹ Experts discuss Vietnam's financial security. <http://english.vov.vn/>, 07.26.2017.

The **debt problem** is getting worse, and this is a serious threat to the economy. An equivalent of 30% of the budget expenses is spent to pay back the old debts and new loans for loaning up (the authorized level is 25%). Expanding state loans are having an adverse effect on the capital market provoking inflation expectations and blocking credit rate reduction that is they freeze economic activity. As it has transpired, the Vietnamese authorities are building up debts even when they deal with soft loans. Under the ODA where the credit rates are typically no more than one percent a year, the overall debt grew 6.5 times from 2001 to 2015 [TCTK 2016].

The public debt is growing faster than does GDP; in 2013, the former was estimated at 95 billion dollars or 56.2% of GDP (against the 41.6% in 2006); in 2016 it was 63.7%, moreover, the government loans reached 52.6% of GDP (*see* Table 2). External debts, which in 2013 amounted to 39.5%, rose to 44.3% [Bộ tài chính 2015; BCT 2014; THKTXH 2014]. So, the total indebtedness of the country exceeded its GDP. The Finance Ministry says that these amounts are within the authorized limits, as the government is under direct obligation to repay the debt merely to the tune of 14.8 percent of GDP¹. But the external debt is largely concentrated in the hands of three major lenders, Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank that is the indebtedness is anything but negligible.

Public investment is still an economic development locomotive, but the annual growth rate there has fallen from between 11–15 percent to 7–9 percent. This caused a noticeable decrease in fixed capital investment, from 43% of GDP in the late 2000s to 31–33% in the period under examination (*see* Table 2). In this way, they managed to stop the overheating of the economy, reducing the waste involved in investment projects implementation, but the side effect was diminishing extensive growth dynamics.

The recent trend is faster growth of private investment, including foreign (by 10–13 percent p.a. in fixed prices), while the state investment slowed down (to 7 percent and less). Therefore, the share of the state sector in the overall investment structure fell from 50% in the mid-2000s to 38% in 2016. The contribution by the private and depending sectors for the first time exceeded that reaching 39 percent. Suggestively, the share of the foreign capital sector went up to 23 percent. That and state budget construction expenses gave a new impetus to economic growth.

Monetary Policies. But there are also positive changes in the currency and finance sphere. One of the chief factors of economic growth recovery

¹ Đã rõ ba chủ nợ lớn nhất của Việt Nam. <https://vn.sputniknews.com/vietnam/2017/05253378974-ba-chu-no-lon-cua-viet-nam/>, 25.06.2017.

and stability was a serious drop in **inflation**. International experts acknowledged that as the most important achievement of the SRV government. Commodity and services prices rose slower in 2013–2017 than during the global crisis and comparably to the 2005–2007 boom period, although GDP growth rates also proved noticeably lower. Headline inflation rate hit the 13-year low, of 4.1 percent in 2014 and 2017 (in 2016 it was 4.74 percent), which was below the 2009 and 2013 minimum. Meanwhile, core inflation rate remained around 1.7–1.9% (yoy). Hence, the discrepancy between headline and core inflation rate was enlarged (*see* color drawing 8) [BCQ 4-16: 13–14; BCQ 2-17: 15; SYV 2013: 575; TCTK 2014; VEPR 33-2014: 6; THKTXH 2014]¹.

One of the main reasons was the reduction of domestic prices of several major goods and services in the wake of a similar global trend. Thus, the cost of public services (water, gas, petrol, electricity) fell reducing expenses for transport and building materials. Communication services likewise grew slightly cheaper. Previously, inflation was pushed up nearly two-thirds by rising public service prices and one-fourth by the commodity price increase. The prices of the former, especially in health service, including medication, and in education were maintained by the government. The price situation in the area of foodstuffs, which accounts for 60 percent of the Vietnamese consumer basket, remained stable thanks to their abundance. The general price stability is a positive trend in the economy, which results in lower production costs and that of commercial products, invigorates consumption and renders easier the monetary policy. This policy by and large helps reduce inflation.

All in all, the most sensitive phenomenon has been placed under control. Yet slack demand on the domestic consumer market in 2013–2015 perked up, which entails higher inflation. Besides, the government has to make an upward adjustment of prices for social services like healthcare, education, transport, and electric power supply. In 2016, health services cost 78 percent more, which added 2.7 percentage points to the consumer price index [TCKT 2016].

The result was a new trend, a growing gap between general and basic inflation, the latter growing three times slower² (in consumer basket prices).

¹ VNA. <http://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-economy-grows-573-pct-in-first-half/114079.vnp>, 29.06.2017.

² Basic inflation went down, from 1.88 percent (year on year calculation) in January 2017 to 1.51 percent and 1.6 percent in February and March, respectively, and has been keeping at the level of 1.7 percent to 1.9 percent for over two years [BCQ 1-2017: 15–16].

Keeping general inflation below four percent will be a difficult task as demand for consumer goods is growing, prices of principal commodities in the world are recovering, and those of social services in the country have to be raised further.

The **monetary stock** in circulation grew by 14–18 percent a year that is slower than it did in the previous period. In this way, a small surplus of liquidity in the financial system was maintained, and the currency exchange rate was kept under pressure [Nguyen Duc Thanh 2014: 26–27; VEPR 33-2014: 7; THKTXH, 2014]. Since 2012, the country has not known any liquidity deficit, not excepting small banks. The key element of the capital market, the monetary stock, has stabilized.

The economy was increasingly **credited**, albeit on a limited scale; in 2013–2014, the increase was by 12–14%; in 2016–2017, by 17–19%. That helped invigorate economic processes after a steady decrease of credit expansion rates since 2008. The desired effect was achieved thanks to stable credit rates (the interbank one stayed in the two to five percent interval), and easier access to circulating assets for companies and physical entities. Short-term deposit and credit rates in 2016 were six to seven percent; medium- and long-term loans were advanced at 9–11 percent a year. Some 18% more funds were attracted to deposits that year (against the 20% increase in 2013) [TCTK, 2014, 2016]. Restrained crediting improved the credit amount to deposit ratio. With the basic rate remaining virtually unchanged since 2010 the discount rate in 2012–2016 shrank considerably.

These and other measures were instrumental in the financial recovery. In 2017, according to statistical data, bank and nonbank assets in the financial sphere accounted for 72%; bonds, for eight percent; insurance operations, for about one percent, and securities, for 19%. The whole of the stock market was estimated at 250% of GDP, it's worth being something like one trillion dollars, which is a lot less than in the developed East Asia economies. Nor is the capital adequacy ratio (CAR) index of Vietnamese commercial banks reliable enough; its ratio to the amount of risks (assets) does not exceed 11 percent while the number of granted loans is growing at a fast rate¹.

The **currency exchange rate** remained reasonably stable; the Vietnamese dong was annually devalued by one percent to two percent. A lower exchange rate against the currencies of Vietnam's main trading partners provided impetus for exports. According to local economists, should the dong continue to devalue at this rate, the Vietnamese currency will remain stable [Nguyen Duc Thanh, 2014: 30–31; VEPR 33-2014: 7]. Excessive strength-

¹ Experts discuss Vietnam's financial security, <http://english.vov.vn/>, 26.07.2017.

ening would pressurize domestic production, especially businessmen who competed with imported commodities.

The Vietnamese authorities managed to control the exchange rate ceiling in the open market keeping the median interbank rate deviations against stock exchange selling prices within the ± 0.6 percent interval during a session. In order to lessen the pressure on the exchange rate, the State Bank of Vietnam removed from circulation monetary (dong) stock and pumped in currency from the reserve fund, introducing a new regime of forming the dong exchange rate based on eight currencies. That reduced its dependence on the US dollar fluctuations. Thus, the role of the free market in stabilizing the exchange rate was confirmed [BCQ 4-16: 18–19; TCTK 2016].

Also, they established the deposit interest rates difference in dollars and dongs, which made the latter's real value in the American currency negative. The result was the public and businessmen converting foreign currency into dongs on a large scale, which helped the State Bank of Vietnam replenish its currency reserves. Thus, was made an important step toward solving the problem of economy independence, i.e. dedollarization.

Thanks to the balance of payments surplus, the State Bank of Vietnam continued to purchase foreign currency. The result was an increase in the country's **currency reserves** from 25.5 billion dollars to 41 billion dollars in 2013–2016 reaching an all-time high. But the imports were covered at the level of 2–2.5 month's volume, which rendered more difficult the problem of paying external debts. In this respect, Vietnam lags behind its Southeast Asia neighbors that have an open stock market and vast savings (US\$160 billion in the case of Thailand, US\$140 billion in Malaysia, and US\$100 billion in Indonesia) [BCQ 4-2016: 19; IMF: 03.02.2014; BCT 2014]. But this amount helped contain the growth of bank rates in Vietnam encouraging economic development. It also improved the ability to respond to unexpected fluctuations in the world market, which caused financial instability, and consolidated the position of the dong against the US dollar, reducing external loan spending (thanks to a higher sovereign credit rating).

Contradictory processes occurred on the **gold market**. The price of gold followed the world trend and was higher than usual. In 2013, it dropped to \$1,370 per Troy ounce (31 g), the lowest level in the previous three years, and went on to decrease by 4–6 percent a year. This was due to such factors as low inflation, a ban on lending on gold collateral, and an improving macroeconomic climate, all of which slowed down the activity of gold accumulation operations. Nevertheless, the demand remained high, and commercial banks could not meet it adequately. According to experts, the need in the precious metal in 2013 was some 93 tons. Therefore, by the end of the

period, as the world price of gold went up, its price in Vietnam started to grow again, with an upward deviation of 7–8 percent. In 2016, it grew by 11.5 percent reaching \$1,400 per ounce in the first quarter of 2017 [Nguyen Duc Thanh 2014: 31–32; BCQ 1-2017: 23].

Foreign Economic Relations as a Development Factor. With an annual five to ten percent increases in the inflow of **foreign direct investment (FDI)** to Vietnam the volume of both registered and invested funds grew. This points to an investment environment profitable to foreign business and the latter's positive assessment of the economic situation in the country. The registered FDI increased from \$21.9 billion in 2014 to \$24.4 billion in 2016, while the implemented kind did from \$12.5 billion to \$15.8 billion (*see* color drawing 9). Despite the 2016 recession owing to the failed attempt at creating the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), it is expected that by the end of 2017 the growth will have amounted to \$28 billion should enough projects be executed; in the first half of 2017 1,183 projects worth \$11.84 billion were already registered (*see* color drawing 9) [BCQ 4-2016, 1-2017].

Moreover, the volume of newly registered FDI added to previous projects grew by nearly 55 percent against the previous year and reached \$19.22 billion. More than half of it went to industrial production, above all mechanical engineering (microelectronics included) and to other manufacturing industries; the next most popular area was still realty and construction¹. Despite so healthy a growth, the contribution of FDI to GDP predictably shrank (owing to its relative recession in the wake of the world crisis) from 12.7% to 7.5% in 2008–2016, in the structure of public investment, from 30.4% to 23%. At the same time, fund implementation improved from 50% to 65% [SYV 2015: 233].

Investor number one is still South Korea, which gets increasingly ahead of others accounting as it does for 36.3 percent. In 2016, it registered new projects worth \$5.5 billion, raising the total to 45.2 billion. The second biggest investor, for the first time, was China which previously had been at the end of the first dozen. Together with Hong Kong, its contribution reached 15.6% (2.4 billion); China is followed by Singapore with 10.5 percent (1.6 billion), Japan with 5.7 percent (0.9 billion), and Taiwan with 5.4 percent (0.8 billion). Suggestively, the list is dominated by countries of the Chinese areal.

¹ Vietnam expects foreign investment to reach a record US\$ 16 billion this year. <http://asia-vietnam.ru/business-category/vietnam-ozhidaet-cto-v-etom-godu-inostrannye-investitsii-dostignut-rekordnyh-16-mlrd-usd/>, 4.08.2017.

Vietnam continues to get financial aid and low-interest credits under the ODA (Official Development Assistance) Program, although it left the category of underdeveloped countries ten years ago. Vietnam was annually granted 5–5.5 billion dollars, which is 2.5 percent of its GDP (the better half of which, up to 70%, gets invested); in 2016, the sum was about 3.7 billion [TCTK 2016].

One more important channel for funds accumulation from abroad is currency remittances from private persons, emigrants and guest workers, whose numbers and desire to support their families at home are second to none among ASEAN countries, barring the Philippines. The inflow of capital along this channel is not only on the increase, but is actually competing with official programs. In 2015–2016, it reached 14 billion to 16 billion dollars p.a. [SYV 2013: 145, 177; TCTK 2014; IVEPR 33-2014: 7; BCT 2014, 2016; THKTXH 2014].

Vietnam's foreign trade developed positively; its turnover continued to increase rapidly. Commodity exports grew from \$132 billion in 2013 to \$176 billion in 2016. Imports in the same period increased from \$132 billion to \$173.7 billion. Imports growth rate surpassed exports one; it was nearly halved, especially of exports owing to falling world prices and the unfavorable situation in the commodity markets. Though the first half of 2017 witnessed significant growth of merchandise trade. Both exports and imports recorded highest growth rates in the past five years of about 19–27 percent (*see* color drawing 10) [SYV 2015: 552, 561; TCTK 2014, 2016; Thống kê Hải quan 2015]. Within six months of 2017, exports reached \$97.8 billion, and imports \$100.5 billion, which promises a doubling of foreign trade turnover compared to 2012 level. This is a unique achievement, extra-valuable in conditions of slumping trading activity after the world crisis [BCQ 2-2017: 16].

The commodity trade surplus grew during this period roughly from \$2 billion to \$3 billion. Since 2012, the trend has assumed a steady nature, which preserved the favorable current balance payment and international clearing balance on the whole. This foreign trade balance has been formed thanks to profitable trade, above all with the United States (the 2016 surplus was \$29 billion, 15% more than in 2015), and the EU (\$23 billion, a 12.3% increase against 2015). The main source of the deficit was China (\$28 billion in 2016), but the level is going down (a 15% slide by 2015). The imbalance in trade with South Korea is getting worse (\$20.2 billion, 8 percent more than in 2015), and the same is true for ASEAN countries (\$6 billion, a 12% increase). In the first half of 2016 and 2017, the trade deficit totaled \$2.7 billion [TCTK 2016; BCQ 2-2017: 16]. Even so, the previous year's

results were positive. The question is whether this achievement can be reproduced in 2017 or the stimulus ratio has changed.

A typical feature of Vietnam's *export activity* has been a steadily growing role of FDI sector, which is due to its growing size while the state sector is developing at nearly half this rate. Whereas at the start of the current period FDI sector accounted for some 65 percent of export supplies, in 2017 the share surpassed 72% compared to 33% in 2009. Slightly less pronounced was their domination in Vietnam's import purchases during this period, from 57% to 59%. Foreign companies are, therefore, already accounting for over two-thirds of Vietnam's foreign trade turnover. These indicators reveal the increasing dependence of Vietnamese economy on the FDI sector.

Besides, while enterprises with foreign capital are constantly building up the surplus in foreign trade operations, domestic companies are doing the opposite. In 2014–2016, the foreign trade balance of the former grew from \$17-plus to \$24 billion, given crude oil exports, while the latter showed an increase from minus \$15 billion to \$21 billion [TCTK 2016; BCQ 4-2016]. The fact that foreign firms are importing large amounts of component parts and raw materials points to a serious shortage not only of basic materials in Vietnam, but also of intermediate products and a low level of production localization. This too suggests that foreign enterprises have little relation to the national ones, and that technology transfer is held back. Local experts predict a considerable threat to the economy should foreign companies quit the country or should ties with them slacken.

The change in *export* trends in commodity groups has been graphically revealed under the pressure of the global crisis. Exports of manufacturing industry products were increasing rapidly, those of unprocessed materials, fuel, agricultural, forestry, and fishery products grew at a slower rate, and had shrunk by the end of the period. Thus in 2016, supplies of smartphones and their components to the outer market went up by 14%, to \$35 billion (by 28% in 2015), other electronic items increased by 18%, machinery, equipment, and spare parts by 28%, footwear by eight percent, and clothes by four percent. Oil exports fell by almost 37%, rice supplies by 22%, export of cassava and related products by 24% [TCTK 2016].

These changes are due to the fact that since 2013 the amounts of purchases have been reduced and the price of coal, crude oil, rice, coffee, seafood, and other key products of Vietnam have been going down. Owing to the increasing international competition, local enterprises took to looking for new business lines and sales outlets. In some areas the situation has improved, in particular there has been a tangible increase in the volume and

cost of coffee exports (by 30%), black pepper and vegetables (by 35% to 37%), and seafood [THKTXH 2014; TCTK 2016].

The export composition underwent major qualitative shifts, although at the end of the period these slowed down. The share of mechanical engineering items and mining industry reached 45.4% thanks to rapid growth, with electronic devices alone increasing by 19% (against a mere 8 percent in 2008), and light industry products by 40.4%. Agricultural produce and forestry output diminished and accounted for 10.3%, while seafood fell to 4 percent [SYV 2013: 530, 534; TCTK 2014; Mazyrin 2013: 258–259; Thống kê Hải quan 2015; THKTXH 2016]. That pointed to export refinement and its improving technological standards.

The main sales market for Vietnamese goods is still the United States, which purchased \$38 billion worth of them in 2016 (an increase of 14%). Among the major partners are also the EU that imported \$34 billion worth of products (up 10%), Japan, with \$15 billion worth of imports (3 percent growth), and ASEAN countries with \$17.4 billion (a 5 percent drop followed by a precipitous rise in the first quarter of 2017). Thanks to the rapid expansion of purchases (\$22 billion worth, which is 26% higher, and a 43% increase in the first quarter of 2017) China improved its position and so did Republic of Korea (\$11.5 billion and a 29% increase) [TCTK, 2016].

Vietnamese *imports* consist chiefly of investment goods (91%). The share of machinery, equipment, instruments, and spare parts for them in this group had been growing, and reached 41.3 percent in 2016, while that of primary goods, raw materials, and fuel shrank to 49.7 percent. The position of consumer goods has not changed (accounting as they do for some nine percent of the imports total), and their import is administratively restricted. This means an actively developing industry and import substitution in the country, and an efficient import regulation too.

In 2013–2016, various product types changed the purchasing tempo and vector. In 2016, the highest was import of electronic components, computers (a 20% increase), plastic articles (17% up), and chemical products (11%), while steel and other metals displayed a downward trend (7–13% decrease), and so did plastics (a drop by 6 percent). Last year, the growth of imports for the footwear and apparel industry, machinery, equipment, and components slowed down dramatically. The import of finished automobiles shrank (by 22%), and so did that of other transportation means and spare parts for them (by 36%), petroleum products (by 12%), timber and wood articles (by 16%), fertilizers (by 22%) [THKTXH 2014; TCTK 2014, 2016].

Vietnam's number one supplier way ahead of all others is China; Vietnam purchased there \$50 billion worth of commodities in 2016, almost on

a par with the 2015 figure. Coming second is the Republic of Korea (\$32 billion, 15% up), and there is a trend toward replacing Chinese commodities with Korean ones, which reduced China's share from 29% to 26%, while that of South Korea went up from 18% to 20%. The position of the United States is strengthening fast (\$9 billion, a 12% increase) although this is a lot less than in the case of Japan (\$15 billion, a four percent increase), and the EU (\$11 billion, up seven percent). Supplies from ASEAN countries are increasing slowly, and in 2016 the level actually went down a little (to \$24 billion) [TCTK 2016].

Services export during this period grew inexorably at an even faster rate reaching \$12.3 billion worth in 2016. The chief source of income is tourism (67% of all revenues); its dynamic outpaces any other sector. Ten million foreign tourists (a 26% increase) visited the country. Transportation services brought in \$2.4 billion, coming second (20%). *Services import* meanwhile increased at a pace, to \$17.7 billion in 2016, including a maximum spending of \$8.9 billion on transport and insurance services (51%). Expenses on foreign tourism grew likewise to \$4.5 billion, and its share reached 25% in services imports confirming the rapid improvement in the well-being of the Vietnamese [THKTXH 2014; TCTK 2014, 2016].

Thus, the services trade developed a deficit that has been tending to increase over the last few years. In 2016, it rose to \$5.4 billion having consumed over 44% of services export profits. The imbalance is due mainly to the foreign trade cargo carriage by foreign firms. Obviously, the opening up of services market practiced by Vietnam under WTO obligations and other free trade agreements is causing complicated consequences and is disadvantageous for the country.

On the whole, commodity and services exports account for almost 92 percent of Vietnam's GDP, while imports do for 89 percent. The 180% total reflects an extremely high degree of openness in Vietnamese economy, which outpaces all other partner countries [ASEAN 2016], and let us face it, is increasingly harmful for it also points to profound dependence on external markets.

Results Analysis. Analysis of the situation in Vietnamese economy in 2013—2017 revealed its obvious achievements, proving that it is on the rise. The SRV remains one of the fastest growing and promising emerging markets globally. The country managed to overcome recession and other aftereffects of the world financial crisis largely thanks to the state fulfilling its role of market regulator. The Vietnamese government took tough measures to rein in inflation, stabilize the macroeconomic situation, attract investment, and develop foreign trade.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of economic development and market reforms in Vietnam are variously assessed by explorers of the authorities' Keynesian policies and supporters of the liberal theory. The latter describe the situation as attempts to stop the slowdown at all costs advancing charges of violating market laws. They appeal for further liberalization of the economy as part of the second phase of renovation, in which they are backed by international institutions and the donor community. The former is increasingly hesitant.

However, practice does not confirm the need of greater openness and more radical reforms. Local experts are beginning to admit that the growth of Vietnam's GDP is increasingly dependent by the day on the output of the FDI sector, especially major transnationals, while the domestic manufacturing sector is withering as the country integrates ever deeper into global economy. The national industry and other branches are losing competition to foreign players.

So, to ensure long-term development prospects for Vietnam, it has to review growth sources, master the new innovative growth model more quickly and improve the competitiveness of its economy. This cannot be achieved without intensifying the production process, improving the qualitative characteristics of labor, the business environment, and state regulation. The Vietnamese leadership is up against a dilemma: how to achieve a more pronounced market nature of the economy and continue reform in the state sector without undermining the basis of the country's socialist orientation.

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Evgenia AKSENOVA

The formation of the legal field for foreign companies' activities in Vietnam¹

Introduction

The reliance on external sources of financing is an important aspect of the national development strategy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). Since the growth of the welfare of the population and the transition of Vietnam to the category of middle-income countries [Vietnam: Achieving Success: 12.04.2013] the possibility of obtaining gratuitous assistance from international donor organizations has reduced. A special role in the development of the country begins to play a partnership with private corporate players. In this situation, the government of the SRV is engaged in the formation of the clear legislative framework, institutions that would ensure the attractiveness of Vietnam's investment climate.

The **topicality** of the study is related to several factors. Firstly, 10 years have passed since the Vietnam's entry into the WTO, and it is therefore necessary to assess how serious progress in the legal aspect of foreign investment regulation have been achieved. Secondly, in 2015, a few key laws came into effect, which greatly simplified and liberalized the activities of foreign investors in the country. The analysis of these steps will allow us to understand what impact they can have on the further modernization of the country, how they correspond to its current level of development.

The growth of the interaction with foreign companies, further adherence to the path of international integration raises the question of whether

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Vietnam will be able to effectively use significant amounts of attracted investments and build mutually beneficial relations with foreign investors. To answer it, it is necessary to understand at what level of legal and institutional development Vietnam is today, whether the legal framework meets the necessary conditions, whether it can become one of the factors of an attractive investment climate.

Research procedure. Within the framework of the research the survey was carried out in the following directions. There was conducted an analysis of the key policy objectives (and their change) of Vietnam in the formation of the legal framework for the activities of foreign companies, their compliance with national development goals, comparison of experts' positions on this issue. The author gives the analysis of the last steps in the modernization of the regulatory framework relating to the activities of foreign business in the country, as well as makes a brief review of the key provisions of the updated Investment and Enterprise Laws. With the use of international ratings, the comparison of changes in assessments of the real implementation of the legal framework in Vietnam over a period of 10 years is made. Based on this comprehensive analysis, the author makes conclusions on the legal environment's compliance with national development strategies.

Research methodology. The methodological basis of the research are the studies of Russian and foreign economists in the field of investment theories. To achieve the goal of comprehensive consideration of the legal framework for the activities of foreign companies in Vietnam, such general scientific methods as analytical and synthetic, comparative, deductive and inductive, system-structural methods were used. In the framework of the economic theory, the author used the institutional method, relied on a systematic approach.

The theoretical basis of the research. The author makes the research of the progress and evolution of the development of the legal framework of Vietnam with the use of various international ratings. The analysis of Vietnam's strategy on attracting investment is based on the overview of the normative program documents of the government of Vietnam and the consideration of experts' assessments in this field. The overview of changes in the legislation relating to the activities of foreign companies in Vietnam is conducted on the basis of new laws and regulations of Vietnam in this field.

During the research, the author relies on previously published studies of this topic. The theme of the development of the legal framework of Vietnam was considered in the works of Mai Van Thang, who noted that a large-scale practice of the "foreign law reception... led to a mismatch of various

branches of law in Vietnam” [Mai Van Thang 2010]. Kenichi Ohno and Le Ha Thanh draw attention to the general incompleteness of the legal framework of Vietnam and to the need for its further improvement [Ohno 2014].

It should be noted that, in general, this topic has rarely been a separate subject of study by Russian and foreign researchers, it is usually viewed from the perspective of Vietnam's general investment policy. An example is the work of Bui Anh Tuan [Bui Anh Tuan 2011: 296]. Some aspects of the modernization of the legal environment of Vietnam have been studied in the works of V.M. Mazyrin [Mazyrin 2014].

The theoretical basis of the research are the studies of the economists in the field of foreign direct investment theories (S. Hymer, C. Kindlberger, P. Krugman, etc.), in particular the theory of internationalization and FDI (R. Bakkley, M. Casson), the eclectic paradigm (J. Dunning), the theory of FDI and the competitive advantages of the nation (M. Porter), works devoted to the impact of FDI on the economic development of the host country (M. Todaro, Yu. Hayami, P. Romer, etc.). In addition, the author relies on the concept of investment attractiveness and the investment climate on the basis of the methods proposed by international organizations, incl. the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, Japan's Foreign Trade Organization and others.

The main part of research

The state of the legal framework for the activities of foreign companies. Vietnam's transition to the renewal policy (“Doi moi”) in 1986, which is relatively recent in historical retrospect, marked the beginning of the formation of market institutions in the country. The report of the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam in 2013 notes that Vietnam has made progress in establishing forms and regimes of property, including the creation of the institution of the private property; equitization of state enterprises; reduction of administrative interference of the state in economic issues; development of such key institutions of the market economy as technology, real estate, labor, and securities markets; in the formation of a modern banking system, a mechanism for protecting the environment, etc. [Institutional improvement: 03.05.2013].

The assessment of the legal environment of the country based on its effectiveness is possible with the help of numerous international ratings, which are usually compiled in accordance with the real legislative implementation. One such rating that ranks the countries by business conditions

(“Ease of doing business”) reflects the subjective opinion of national and foreign entrepreneurs on the business climate of the country. In 2015, Vietnam was at 78th place (the best figure for 10 years), significantly rising from 99th place in 2014. The change in a number of evaluation criteria makes it incorrect to compare Vietnam's business environment rating in 2005 and 2015, but it is possible to compare a number of separate indicators (Table 1). The number of days for starting a business (from 56 to 34) and for registering property (from 78 to 57), the complexity of settlement of economic disputes (from 445 days and 41 procedures to 400 and 36, respectively) have decreased through the years. [Ease of Doing Business: 22.11.2015]

Table 1

**Change in the legal environment of Vietnam based on the rating criterion
for the conditions of doing business in 2005 and 2015**

Criterion	2005	2015
Starting a business (number of procedures)	11	10
Starting a business (number of days)	56	34
The cost of starting a business (% of income per capita)	15	5.3
Registering property (number of procedures)	5	4
Registering property (number of days)	78	57
Cost of resolving insolvency (% of estate)	18	14.5
Resolving insolvency (number of years)	5.5	5
Enforcing contracts (number of days)	445	400

Source: [Ease of Doing Business in Vietnam: 22.11.2015].

According to the rating on business conditions, companies in Vietnam face the greatest difficulties when starting a business, while the lowest indicator relative to other countries is recorded in the category of “payment of taxes” (Table 2). This indicator includes the amount of tax that an average company pays, and the administrative burden of tax payment: how many hours are spent preparing the necessary documents, filing a tax return, etc. For example, if the number of hours a company spends on paying taxes in Vietnam is 872 hours / year, in OECD countries — 175.4 hours / year, in East Asia — 204.3 hours / year.

Paradoxically, it was in the field of taxation and business registration that Vietnam pursued a particularly active policy to improve the business climate, which in reality failed to have a positive impact on its position in the rating. In 2010, the corporate tax rate and the value-added tax rate were reduced, and the income tax on income from the transfer of land use rights was eliminated. In 2011 and in 2015, repeated corporate tax reductions were made. Also, Vietnam pursued a policy to simplify the procedure for opening a business. For example, in 2011, a single window system was launched, which combined the acquisition of a business license with the receipt of a tax license.

Table 2

The place of Vietnam in the rating of “Ease of Doing Business” in 2014 and 2015

	2014	2015
Rating	99	78
Starting a business	109	125
Dealing with construction permits	29	22
Getting electricity	156	135
Registring property	51	33
Getting credit	42	36
Protecting minority investors	157	117
Paying taxes	149	173
Trading across borders	65	75
Enforcing contracts	46	47
Resolving insolvency	149	104

Source: [Ease of Doing Business: 22.11.2015].

Corruption, of course, is a deterrent for foreign companies when deciding to enter the country's market. In the international rating of perception of corruption published by INGO Transparency International, in 2014, Vietnam ranked 119th out of 175 countries (31 points out of 100) [Corruption by country 2015]. In 2004 Vietnam was on 102nd place out of 146 countries (2.6 points out of 10). In the international rating of the World Justice Pro-

ject, Vietnam ranks 83 out of 97 countries on the criterion of regulatory enforcement, according to the openness rating of the government — 91st out of 97 countries¹.

According to the basic criterion of institutional maturity in the international competitiveness rating maintained by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Vietnam has the lowest indicator relative to all other criterion — 3.5 (Table 3). The only exception is the index on the criterion of innovation — 3.1, which reflects the country's readiness to move on to the innovative way of development². In 2005, Vietnam ranked 77th out of 125 countries in the overall ranking of competitiveness, in 2014 — 68th out of 144 countries, but this change was not due to the improvement of the quality of the legal environment of the country, i.e. the basic criterion. To a greater extent it was caused due to the improvement of the the macroeconomic situation, stabilization of the labor market and increasing domestic consumption.

The share of the implemented investment from the total registered volume is an indicator of the effectiveness of the business environment. For example, in Malaysia, the actual implementation of projects in the industrial sector in 2008—2013 was 75.7%. In Vietnam, this indicator varies from 16% in 2008 to 70% in 2015 [FDI projects: 22.11.2015]. In addition to the deterioration of the external environment, such a gap can also be caused by country's risks: unfavorable state policies, business disputes, difficulties in recruiting and marketing, unreliable suppliers or even cultural differences [Ohno 2014].

According to a survey conducted by the Japanese Foreign Trade Organization (JETRO) in January 2013 on Japanese firms operating abroad, the main business risks in Vietnam are unpredictable changes in legislation and the absence of supporting industries. Japanese investors complained about corruption, lack of political transparency, unclear customs procedures, lack of information for investors and institutions for their support.

These ratings are subjective in nature, the difference in estimation and counting methods reduces their representativeness. For example, some estimates of the World Economic Forum on the main business problems in Vietnam contradict the rating the Ease of doing business. The WEF rating

¹ The rating of the regulatory legal application includes, for example, such criterion as the effectiveness of the application of state regulation measures, the conduct of administrative procedures without unnecessary delays & the quality of administrative proceedings.

² The international competitiveness rating considers the factors of the institutional maturity of the business environment in Vietnam. The WEF identifies 12 criteria of competitiveness, which are ranged from basic to more complex.

Table 3

**Vietnam in the ranking of international competitiveness
by the criterion of institutional maturity in 2014**

Indicator	Rank (out of 144)
Overall Competitiveness Rating	68
Rating — Institutional maturity	92
Property rights	101
Intellectual property protection	105
Diversion of public funds	76
Public trust in politicians	49
Irregular payments and bribes	109
Judicial independence	88
Favoritism in decisions of government officials	74
Wastefulness of government spending	83
Burden of government regulation	101
Efficiency of legal framework in settling disputes	89
Efficiency of legal framework in challenging regs	80
Transparency of government policymaking	116
Business costs of crime and violence	64
Organized crime	78
Reliability of police services	99
Ethical behavior of firms	109
Strength of auditing and reporting standards	132
Efficacy of corporate boards	128
Protection of minority shareholders' interests	122
Strength of investor protection	123

Source: [The Global Competitiveness Report: 22.11.2015].

alleges that the most serious problem in Vietnam for business is access to financial resources, while in the rating on Ease of doing business on this criterion, Vietnam ranks 36th in the world — one of the best indicators. However, as a whole, the examined data paints the picture of the general immaturity of the legal field in Vietnam, numerous barriers, especially when it comes to the implementation of existing legal norms.

The dilemma of choosing the path. The strategy of reliance on FDI. In the first 20 years after the beginning of the “doi moi” policy, the government of Vietnam, while modernizing the legal framework of the country with the aim of attracting investments, focused on obligations to international organizations, primarily, to the WTO. These steps were a response to changing circumstances, rather than measures to implement long-term goals of increasing competitiveness. A lot of effort has been made to improve the legal environment and infrastructure to absorb as much FDI as possible, and that is why the main benchmarks were the annual quantitative indicators for FDI inflows.

The policy of Vietnam to attract investment has undergone a certain evolution. For example, within its framework, industrial zones were favored over the export zones, and administrative reform stimulated the transfer of powers to license a part of investment projects to local authorities [Vo Thanh Tri 2012]. Year 2008 became an important one: the volume of registered investments into the economy amounted to 71.7 billion US dollars [FDI projects: 22.11.2015], but only 16% of them were implemented. In the following years, the volume of registered investments significantly decreased, which was quite a concern for the country's leadership. Moreover, as a negative aspect of FDI inflows, the following phenomena have been observed: tax evasion and transfer pricing as well as reliance of foreign companies on borrowed capital. For example, according to the Tax Department of Ho Chi Minh City, 50% of enterprises with foreign capital in the city reported losses for 4 consecutive years. Claims for losses allowed companies to derive profits through the transfer pricing mechanism to parent companies [Taxman: 04.03.2012].

Thus, when global financial crisis was over, the Vietnamese leadership faced a dilemma: how to stimulate the flow of investments into the economy, to restore investor confidence and at the same time to reduce the obvious negative aspects of the influence of foreign companies on the economy of Vietnam. Under these conditions, Government Directive No. 1617 — dated 19.09.2011 — with a goal to strengthen the implementation and reorganization of FDI management [Directive No.1617: 28.09.2011] was issued along with Government Decree No. 1601 dated 20.10.2012 on the approval

of a plan for improving the management of investment capital in Viet Nam, including investment initiatives [Decision No.1601: 22.11.2015]. The directive, especially its requirement to limit investments in the non-production sector, was cautiously met by consultants of international companies lobbying their interests. For example, Vietnam was predicted to increase the trade deficit [The impacts of investment: 22.11.2015]; it was noted that the restriction on trade could reduce the desire of TNCs to invest in the economy of Vietnam, because while being producers, they are interested in organizing their own distribution networks in the developing country.

Among Vietnamese economists there was a certain split of opinions. Hoang Xoan Hoa, a member of the Economic Commission of the Vietnam Communist Party's Central Committee [Time to amend: 27.03.2014], proposed to pursue a policy of the earlier opening of a number of industries for foreign companies (health, education, telecommunications, transport and aviation) rather than determined by the WTO Agreement. He noted that the policy of attraction to Vietnam TNCs from the list of 500 largest TNCs of the United States and Europe should be carried out simultaneously with measures to accelerate bilateral negotiations with leading partner countries. Duc An Dang, using the method of instrumental variables, showed that the flow of FDI affects the increase in the institutional maturity of provinces, the formation of institutions of a new economic structure, and the acceleration of institutional transformations, with the greatest impact on the northern provinces of Vietnam [Gubaidullina 2006; Duc Anh Dang 2013].

On the other hand, Nguyen Dinh Cung, the director of the Central Institute of Economic Management of Vietnam, calls for determining what impact — positive or negative — FDI has on Vietnam's economy, indicating that FDI efficiency remains low. He believes that it is necessary to pay attention to the irrational use of domestic resources of the country [Vốn FDI: 29.07.2015]. The researcher of the Institute for Social and Economic Development of Hanoi, Nguyen Minh Phong, notes that most foreign investors are attracted by the exploitation of cheap labor force and natural resources. TNCs are driven by the desire to use backward technologies that are harmful to the environment of Vietnam [Những “điểm nhấn”: 01.12.2015].

Then, there's also a point of view that Vietnam's investment policy encourages the activities of foreign investors to the detriment of local producers. It also points to the fact that the strategy of the excessive reliance on foreign investment contains certain risks. For example, professor of economics at the University of Waseda, Tran Van Tho, noted that the inflow of FDI into Vietnam without serious institutional reforms may strengthen the

duality of the economy, increase its structural imbalances, meaning that Vietnam will fall into the middle-income trap [Will Vietnam's: 16.10.2014]. The concern, in his opinion, is the fact that foreign companies with predominantly 100% ownership limit vertical and horizontal ties with Vietnamese companies, prefer to use imported materials.

The results of the rethinking of investment policy and the analysis of the reasons that caused the overheating of the economy were presented in Vietnam in 2011 at the 11th CPV Congress, which put forward a national development strategy until 2020 and set new goals in international economic policy. Meanwhile, despite the fact that attracting investments is an integral part of this strategy, experts note that Vietnam still lacks a single clear program to stimulate investment. On the one hand, it contains measures to liberalize the field of activity of foreign companies in Vietnam, and on the other, introduces a more stringent reporting system for the implementation of projects with FDI to reduce risks from their presence in the economy.

Direction for liberalization. The result of the discussion on the most effective policy for attracting FDI to Vietnam was the adoption of a number of new key documents. One of the most important provisions of the new course was the adoption on November 26, 2014 of the new Investment Law and the Enterprise Law, which entered into force on July 1, 2015 and significantly liberalized the activities of foreign companies in Vietnam.

An important change in the Law on Investments was the reformation of the concept of “foreign investor”. Under the new law, companies are considered foreign only if they were established outside of Vietnam, or companies in which foreigners own 51% or more of the capital. Thus, most enterprises with foreign ownership receive the right to use the regime of a national investor, that is, to operate in an equal legal field with Vietnamese companies. Under the new system, a foreign investor is able to create a holding of local companies and implement management over them even in those industries that had previously been closed to foreign companies.

In addition, there's several other significant changes: first of all, the new investment law narrows the list of prohibited sectors for the participation of foreign investors from 51 to 6. The number of sectors for which investors must comply with certain conditions (“conditionally open sectors”) decreased from 386 to 267. Secondly, the law also eliminates the need to obtain investment certificates for mergers and acquisitions in sectors that do not relate to the category of “conditional”. This transaction is conducted solely in accordance with the Law on Enterprise. Thirdly, the process of obtaining an investment certificate is simplified for services sector projects: the decision to approve the project will be made within five days after the filling

of the application. Finally, the new law on investment expands the list of sectors or industries enjoying maximum benefits in Vietnamese legislation: tax rate of 10% for 15 years, exemption from taxes during the first 4 years of operation with a further reduction of 50% of corporate Income tax.

While the Investment Law reduces bureaucratic barriers for obtaining an investment certificate, the Enterprise Law gives the same benefits when obtaining a registration certificate. The receipt of the registration certificate now takes only three days from the date of filing the application instead of five working days, as it was before. The Certificate of Registration no longer indicates the types of activities that the company is engaged in: it means that it can conduct activities in as many sectors as can, if access to them is not prohibited or restricted by law.

To attract private investment funds and minority investors to participate in the programs of equitization of state enterprises (SOEs), the new Law on Enterprise introduces the concept of a derivative claim. It allows shareholders holding at least 1% of the total number of shares to initiate a derivative claim against members of the management board and directors for abuse of their powers. The cost of derivative claims is borne by the company.

Implementing measures to securitize the economy, the new Law on enterprise recognizes the rights of companies to issue bonds. Unlike the previous legislation, which required the issuer of the bonds to be “profitable”, the Law on the enterprise requires only that the issuer of the bonds must be solvent, that is, be able to pay its debts on time. This measure of deregulation can stimulate the development of the market of project bonds, a dynamic capital market in Vietnam as a whole [Newly enacted: 22.11.2015].

Currently, there are concerns about possible inefficient implementation of the new Investment Law. Although the law provides 45 days for the authorities to review an application for an investment certificate, the authorities often do not comply with this requirement, and there are no sanctions against them. The absence of a ban on the requirement of documents by the issuing investment body, which are not directly defined in the rules of implementation, can lead to significant delays. A similar problem can arise when obtaining a registration certificate, if the registration authority requires applicants to submit documents, for example, on a criminal record. Ultimately, this will also lengthen the business registration procedure.

Other laws that also expand the opportunities of foreign citizens and investors in Vietnam include the Housing Code and the Real Estate Law adopted in 2014. The new Housing Code (adopted in November 2014, entered into force on July 1, 2015) allows foreigners to buy residential prop-

erty, and also gives the right to own property on a par with Vietnamese citizens. The new Real Estate Law, which entered into force on July 1, 2015, allows foreign organizations and individuals to acquire and lease completed facilities for use as a head office, work or production premises, for commercial transactions, etc. (Real Estate Law 2006 forbade foreign investors to purchase completed construction projects, including office buildings).

Vietnamese authorities actively pursue the policy to improve the legal framework for public-private partnership (PPP). Decree of the Government No. 15 of 14.02.2015 eliminated a few shortcomings in the existing legislation. For example, the limit on the size of the state contribution to the PPP project has been removed. The new law allows the state to regulate the size of its contribution, depending on the financial feasibility of each project separately. The new legislation simplifies the procedure for new participants to join a contract, which allows creditors to more actively participate in the implementation of projects and protect their investments in case of incompetent actions of the executing company [Decree outlines: 18.03.2015].

In accordance with the new PPP regulation in Vietnam, the implementation of such projects after preliminary approval may involve the use of foreign arbitration. In addition, creditors are entitled to take property as a pledge, use land and sell project facilities. The requirement for approval of the pledge by the competent state authority was lifted. The decision guarantees that the purpose of using the land plot will remain unchanged throughout the project implementation period, even after the creditors realize the right to enter the contract.

In addition to improving the legal framework, the government creates a number of tools to support PPP projects, including The Project Development Facility, which is expected to help to conduct a thorough assessment of the financial attractiveness of potential projects. The government also developed a list of priority national projects offered to potential foreign investors for cooperation in the PPP format.

Direction to strengthen supervision. In Vietnam, along with the liberalization of investment activities of foreign companies, a policy is being pursued to better regulate their work. For example, a new Law on Environmental Protection was adopted in 2014. It requires environmental impact assessment reports for projects that use land located within or close to wildlife reserves, national parks and World Heritage sites, i.e. for projects that can adversely affect the environment.

In June 2014, Vietnam adopted a new Construction Law, which introduced two new categories for obtaining a building permit. For example, for the implementation of projects in the category of “special complex zones”,

such as economic zones, airports and seaports, a building planning permit will be needed instead of a simple building permit [Regulatory: 22.11.2015].

In order to regulate the management of transfer pricing, the Ministry of Finance of Vietnam issued Circular No. 66 in 2010, which introduced a new system for assessing the market value of a transaction. The circular helped to solve the problem of tax evasion by the TNCs, and also improved tax management and audit. The next step of the government was the introduction of the Action Plan for managing transfer pricing in 2012–2015. According to this plan, an additional audit of companies was conducted to identify the risks of transfer pricing at both the central and provincial levels. The companies that declare themselves unprofitable, as well as sectors of electrical equipment, real estate, construction, companies operating in export zones, i.e., as a rule, TNCs are of particular interest to auditors.

In February 2014, the Circular of the Ministry of Finance of Vietnam No. 201 on transfer pricing in commerce and Circular No. 205 against double taxation (“DTA”) and about the prevent tax evasion and fraud in relation to taxes on income and property were introduced in Vietnam. In the same year, provisions on the Advance pricing agreement (Circular No. 201/2013) were included in the amended Tax Code, which helped to improve the regulatory framework for transfer pricing [Vietnam transfer: 22.11.2015]. Taxpayers in Vietnam can now manage their transfer pricing risks by pre-signing an agreement with the tax authority. Currently, several TNCs, including Samsung, have begun to participate in the three-year pilot program of the APA agreement, proposed by the Ministry of Finance of Vietnam [Vietnam Gov't: 05.09.2013].

In March 2014, the General Department of Taxation of Vietnam began to implement a disclosure policy. In accordance with the new course, local tax departments should publish on the management website names and other data of those taxpayers who violated the tax laws of Vietnam, and those who are suspected of this violation. Thus, taxpayers are interested in careful documentation of their transactions with affiliated parties, since any indication of incorrect application of transfer pricing rules can not only raise questions of tax services, but also have a negative impact on the company's reputation.

Results. While significant progress has been made towards the establishment of a developed legal framework for the activities of foreign business in the Vietnamese market, it still has to go a long way to improve the overall system of market institutions, harmonize the national legal framework with international standards and increase its transparency and overall quality. The study identifies the following problems: firstly, the regulatory frame-

work still retains many white spots. Secondly, the difficulties with its implementation distort the original goals of its authors: there remains a serious gap between the existing regulatory framework and real practice.

Results analysis. The review of Vietnam's legislative policy regarding the liberalization of the activities of foreign companies in Vietnam shows that significant results have been achieved in the time range. Fulfilling obligations of international organizations, Vietnam made its legislative base closer to generally accepted norms. Changes in recent years should be recognized as progressive, even though they have not yet managed to give results. We expect that the new Enterprise Law and the Investment Law will have a significant impact on the Vietnamese business. The revised laws will facilitate the creation of new enterprises, especially those owned by foreign investors, and will reduce losses from the withdrawal of foreign investors from the Vietnamese market. In addition, the new laws will ensure the legitimate rights and interests of investors, shareholders and other parties involved.

Even though more than 10 years have passed since Vietnam joined the WTO, there is still no single strategy for attracting foreign capital to the country's economy. This is generally a negative factor, since it makes it difficult to understand the goals and planned steps of the country's leadership in dealing with foreign business. In expert circles, there is a wide range of opinions on the appropriateness of attracting significant foreign investment. There is an opinion that a more selective and balanced policy to attract FDI is needed.

The existing legal and regulatory framework of Vietnam still has many blank spots and problems. Imperfection of the tax audit system allows companies with foreign ownership to evade taxes, which leads to state budget losses. Shortcomings in the legislative base in the sphere of environmental management results in losses for the country in the form of direct damage to the country's ecology. Further elimination of defects and gaps in the regulatory framework can enhance the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. The development of concession forms of cooperation with foreign investors can have a particularly positive impact.

Conclusion

The formation of an enabling legal environment can have a significant impact on improvement of Vietnam's investment climate and attracting capital, and that is why it is becoming one of the key tasks of the SRV government to accelerate the economic development of the country. A favor-

able legal environment is able not only to encourage foreign investors to direct their funds to Vietnam, but also, for example, to increase the effect of already implemented investments.

The fact that the active legislative activity of Vietnam in recent years has not greatly affected the increase of its place in various business ratings points at a serious problem in the legal environment of the country: there is a significant gap between the regulatory framework and real practice. The lack of clear specifications for the implementation of laws, coupled with the human factor, distorts the scheme of implementation of laws. Thus, if the Vietnamese government fails to create a clear scheme for enforcing laws, numerous problems will continue to impede the business community and hamper the efforts to conduct effective activities in Vietnam, regardless of the quality of the regulatory framework and the right investment strategy chosen.

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*S. RYAZANTSEV, A. LUKYANETS,
R. MANSHIN*

Demographic and Socioeconomic Consequences of Global Warming and Climate Changes in Vietnam¹

Introduction

Human being and all biological species on the planet have always been in possession of the environment. Due to the development of science and technology the direct impact of nature on human has weakened. Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that mankind has learned to control natural and climatic phenomena. It is more appropriate to use the words “manage” and “adapt.”

However, at the beginning of this century, the natural and climatic factor in man's economic activity has again become more important. Climate changes have become one of the main real problems facing mankind, which threaten the political, economic, and social stability of entire countries and continents.

Initially, climate change was an object of investigation by natural sciences. However, along with an increase of the negative consequences of climate changes, these problems began to be thoroughly studied by other sciences and trends. Russian scientific thinking is a certain exception. Despite certain achievements of Russian scientists — climatologists, geophysicists, geographers, and others, there are no tangible scientific results in the sphere of the socioeconomic consequences of these phenomena.

¹ The paper was first published as S. Ryazantsev, A. Lukyanets, R. Manshin “Demographic and Socioeconomic Consequences of Global Warming and Climate Changes in Vietnam”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 4 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2014), pp. 124—128. While most of information and analysis are still valid, some parts have been updated in line with recent developments in Vietnam.

We should note that even among natural scientists, there is no consensus concerning the determining factors of climate changes. Just as in the previous century, certain scientists adhere to the view that the present climate changes are a natural process of cyclic fluctuations taken shape over millions of years and repeated at definite periods, but in no way connected with human activity. Another part of academic community holds the view of the exclusively anthropogenic character of climate changes, caused primarily by discharges of carbon dioxide, which has led to the so-called greenhouse effect [Ballantyne 2012: 70—72]. It was precisely the arguments of the supporters of the anthropogenic factor in climate changes that have led to the adoption and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by most advanced countries in December 1997 in addition to the UN Convention on climate changes. Its essence boils down to the need to curtail the discharge of carbon dioxide by developed countries and those with transition economy (Kyoto Protocol, 12.08.2015.)

Climate changes on the planet occur very unevenly. In this connection, their consequences for countries and territories are largely differentiated. For example, whereas certain climate changes can bring economic benefit to Russia, the United States and Canada in a short- or medium-term period, these changes may become perilous for a number of African and Southeast Asian countries and bring about considerable human and economic losses. Thirteen of thirty countries especially prone to climate changes are situated in the Asia-Pacific Region. Besides, this region suffers from up to 70% of all natural calamities in the world, which have brought irreparable harm to over 1.6 billion people [World Bank: 20.04.2017]. This problem is especially acute for island states, as well as those with a considerable shoreline, as Vietnam.

From a scientific point of view, Vietnam is an ideal object for research. Having a great demographic potential, high population density and a long shoreline, that country has suffered from the horrors of natural cataclysms, partly caused by climate changes.

Research materials. In short- and medium-term prospect, climate changes will exert an ever growing negative influence on the demographic, economic, and social processes in Vietnam, touching on the life of the growing number of people. Global climate changes mean global warming expressed in an increase of mean temperatures of the environment practically in all seasons. The main cause of global warming is an increase of carbon dioxide discharges into the atmosphere. In the 1990s, the volumes of these discharges increased by 1.1 percent annually, whereas in the 2000s, the figure was 3.1 percent [Lukyanets 2016: 269].

The consequences of the global climate changes are multifarious and specific. The anthropogenic influence of man's economic activity on natural conditions is the determining factor for the formation of such phenomena as floods (due to the rising level of the World Ocean), tropical storms and hurricanes, onslaught of deserts, draughts, wild fires, etc. One of the specific features of natural calamities is the emergence of absolutely opposite natural disasters on a comparatively limited territory at one and the same time. Vietnam's provinces in the Mekong Delta are a case in point: part of it suffers from draught, another (coastal) is inundated due to a rising sea level.

The types and forms of climatic consequences largely depend on the geographical position of the given territory, and their scope on the population density and industrial and infrastructural entities there.

Today, climate changes are seen and felt on all continents. However, the strength of these “acts of God” and intensity of climate changes are determined by the geographical situation. The most vulnerable continent is Asia, which accounts for 38% of all dangerous natural calamities. This continent is also the leader by the summary damage caused by all these phenomena. The American and African continents are in second and third places; their indices are 26% and 14% respectively [Osipov: 13.08.2016].

Research methodology. Global climate changes are expressed in rising the mean temperature of the environment, which leads to a multitude of negative consequences. First and foremost, among them is heating the surface of the World Ocean and as a result — rising of its level and changes in the amount and time of precipitation [Perez 2013: 6]. This process harms human health, endangers water resources, agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, and puts to risk populated centers in vulnerable places. Quite often, in investigating the impact of climate changes on the life of the planet, scientists center attention on the most crucial problem — the rising level of the World Ocean revealed in inundating coastal territories. However, in our view, it would be methodologically more correct to study the whole range of these consequences comprehensively. For instance, typhoons result in inundation and erosion of the shore, which lead to terrible demographic and socioeconomic consequences. Thus, a comprehensive character should be the main feature of our investigation.

In investigation, assessment was applied to biogeophysical impacts of climatic risks and threats on socioeconomic and demographic processes in individual households and at a provincial level.

The sociological method of investigation was used by carrying out the selective method of sociological survey of the population. The main tasks of the investigations were: to reveal timely problems of Vietnamese households

connected with climate changes and their consequences; to collect information for testing sociological instruments in surveying households; to assess the efficiency of government policy in the sphere of climate changes and prevention of negative consequences.

Research procedure. Methodology of investigation presupposes an analysis and comparison of data of official statistics and combined grouped data, which have been obtained due to sociological surveys in the provinces of Vietnam. The main sources of statistical data were those of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Temperature fluctuations and volumes of precipitation have been thoroughly registered and studied. Based on the data of the archives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Vietnam the dynamics of natural-climatic indices has been studied not only in the present conditions, but beginning from the mid-20th century, and even earlier.

The main part of research

In 2015, the population of Vietnam numbered 91.7 million, with density of 277 people per square kilometer [SYV 2015: 85]. The character of demographic processes predetermines the further growth of Vietnam's population. Despite lower intensity of the processes of the natural movement of the population, in the period between 1990 and 2010 alone the number of the country's population increased by over 24 million [SYV 2015: 87].

The demographic policy pursued by Vietnam and aimed at lowering birthrate, is bearing fruit. During the past two decades, birthrate has gone down by 1.6 times and amounted to 16.2% in 2015. The same dynamics is shown by the summary birthrate coefficient, which has lowered by almost 1.6 times and comprised 2.1 births. Mortality rate and expected longevity are also characterized by positive dynamics. During the period under investigation, the general mortality rate coefficient decreased by 1.7%, and infant mortality rate coefficient dropped by almost 50%. This is also shown by the growth of expected longevity, which was 73.3 years in 2015 [SYV 2015: 113, 125].

The demographic parameters of Vietnam's development show that the country has a considerable demographic potential which will not only increase the population, but will also serve as one of the formative factors of the migration potential of the country.

A considerable demographic potential and geographical position of Vietnam placed it to the top of the rating of countries, which are prone most of all to the consequences of global climate changes.

Research has shown that the sea level rose especially intensively in the 20th century, and this process is going on at present, too. By approximate estimates of climate experts, the level of the World Ocean will rise by about 35 to 40 centimeters by the end of this century. According to the results of climatic modeling, the sputnik data, and hydrographic observations, the sea level is rising unevenly in the world. A special report of the Intergovernmental group of experts on climate changes supposes that by the middle of the 2090s, the level of the World Ocean will rise by 0.22 to 0.44 meters higher than the level in the 1990s, and will grow by about four millimeters a year [Climate change: 18.07.2016].

According to forecasts, a rise of the sea level will be, on average, 78—95 centimeters, and in certain maritime districts of the country up to 105 centimeters. Seven coastal provinces of Vietnam will be under threat of being flooded. About 40% of the Mekong Delta, more than 10% of the Red River Delta, and Quangbinh province will be inundated. There is a danger of floods on more than 20% of the area of Vietnam's coastal districts. As a result of floods, Vietnam will lose five percent of its territory [UNDP: 14.04.2017].

Vietnam will come across considerable economic problems: the GDP will drop by 10%, agricultural output will diminish by seven percent, the losses of rice crop (the main staple food of the people) will amount to five million tons; 11% of dwelling houses will be flooded and destroyed, about four percent of railway lines, nine percent of the national system of motorroads, and 12% of provincial highways used by climatic migrants from coastal districts will be damaged or destroyed, taking into account the population growth rates and density [Vulnerability 2011].

The data of the possible losses modeling show a considerable economic damage which Vietnam will sustain. Rising of mean temperature by one degree will result in economic losses in agriculture to a sum of 52 US dollars per each hectare of sown area. With an increase of precipitation by one millimeter additional losses may comprise 3 US dollars per hectare of sown area. Thus, a summary impact on each hectare of sown area will be equal to 55 US dollars, which is a critical index for Vietnam's economy, because agriculture plays a considerable role in the country's economy [Vulnerability 2011].

These consequences may provoke a powerful socioeconomic crisis. One of the most unpredictable problems may be mass climatic migration. Evidently, Vietnam will come across an unprecedented problem of forced migration, that is, the real necessity will arise to resettle people in other regions of the country and, possibly, in other countries. About 35% of the population in the Mekong Delta will have to be moved; about nine percent of peo-

ple in the Red River Delta and Kuangnin province, about nine percent of people of the central coastal provinces and nearly seven percent of the residents of Ho Chi Minh City will have to be resettled [Lukyanets 2015].

The abovementioned natural climatic trends will have considerable demographic consequences. First of all, the traditional populated areas will become smaller, employment will go down, poverty will rise, and forced economic migration will grow.

In 2012, a state strategy was adopted to make reaction to climate changes more effective, and also to reduce hothouse gases discharges into the atmosphere. The goals of the Strategy included: higher level of public information; elaboration of mechanisms aimed at stability and adaptability of ecosystems to climate changes and rising sea level; reduction of hothouse discharges [Framework Convention: 10.04.2017].

Results. The investigations carried out have shown that in the nearest future the level of the World Ocean will be rising with every passing year. This threatens Vietnam with a decrease of the GDP, the lower living standards of the population, and a reduction of the country's territory.

Results analysis. Research has shown that even within the framework of just one country the consequences of climate changes in geographical respect (by provinces) will be different. The territories in lowlands, primarily the Mekong Delta and the Red River Delta, will be threatened most of all. It was established that 43% of the population living in the Mekong Delta are liable to the impact of climate changes, 30% live in the economic region of the Red River Delta, 11% — on the North Central Coast, nine percent — on the South-Central Coast, and seven percent — in Eastern Nambo, the Southeast of the country, who will be threatened most of all.

Migration flows were planned on the basis of forecasts of floods. The methodology of forecasting was based on extrapolation. When forecasting the number of Vietnam's population, the coefficient 1.08 was used, since the average annual population growth in the past decade was 0.82 percent. Forecasts were also differentiated by the levels "low," "medium," and "high," with a view to possibly predicting the oncoming of adverse developments. The forecasting period was from 2020 to 2050, with a five-year interval.

In the "low" variant, the number of people living in the zones of potential inundation in 2020 will reach 2.9 million for the entire country, of whom 1.25 million in the Mekong Delta, 0.87 million in the Red River Delta, 0.32 million on the seacoast of the North of Central Vietnam, 0.26 million on the seacoast of the South of Central Vietnam, and 0.2 million in East Nambo [GSO data and material of sociological survey of experts and households].

These data partly reflect the size of the danger threatening the country even in the conditions of the “low” forecast. As to the “medium” variant of forecast in 2020, the number of people in the potential flood zones in the entire country will reach 4.22 million, and with the “high” variant of forecast — 5.15 million.

By 2020, the flow of forced migrants in the country will comprise 282.200 in the “low” variant; 554.900 in the “medium” variant, and 678.200 in the “high” variant. By 2050, if the trends of climate changes remain the same, the figures will be as follows: the “low” variant — 1.154.6; “medium” — 1.732.0; “high” — 2.356.1 [calculated by the authors].

Based on modeling scenarios of the distribution of forced migrants, the following results were obtained. In all variants of forecasts of migration flows of the population from coastal territories the country will be able to accept this part of the population with relatively minimal inconvenience for people. The main problem will be not so much the very process of resettlement as making people stay in new places. Ninety percent of migrants are engaged in agriculture or fishery (rice growing and seafood gathering). Their movement to inner districts of Vietnam will require their profound retraining, especially those engaged in cultivating sea products (shrimps, oysters, shellfish, and the like).

If a need arises to resettle the entire population living in the potential flood zones, it may lead to a collapse of the socioeconomic system of entire economic regions. The model has demonstrated that the entire population can practically be resettled over the country's territory. But it will definitely lead to a humanitarian, social, and economic catastrophe. Our surveillance of the population in 2014 showed that only 27% of people were ready to change their sphere of activity, 58% said that they would not be able to master a new trade, and 14% stated that they were not ready to change their mode of life. The agrarian specialization of the country aggravates the situation still more, which is strongly correlated with climatic conditions.

For elaborating the ways of resettlement, the geographical specificities and relief of the country have crucial importance. We have evolved possible ways of resettling the population only within the country, inasmuch as their realization are exclusively within the competence of the national authorities.

The main territory of acceptance of climatic migrants from the Mekong Delta, apart from that very territory, will be the district of the Central Highlands, which is now one of the most backward districts of the country and has a rather low population density. Under unfavorable climatic conditions and a rise in the World Ocean level during the period up to 2025, climatic migrants from the provinces in the Mekong Delta can be resettled in the

neighboring provinces close to the same economic region. There is enough time to prepare part of the Central Highlands territory, as well as to retrain part of the population engaged in fishing and aquaculture breeding for working in agriculture and the industrial sector.

This very territory will be the place of settlement for the migration flow from the southern regions of the seacoast of the Central District and Eastern Nambo. The model has shown that resettlement on these territories can take place up to 2030 with the present trends of climate changes, and up to 2025 in case of their worsening.

Up to 2030, the northern provinces of the seacoast of Central Vietnam can resettle their forced migrants themselves. The territory, its relief and population density make it possible to resettle about one million people. However, the main problem will be that of employment, because the bulk of the migrants will consist of people engaged in the sea economy. After 2030, the remaining part will have to be resettled in the northwestern and north-eastern provinces, which are the least developed economically.

The provinces of the Red River Delta (except the city of Hanoi) can redistribute more than one million people themselves. This means that under the present trends of climate changes these provinces will exhaust their own potential to receive migrants already by 2020. The main territories of resettling the population beginning from 2021 may be northwestern and north-eastern territories of the country.

The most crucial problem now is resettlement of Vietnam's financial center — Ho Chi Minh City. This is the biggest city producing 20% of the country's GDP, and it has suffered from climate changes for more than a year. It is there that the first projects of modeling climate changes have been realized. And it is there that the most acute problem is inundation of a bigger part of the city. In 2014, the number of its population was 8.2 million, which makes it practically impossible to resettle it in a new territory [SYV 2015: 86]. At the moment, the municipal authorities lay an emphasis on drawing foreign specialists to the construction of hydro-installations.

The tasks we have presented may seem spectacular and unrealizable in most countries of the world, Russia included. However, Vietnam is a specific, rapidly developing country which, on the one hand, has all features of conventionality and originality, and on the other, is trying to use more actively international connections and advanced technologies. Large-scale infrastructural projects are implemented by big foreign companies (primarily from Japan and South Korea), however, on condition of mandatory hiring local population. The policy of resettlement has been pursued in Vietnam for more than a year. By the beginning of 2015, the authorities resettled

93.685 families from coastal districts of Vietnam and the provinces of the Mekong Delta [Lukyanets 2015]. At present, this program has no permanent character and is implemented when it is not possible to restore the former living conditions of households.

Conclusion

The problem of flooding coastal territories is a threat not only to Vietnam. The crisis caused by inundations will result in an unprecedented mass resettlement of the population, which will go beyond the borders of Vietnam, taking into account its area. This is why this problem is not of a local character, but acquires crucial importance at an international level. Flows of climatic migrants from Vietnam can cause considerable demographic and socioeconomic problems in recipient countries, if they are not duly prepared. Besides, the flow of illegal migration will grow sharply. Traditionally, the level of migration from Vietnam to Russia has been sufficiently high.

Therefore, Russia can well be put on the list of priority countries to receive migrants. In this connection, with the emergence of an additional emigration potential in Vietnam, Russia and other countries, primarily those of Southeast Asia, should be prepared for possible developments, otherwise an additional flow of migrants may aggravate the migration situation there. At the present stage, not a single country, Russia included, can eliminate the threat of the development of an unfavorable socioeconomic and demographic situation caused by a mass flow of climatic migrants, if additional measures are not adopted. This is why Vietnam itself and the world community are interested in a due assessment of the consequences of the mass movement of the population of the coastal provinces of Vietnam and the adoption of all necessary measures. Above all, it is necessary to model possible demographic and socioeconomic phenomena and processes with a view to precluding a socioeconomic crisis on the flooded territories and in the country as a whole in order to prevent possible demographic threats.

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Anton TSVETOV

Emerging Social Forces in Modern Vietnam: Group Interests and Political Participation¹

The article examines three social forces of modern Vietnam, which are becoming politically self-aware: bureaucrats, private small and medium-sized business owners, and the urban middle class. Each of them to a certain extent owes their emergence to market reforms, has expectations from the political course of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), and hopes to take part in the formulation and negotiation of that course. The key problem is how and when do political and social preferences of these groups translate into political decisions. There are grounds to believe that as the CPV addresses the changing social structure of Vietnam and seeks to continue representing all of the classes of the Vietnamese society the party may shift to greater openness and gradual transformation into a public platform form harmonizing popular preferences. One of the logical steps in this direction would be greater representation of private capital in the Communist Party ranks.

Introduction

The Vietnamese society is undergoing profound structural change. A broad range of external and internal factors determines the impressive social dynamics in the country. Continuing globalization, the unprecedented interpenetration of economic, political, social, and cultural practices and patterns alter the development strategies of many countries. These trends

¹ The paper was first published as Anton Tsvetov “Emerging Social Groups in Contemporary Vietnam: Group Interests and Political Participation”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 6 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2016), pp. 52–65.

are not met with deference only, as nation states fear the erosion of their identity and attempt resistance, often in the form of promoting alternative development strategies. Nevertheless, the market principles of economic management and universal values of democracy and human rights continue to penetrate Asian societies, not to the least Vietnam.

The theoretical basis of the research. Interest in political representation of social groups is growing as market reforms in Vietnam have raised questions about whether any sort of political transformation is to follow. At first, the policy of *renovation* (Đổi Mới) concerned only the economy and — to an extent — the foreign policy of Vietnam. However, the social changes that followed the economic reforms have given birth to new challenges, which the Communist party and government leaders have to tackle.

Research methodology. To address these issues we used dialectics, general theoretical and special methods of investigation: historical, logical-intuitive, systemic-structural, content-analytical, and event analyses.

Research materials. The investigation is based on the latest data of sociological studies carried out by international scholars, as well as their Vietnamese counterparts. Among these works mention should be made of a collection of articles under the editorship of J. London (*Politics in Contemporary Vietnam* [Politics 2014]).

In Russian research on the social structure of modern Vietnam most notable is the relevant section of the *Contemporary Vietnam* reference published in 2015 [Contemporary Vietnam 2015]. Its authors — V. Mazyrin, S. Ryazantsev, A. Lukyanets, and R. Manshin, which, having presented vast sociological material, did not touch on the issues discussed in this article.

Publications in the Vietnamese press are of special importance for understanding the political situation in the country. Analyzing publications in the *Nhan Dan* newspaper, the press organ of the CPV Central Committee, allows to follow the intricate changes in the political course of the ruling Communist Party, and the Vietnamese robust social media and blogging community gives a picture of public sentiment beyond the official narrative.

Research procedure. This investigation took the form of gathering, grouping, and analysis of information on different social groups of Vietnamese population. Three groups were singled out:

- bureaucrats/government officials (executive), especially of the socio-economic bloc, in both central and provincial bodies;
- private business owners, especially middle and small;
- urban middle class.

Each of these groups is treated with a brief portrayal and we then proceed to assess their influence on the further political development of Vietnam.

The main part of research

Posing of the problem. The ruling Communist party of Vietnam and its government continue to pursue the course for market reforms, while preserving socialist orientation and retaining elements of planned economy. An important element of the present transformations is the development of the legal basis of relationships between the state and society with a view to strengthen the rule of law. A course for openness to the outer world and active integration in the global economic and political environment is also pursued. A vivid example of such policy is provided by a whole series of free-trade agreements (FTAs) signed in 2015 with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), South Korea, the European Union (EU), and the United States (within the framework of the Transpacific Partnership (TPP)).

These fundamental processes in the country's economic and political life engender reconfiguration of social relations, particularly in the form of growing influence of certain social groups. In this article, we attempt to give a general characteristic of three social groups whose role in the sociopolitical life of Vietnam has been growing. These are: (1) government officials of the executive branch, particularly of the socioeconomic bloc at the central and provincial level; (2) private entrepreneurs and business owners, especially middle and small; (3) urban middle class.

These three groups owe their social advance to the market reforms and economic progress of Vietnam. The changes in the economic sphere contribute to the formation of a new type of value distribution and access to resources for different sections of the population. Each of these groups has its own demands and expectations from the CPV. As time goes by, the requirements turn into interests, hence, these social groups will want to protect and advance them. Since the CPV insists that it represents the interests of all sections of the Vietnamese population¹, it is important to consider the strengthening of these groups in evolving their political course. Therefore, the mechanisms of incorporating political preferences of these groups into the governing system of the state are of special importance.

We will provide several key characteristics for each of these groups and attempt to formulate their group interests. Undoubtedly, there are other social groups in modern Vietnam which have considerable influence on the political process (party functionaries, military, large government-run and

¹ In the material of the conference devoted to the 85th anniversary of the CPV formation it is said that the party “protects the fundamental and long-term interests of all classes” [See: Những thành tựu 2015].

private business, etc.). However, in this work we will deal only with these three groups as products of the market reforms.

It should also be noted that these groups differ in perception of their interests, self-identification, and the degree of participation in the country's political life. With rare exceptions, they are not corporations in the broad sense of the word and have inner division lines. There can be temporary and constant overlappings and contradictions of vital interests and views on concrete points of the agenda between them and other groups.

This article does not examine the existing and possible mechanisms of aggregating their social preferences and their incorporation in the political medium. This is only done in cases when these channels themselves can be regarded a fundamental characteristic of a given social group.

Bureaucrats. Government officials of the socioeconomic bloc at the central and regional level, who oversaw the active promotion and direct implementation of the market reforms were among the key beneficiaries of the reforms themselves. It is they who are responsible for bringing in foreign investment and implementing policies that have raised living standards across the country.

Despite the deep fusion of the party and government apparatus in Vietnam, there seems to be a growing division between them. Vasavakul (2014) states that the emergence of the independent Audit of Vietnam (Kiểm toán Nhà nước Việt Nam) points to the need to balance the executive power and, consequently, its growing influence and independence from the Party. Vasavakul further notes that although the Audit was set up in 1994, the Law on Audit of 2005 and subsequent changes showed its increasing importance and greater role [Politics 2014: 42–63].

Meanwhile, due to the country's economic achievements the Communist party retains high authority in Vietnamese society. From the time of seizing power in 1945 and right up to the country's unification and the formation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976 the CPV reaffirmed the right to power through its fight with the foreign adversaries. After the end of the border war with China in 1979, and especially after the normalization of relations with China (1990) and the United States (1995) such mobilization mode of gaining legitimacy by the Communist Party simply could not function any longer and, therefore, was replaced with legitimation through economic successes and performance. Market reforms have resulted in a tangible improvement of the quality of life of the population¹.

¹ In 15 years, from 1999 until 2013, the per capita GDP by PPP grew more than twofold — from 1.850 US dollars to 4.000 US dollars [CIA Factbook: 30.05.2016].

Therefore, the government's economic bloc is essentially the guarantor of popular support to the CPV. Economic achievements provide for the growing importance in the public life of not only the general bureaucracy, but the leading figure of the group — the Prime Minister. This — alongside with personal political ambition — may explain the considerable influence of the former Premier Nguyen Tan Dung on the country's political life. J. London believes that these two factors exert mutual influence, because Dung used his growing prestige for strengthening the executive power [London 2016].

Participation of the bureaucracy in the implementation of projects with foreign investment conditions the growing contacts with foreign partners from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the United States, and European countries. The number of persons in the government apparatus at the central and regional levels with Western education is growing [East Asia Forum 2015]. It is through this social group that interaction of foreigners with Vietnam's government is taking place, which contributes to the growing role of the economic bureaucracy in the media and political environment of Vietnam.

On the basis of the existing sources of the growing influence of this social group, the following interests will be emphasized. Above all, there is the striving for greater autonomy of government bodies from the Party, greater room for decision-making in the fiscal sphere and governance, and relaxing of Party control [Politics 2014: 42—63]. On the one hand, the economic bloc of the government is interested in drawing foreign investments and improving the business climate in the country. This makes it possible to increase the taxable and rentable base as the sources of legal and illegal incomes of officials. On the other hand, this social group advocates the preservation of regulating functions and formal and informal barriers in the hands of the state in order to control investment flows.

The abovementioned features are characteristic of both central and regional bodies of power. However, there are certain differences between the interests of administrators in different provinces. The most important criterion of this difference is dependence on subsidies and transfers from the central budget. In 2014, it was only 13 out of 63 provinces and cities of Vietnam that gave the central budget more funds than they consumed [Ministry of Finance: 30.05.2016]. Accordingly, the remaining 50 were net recipients of budget subsidies.

Dividing provincial officials by this principle, one can assume that the donor provinces are interested in expanding the powers of the local administrative bodies in endorsing investment projects and regulating economic activity. It would be advantageous to them to weaken centralized regulation in order to have an opportunity to draw foreign investors independently

[Politics 2014: 64—83]. They are thus concerned, for example, by the rules for approval of investment projects determining the threshold limits of capital investments below which the provinces may take independent decisions on investments.

At the same time, the recipient provinces are interested in retaining stable subsidies flows which would allow them to maintain social peace through the existing mechanisms of welfare distribution. For these regions, it is important that the center understands their role as guarantors of support of the central government's course in the regions.

Small and medium business owners. The emergence of a broad section of private entrepreneurs in Vietnam is a major social consequence of the market reforms. The most important characteristic feature of this social group is that it was the first one to have received economic independence from the state, and later gained this opportunity for the broad sections of the employed population. This explains the fact that the motives of the social and political behavior of this group have mainly an economic nature¹.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of private capital in contemporary Vietnamese society. Most private enterprises in the country belong to small and medium business. It produces 43.2 percent of the GDP, and provides more than half of entire employment [Statistical Yearbook 2013: 213]. A greater part of enterprises is built on the basis of personal capital or the financial means of relatives [Heberer 1999-21: 18]. Many entrepreneurs have horizontal ties at their level in local state bodies.

Private business is mainly interested in the continuation of the market reforms in the country and further liberalization of the economy. Its main requirement is observance of the rights and freedoms of private entrepreneurship, and physical and legal security [Perri 2012-16: 93—112]. A no small role is also played by the protection of private property, its legal guarantees, including such a delicate issue as land ownership.

There is a timely problem of decreasing corruption and preferential treatment of the state sector, as are transparency in doing business, access to government contracts, and free competition [Perri 2012-16: 93—112]. At the same time, certain businesses may benefit from protectionist policies and thus oppose the active integration of Vietnam in international trade via FTAs. Private businesses in these areas hope for protection of their interests and a certain degree of trade protectionism on the part of the state.

¹ Nevertheless, an important role in the motivation of the social behavior of the private entrepreneur is also played by a drive for self-realization and desire to ensure a high quality of life to his or her family [Perri 2012-16: 93—112].

Urban middle class. The urban middle class in Vietnamese cities and towns may also be regarded a product of the reforms, inasmuch as the latter gave birth to urbanization and income stratification [Comparative analysis: 289]. Without using strict criteria for determining the middle class, we regard this group as a sum total of educated citizens of a middle income living in cities.

Although there is no uniform evaluation of the numerical strength of the middle class, its high growth rates in Vietnam are often assumed. For example, Nielsen in 2012 cited evaluated middle class in Vietnam at eight million, expecting that it should reach 44 million by 2020 and 95 million by 2030 [Nikkei Asian Review 2015]. The US-based Boston Consulting Group in 2012 evaluated the MAC group (middle and affluent class) at 12 million, and predicted its growth to 33 million by 2020, noting that half of them lived in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city and their outskirts [BCG Perspectives 2013].

The key characteristic of this group is its integration in the national and global information environment. This is due to the financial factor and the high degree of the Internet penetration, including the mobile Internet. According to the data gathered by the Singapore Agency *We Are Social*, in January 2015, there were 39.8 million active Internet users in Vietnam (44% of the country's population), and 28 million accounts in social networks. As compared to January 2014, the number of users grew by 10% and the number of accounts by 40%. On average, users spent five hours ten minutes on the Internet each day when using desk devices and 2 hours 41 minutes each day via mobile Internet [Digital in 2015].

For these reasons, this social group is close by its way of life to similar social groups in other countries, which contributes to their rapprochement in values. At the same time, the mode of life is determined mainly by consumption patterns, level and structure. It is important to note that the great role of the urban middle class in the economy is determined by its place in the production of social, cultural, and technical innovations and in the national structure of consumption too — in 2010 this group accounted for up to 40% of retail purchases in the six biggest Vietnamese cities [Breu 2010].

Of the social groups examined in this article the middle class is the least formalized, because its income and way of life have not such a clearcut character as, say, its professional or trade affiliation. Therefore, we can talk of group interests only in a general form. These include the openness of Vietnamese society, social mobility, preservation and improvement of the quality of life with the emergence of better-paid jobs, better living conditions, the condition of the environment, and opportunities for self-realization.

The urban middle class protects the values of direct civil participation in political life and, therefore, expresses interest in social, and sometimes political and economic matters.

The most vivid form of the urban middle class activity are online information campaigns via mass media, blogs, and social networks. In this situation, the active segment of this social group often joins coalitions *ad hoc* with other social groups. For instance, in 2009, during the “bauxite scandal” an alliance of environmental and anti-China activists took shape, as they criticized the government's plans to allow a Chinese company to mine bauxites in the country. Some people criticized the project as harmful to the environment, others — as detrimental to Vietnamese national interests [Politics: 86]. A later example was the broad participation of web activists in publicizing worker demonstrations in 2014 against changes in the social security legislation [Bloomberg 2015].

The opportunities for self-organization of the urban middle class are rather limited at the moment. This is due, first and foremost, to the narrow space for the work of non-governmental organizations, which are still much state-controlled. However, it seems that some time later requirement for the channels of expressing collective will of the active part of urban educated citizens will grow. Netizens largely determine the image of the country in the global media environment and play a major role in the formation of the image of Vietnam and its Communist Party abroad.

Apart from that, the value of the urban middle class as the backbone of Vietnamese consumption will grow along with the reorientation of the economic model of the country to domestic demand. This shift will hardly take place somewhere in the medium-term perspective, however, relations between the middle class and the country's leadership have begun to change already.

Conclusion

Due to limited opportunities of free association and the closed nature of the political process, the interests of these groups are not broadly expressed in public. These groups are also new to contemporary Vietnamese political life so their interests have not yet been duly ascertained.

It would be wrong to say that the “new” social forces examined in this article present a threat to the Communist Party of Vietnam, inasmuch as they have come about as a product of a political course aimed at renovation. These groups are interested in the continuation of the economic transfor-

mations in the country, and they are among the most active supporters of such renovation.

The completion of the self-identification of each of these groups is inevitable. In the course of this process, we will witness a desire for the implementation of these requirements in practical activity, and this drive is becoming more visible. Right now, it is only possible to speak of a shortage of transparent mechanisms of broad public participation in the political process.

The forms of this participation are a subject of a separate investigation. However, in this context it is necessary to note that preserving social peace as a long-term prospect will only be possible there is a certain configuration of the economic and political structures. Vietnamese society is open enough today and full of information flows to make the further development of democratic institutions inevitable. In the course of this process new requirements may arise for the transformation of the Communist Party from a mobilization and crisis center into something new.

There are grounds to believe that a reaction to changes in the social structure and the need to preserve representation of “all classes” of Vietnamese society will push the Communist Party of Vietnam to greater openness and gradual transformation into a public forum taking into account important preferences of the population. One of the steps in this direction would be broader representation of business in the party ranks. Such steps may not mean ideological changes or weakened monopoly on power, on the contrary, they would be a natural step toward its preservation.

A prerequisite for and at the same time a consequence of such transformation will be the modernization of the image of the CPV and, possibly, a change of its inner structure, certain formalization of broader political representation. All these changes are only one of the hypothetical models of the transformation of relations between power and society in Vietnam, but it is precisely such character of renovation that could ensure social peace and a due balance between the social and political structures of the country.

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PART FOUR

HISTORY

Oksana NOVAKOVA

Independent Vietnam: Democracy Vs. Tradition, 1945—1946 and the 21st Century¹

Introduction

The subject under examination gets increasingly **topical** as the renovation policy evolves in time. However, it is still a long way to having the subject exhausted; the degree to which it has been explored, for all the numerous papers, including by Western scholars, is rather modest. As for Russia's Vietnam studies, there is still a good deal of room for research.

Research procedure. The main thing was to look for and collect new documents dating back to the 1945—1946 period and comprehend their significance in light of the 21st-century trends in domestic science, and also supplement data from various sources. At the same time, I examined theoretical prerequisites, experience and motive forces of the 1945 Revolution, and compared those with modern political guidelines of the Vietnam leaders.

The main idea of the research was to achieve some specification of several conclusions existing in domestic Vietnam studies as to the evolution of Vietnam's way in recent history, especially in the part referring to the 21st century period.

In this context, the paper shows the ideological and political innovations by the Vietnamese leadership conditioned by the challenges of the 21st

¹ The paper was first published as Oksana Novakova “Independent Vietnam: democracy versus traditionalism: 1945—1946 — the early XXI Century”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 240—261. While most of information and analysis are still valid, some parts have been updated in line with recent developments in Vietnam.

century, and also by the increasing role of the image of charismatic leader Ho Chi Minh, until his sacralization both at the national cult level and in Vietnamese Buddhism.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by foreign and domestic Orientalists on the renovation policy and, up to a point, on the period of the 1945 August Revolution. To achieve the research objectives and solve the assigned problems, I used both general theory and specialized cognition methods — analysis and synthesis, the historical, logical, analogy and comparison, systems and structural analysis, and others.

In terms of the conceptual approach, I sought to highlight the characteristics and evolution of Vietnam's historical development model in the second half of the 20th century. This is important theoretically and practically, because similar processes are unfolding in other countries of the region as well, in East and Southeast Asia. It is hardly an accident that the leadership of Vietnam was strongly influenced by the Singapore development model, and now by that of the Republic of Korea.

Research materials. The research was largely based on archival materials from Vietnam that I brought into research circulation for the first time, namely the Viet Minh Front Program, Declaration of Independence of the DRV, the 1946 Constitution, and also the Theses on Vietnamese Culture [Viet Minh Front Program 1983: 812—823].

I analyzed these major DRV documents, emphasizing the role of Ho Chi Minh in their creation, which yet again confirms their fundamental importance at the first stage of the DRV existence.

Describing the complicated political situation in Vietnam at the time, I also pioneered the profile of the prominent politician Trần Trọng Kim whose work and activity have so far been largely neglected by Vietnamese historians.

In this connection, the thing that arrests attention is the recent but rare publication by a Vietnamese author on the subject that is also used in this paper [Trần Trọng Kim 1930].

Of the rare archival materials it is worth mentioning the 1945 publication [Lê Trọng Nghĩa 2012: 5—6], where an eyewitness, a Vietnamese journalist, describes the historic meeting of September 2, 1945, on Ba Đình Square, when President Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the establishment of the independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

This research relied on major works by Vietnamese authors who covered the issue [Trung Hiệp 2009; Nguyễn Khắc Viện 1970], and writings by their West European counterparts. [Brocheux 2011; Devillers 1952; Thayer

1992; *Far Eastern Economic Review*: 20.07.1989] These fundamental works explore in detail the historical developments in 1945–1946, as well as events related to the changes and challenges of the 21st century.

This remark refers especially to the works by Russian authors, which I used in the second section of the paper. [Lokshin 2011; Mosyakov 2001; Murasheva 2011; Novakova 1995; Perelomov 2011; *Mass Propaganda* 1985; Titarenko 2000; Tsvetov 2014]

The theoretical basis of the research is concepts of the world history science that rests on the major thesis about the world heading for progress, since the concept of time is perceived as movement along a spiral where each coil is the next step along the path of historical progress. Potential deviations are viewed as a particular case. The paper also relies on provisions of the theory of modernization and preservation of the national identity in conditions of globalization, which has become a pressing problem for many countries of Southeast Asia and Vietnam for one. In this connection, I fell back on the theoretical work by the famous political leader of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew [Lee Kuan Yew 2005].

The **Conclusion** generalizes the research results naming the intermediate results of the renovation policy and summing up the present state of Vietnamese society. It also characterizes the cause-and-effect relations between the said events that call for an assessment of the way covered.

The main part of research

A Brief History, Goals and Motives of Creating the Viet Minh Front and Establishing the DRV. By the end of the Second World War in the Pacific, Vietnam had found itself in a favorable situation, particularly after August 14, 1945, when Japan announced unconditional surrender. That meant a realistic prospect of liberation in conditions of power vacuum, as the French troops had been interned by Japan following the military-political coup of March 9, 1945. By then, the only political force in the country capable of seizing power was the United National Front of Viet Minh whose position was especially strong in the North.

But the so-called peaceful occupation of Indochina by Japan (1940–1945) had seriously harmed Vietnam's political and economic situation. The Japanese authorities started active propaganda of Pan-Asian ideas in Vietnam, which were racist. That propaganda was intended create a Greater East Asia under Japan's aegis (“eight corners under one roof”) [Mass media 1985: 25]. In Vietnam, like in other SEA countries, The Japanese authori-

ties organized photo shows that publicized Japanese military victories, including at the Pearl Harbor. the Japanese authorities tried hard to find pro-Japanese leaders among right-wing nationalist groups in Vietnam to whom they could hand power. First and foremost, these were Trần Trọng Kim and Ngô Đình Diệm.

Against the background of the mounting pro-Japanese propaganda and worsening economic situation coupled with the growing discontent in the countryside under Japanese occupation, the covert process of patriotic forces consolidation in North Vietnam accelerated. In 1941, the Communist party of Indochina (CPIC), then in the underground, initiated the establishment of the Viet Minh United National Front in the Province of Cao Bang, in the township of Tan Trao; its objective was to win independence.

Six months previously, in May 1941, the 8th Plenum of the CPIC Central Committee convened in Guang Xi (a hundred kilometers north of Cao Bang); among the attendees were Nguyen Ai Quoc, Ho Tung Mau, Vo Nguyen Giap, Pham Van Dong, Ha Ba Cang, Dang Xuan Khu (Truong Chinh). All of them were comrades-in-arms of Ho Chi Minh who had traveled with him the entire length of the long and arduous way of revolutionary struggle and eventually became prominent leaders of the DRV/SRV, the political elite, the generation that remained in power from 1945 to the early 1990s, which may be pronounced unique and phenomenal in Vietnam's recent history. That phenomenon was later given the name of meritocracy.

The Plenum approved the **Program of the Viet Minh Front** on the initiative and with personal participation of Ho Chi Minh, which points to the great significance of this document. Ho Chi Minh never deviated from the Program until 1945, when the August Revolution triumphed, and continued in the same vein during the peaceful respite in 1945—1946. The appearance of the Program was of paramount importance for the subsequent activity of the Viet Minh Front. The idea of a national front can be characterized as effective and consolidating Vietnamese society throughout the subsequent decades of fight for independence and reunification of the country.

The Viet Minh Front Program. It was 15 pages long and included two parts.

Part One formulated the main objective of the Viet Minh Front and the nation at large, namely achievement of independence. It raised the issue of normalizing relations with the former parent state, desisted from fomenting an atmosphere of fanatical hatred for all French people.

Part Two contained an appeal for alliance with Western democracies against fascist aggression; it was a hint, above all, at assistance from the United States and China.

Part Three formulated specific proposals for general democratic reforms. That made the Program of the Viet Minh Front a lot more positive than similar programs of national revolutionary parties in the 1920s — 1930s where the creative section was woefully underdeveloped, and it was not clear what kind of future awaited Vietnam should those parties win.

The Viet Minh Program, by contrast, reserved most of its pages for a description of measures aimed at building a future DRV. Here one can see the entire spectrum of democratic reforms — general elections for all Indochinese over 18, equal rights for the Viets and ethnic minorities, for men and women, a system of decentralized power in the form of People's Committees, that is, creation in the DRV of a ramified network of new democratic power.

In the socioeconomic area, it was proposed canceling all taxes imposed by the colonial administration, setting up a system of social security, state care for the old, creating modern national culture — movies, drama theaters, etc. The agrarian issue in the Program was confined to the demands of land confiscation from French colonizers and traitor landowners, and of lower rent, that is the wording was extremely cautious given the complexity and importance of the issue in a country where 95 percent of the population were peasants.

Overall the Program, relying as it did on national traditions, met the interests of the overwhelming majority of the country's population. All of this suggests that in that complicated domestic political and international situation Ho Chi Minh made priority the matter of attaining Vietnam's independence by uniting all social groups and strata of Vietnamese society, and not the class struggle principle. Even the Emperor Le Loi (the 15th-century national hero of Vietnam) could have subscribed to this document, considering its all-nation nature and objective of gaining independence.

By the end of 1943, Viet Minh was already in control of a good chunk of the territory in seven northern provinces of Vietnam — Lang Son, Cao Bang, Bac Can, Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, Bac Giang, Vinh Yen.

By the spring of 1945, the Viet Minh leadership had formed in the northwest of Northern Vietnam, in Viet Bac, a vast liberated area where bodies of people's power, People's Committees, started to be set up that are still functioning today. Also, the first guerrilla formations and the Armed Propaganda Detachments were formed in same place; later they served the basis of the People's Army of Vietnam (VPA).

The worst curse of the war years and Japanese occupation was economic dislocation that affected North Vietnam and the northern provinces of Central Annam. US bombings of the coast of Central Vietnam that para-

lyzed shipments of rice from Cochinchina to Tonkin and Annam caused famine in Tonkin in the spring of 1945 that killed nearly two million people [Novakova 1995: 204]. That was one of the factors that engendered a revolutionary situation in Vietnam.

On September 16, 1945, Japan capitulated. Vietnam saw before it a clear prospect of liberation, for the first time in the entire history of colonial dominance. In the favorable settings, the Viet Minh Front called on the people of Vietnam to rise. On August 17, 18, and 19, Hanoi and other cities of North Vietnam witnessed peaceful demos, several thousand strong, under red flags with a gold star, the standard of the Viet Minh Front. In fact, that was a bloodless national liberation revolution that triumphed throughout the country. By September 2, 1945, the only real force in Vietnam was revolutionary committees and the Provisional Revolutionary Government with Ho Chi Minh at the head in Hanoi.

The DRV Declaration of Independence. On September 2, 1945, the Second World War was over. For Vietnam that day was memorable for one more reason. On September 2, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and free state, in Hanoi's main Square of Ba Dinh. The historic Declaration of Independence announced by Ho Chi Minh [Hồ Chí Minh 1983: 812—823], expressed and enshrined the will of millions of Vietnam's citizens. The period of French colonial rule in Vietnam was over; the country had embarked on a new road of independent development. Ho Chi Minh spoke at a mass rally where, according to some estimates, almost 500,000 people had gathered, including members of ethnic minority groups from North Vietnam easily distinguishable by their colorful costume. That was the first public appearance of Ho Chi Minh before his fellow countrymen after 30 years in emigration, four years of fighting in the North Vietnam jungle in the ranks of the Viet Minh Front he had founded, and the victory of the August Revolution in 1945.

This Declaration written personally by Ho Chi Minh is a major document of Vietnam's recent history. The Declaration is a concise document of just 760 words. It contained quotations from the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the French 1791 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Simultaneously, for the benefit of the Allied Powers, there was an emphasis on the fact that Vietnam's independence accorded with the provisions approved at international conferences (in Teheran and San Francisco), and so the DRV was worthy of recognition on their part.

The Declaration text is very much to the point, precise and logical. A good example is the following passage. "The French fled, the Japanese

surrendered, Bao Dai abdicated.” Interestingly, the term used for “emperor” was the folksy *vua* instead of the official *hoang de*.

In conclusion, Uncle Ho addressed his fellow countrymen (a popular term at the time that in subsequent decades was replaced by the appellation *comrade*, new to the Vietnamese) to warn them, “We are in for great trials and suffering. You should support the government so as to celebrate together even more victories in the future” [Trung Hiệp 1945: 5–6]. The words proved prophetic. The French government at the time was concerned with recovering its presence and authority in Indochina.

As for the Vietnamese themselves, they consider the main words in the Declaration “the basic rights of the nation and every citizen, that were organically fused into a single whole by President Ho Chi Minh in the Declaration of Independence he had written, which inspired the Party to create the first Constitution” [Vietnam News 1982: 8].

The general ceremony of the historic rally had room for national traditions as well. Three days previously, Hue (seaport in central Vietnam) witnessed the ceremony of abdication by Emperor Bao Dai in favor of the Viet Minh Front, when he handed over to its representative Tran Huy Lieu the imperial regalia, the nephrite sword and the imperial seal. Ho Chi Minh lifted the sword high above his head saying that “this sword used to be a tool of oppressing people, but now it will punish traitors.” [Độc Lập 1945; Vu Ngu Chieu 1984: 380–381].

The Declaration of Independence of Vietnam incorporated the texts addressed to the Allied Powers, but also those addressed to the domestic Vietnamese audience. Their style and tone are in sharp contrast to each other, as they had different objectives and different addressees.

On the very first days after the victory of the August Revolution, the Provisional Government issued a decree to abolish the old administrative staff machinery. In its place, People's Committees started springing up across the entire north and center of Vietnam, the new bodies of people's power (Decree of November 22, 1945.) These and other general democratic measures of socioeconomic transformation of the country on democratic patterns conducted by the DRV government during the so-called peaceful respite year (August 1945–December 1946, until the War of Resistance began) were largely instrumental in increasing the popularity of the new authorities among the peasantry, and also in greater consolidation of society at large.

Under the resolutions of the Potsdam Conference of 1945, the Japanese troops in Vietnam were to be disarmed by the United States and Great Britain. To this end, the country was conventionally divided into two parts

along the 16th parallel. The southern section was supervised by the British, the northern one — by the Americans. Yet, the British soon ceded their mission to the French whose troops were in Saigon already in September. The United States delegated its job of disarming the Japanese to the troops of Chiang Kai-shek, which established their control over most of North Vietnam, Hanoi included.

With US consent, France and Kuomintang China agreed in early 1946 that the French troops, no more than 15.000-strong [Sainteny 1953: 182—185], would replace the Chinese troops (200.000-strong) in North Indochina.

In the circumstances, the DRV had to compromise and conclude a preliminary agreement with France on March 6, 1946, under which the DRV was recognized as a free (though not an independent) state, and assented to the presence of French troops on its territory instead of Chiang Kai-shek's units for a term of five years. The start of the negotiations allowed Hanoi to hold elections to the National Assembly of the Republic in January 1946. Ho Chi Minh was elected DRV President, and the country received the first Constitution in its history that guaranteed democratic civil rights, and defined the procedure of forming popular power bodies in the center and in provinces.

The 1946 Constitution. The first DRV Constitution was adopted on November 8, 1946, in the complicated conditions of the domestic and external situation in Vietnam at the time. Merely a year had passed since the August Revolution and proclamation of independence; the DRV was yet to be recognized by a single state of the world;

The Constitution became a legal basis of the new independent Vietnam and, also a nation consolidating force. Since then, Vietnam has been an entity of history instead of an insignificant colonial country, and its active inclusion in world history has become a fact. On the whole, the 1946 Constitution was vividly antiimperialist and democratic, and became the legislative basis of the democratic transformation of Vietnamese society at that stage. Article 1 defined Vietnam as a democratic republic, but it failed to reflect or enshrine the political and socioeconomic foundations of society. Overall, the 1946 Constitution was bourgeois-democratic in nature.

The 1946 Constitution was likewise written with immediate participation of Ho Chi Minh. The predominant principle of the 1946 Constitution was to proclaim the vital interests of the nation as a priority. In other words, on the threshold of a potential war with France, Ho Chi Minh yet again tried to implement in the 1946 Constitution the principle of a united national front approved already in the Viet Minh Front Program 1941.

The first Constitution was brief (an Introduction, seven chapters and 70 articles) compared to the other (four) constitutions approved in present Vietnam [Tsvetov 2014: 22]¹.

All the three fundamental documents named here were, therefore, written by Ho Chi Minh or drawn up with his personal participation. His political experience and political culture was shaped under the influence of progressives in France (socialists and communists), then during his stay in the Soviet Union. But the main constituent of Ho Chi Minh's political views had always been his adherence to the Vietnamese national idea that also included patriotism, that is creation of an independent Vietnamese state.

From the moment of establishing the Viet Minh Front and until the entire nation was called upon to rally in fighting for independence against France (December 1946), Ho Chi Minh very consistently, step by step, followed the way of establishing the necessary state republican institutions, which was a novel phenomenon in Vietnam's political reality. The coming to power of Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues meant the advent of a new political class and elites in Vietnam, a radical change in ideology and notions that determined the country's subsequent development.

Independent Vietnam was, therefore, proclaimed a state with a republican social system; the new name had been carefully considered to display a rupture with the old monarchical Vietnam while simultaneously emphasizing democratic values. They had to lay the foundation of the new statehood, politics, and political culture.

All that can be described as an establishment of democracy in Vietnam, as unprecedented activity of the masses to build the foundations of a new state in so utterly traditional a society as Vietnam's. In political science similar phenomena are known as "anticipating," which is inevitably followed by a rollback.

The decades of excruciating wars that followed (1946—1975) took the mobilization of the nation's entire energy and putting forward new tasks. After the country was reunified and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) was proclaimed, Vietnam's all-round relations with the Soviet Union were further consolidated. The Vietnamese leadership took to largely copying the Soviet model of socialism [Tsvetov 2014: 21]. But on the whole, after the Great Victory over US imperialism the condition of Vietnamese society changed. However, the leadership took too long to give up the war-

¹ Of the 120 articles of the new text of 1992 version 101 were amended. As a whole, independent Vietnam had four officially adopted constitutions, namely of 1946, 1960, 1980, and 1992.

time habits, and by the end of the 1970s, this had plunged the economy into a crisis.

Transition to the Renovation Policy. 1986—1991. *Changes in Vietnamese Society.* In the second half of the 1980s the Vietnamese leadership stepped up the search for economic liberalization. The renovation policy (*doi moi* in Vietnamese) was outlined at the 6th (1986) and 7th (1991) congresses of the Communist party of Vietnam. The idea was to allow all socioeconomic modes and encourage private initiative. The economic reform also brought about considerable social improvements in Vietnamese society.

During the same years (late 1980s-early 1990s) important events occurred in global politics. The U.S.S.R., Vietnam's main foreign trade partner and donor, disintegrated; the Cold War ended.

While strengthening its leading role (Constitution 1980, Article 4) [Constitution 1982: 21]), the CPV leaders stressed in their propaganda activity and in Congress documents their adherence to socialist ideals and “ideas of Ho Chi Minh” while rejecting the multiparty principle¹ and pluralism. In Vietnam's foreign policy contacts with West European and APR countries multiplied, which was aided by the final withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia (1989). It was not till November 1991 that China and Vietnam officially announced normalization of bilateral relations.

The Vietnamese brand of socialism. Once the renovation policy had been launched and market reforms went under way, the socialism 'with Vietnamese specific features' was given the right to existence [Perelomov 2001: 7—8].

At the initial stage of reform policies, certain attempts were made to democratize the political system. In particular, the conditions of the press functioning became more liberal [Thayer 1992: 7]. Various culture and media spheres received a boost after Nguyen Van Linh's meeting with Hanoi's creative intellectuals that took place on October 6—7, 1987. Among the creative intellectuals the period became known as the Hanoi Spring as new publishing houses emerged, some of them not financed by the state, works by emigrant Vietnamese writers in Europe and the United States found their way into Vietnam [Thayer 1992: 9—10].

The new trends captivated university lecturers and undergraduates. Vietnam's Ministry of Education conceded to some of the demands and allowed several universities in the South to elect their own chancellor. It was also allowed to set up private schools [Quân đội nhân dân: 14.08.1989].

¹ In 1988, both the Democratic and the Socialist parties declared themselves disbanded.

However, issues of the new ideological and political line caused debates at CC CPV Plenary sessions. Some CPV ideologists believed that democracy should be controlled. The new Law on Press regulated the work of the media. The official change of course by the CPV leaders in favor of more toughness regarding literature and art was confirmed in the Resolution of the CC CPV Secretariat passed in July 1990 [Nhân Dân: 28.07.1990].

Nguyen Van Linh, the architect of reform, elected Secretary General of the CC CPV at the 6th Congress, remained in that post for just a single mandate term. The Politburo which included 13 members incorporated nine new members — the scale of replacements was totally without precedent. One can suppose that among the CPV leadership in the early 1990s, following the 7th CPV Congress, the position of those who were against the renovation policy strengthened [Murasheva 2011: 67]. The man who became CC CPV Secretary General was Do Muoi, a Party veteran.

The replacement of the CPV leadership at the early stages of *perestroika*, with Do Muoi taking the place of Nguyen Van Linh, was an example of yet another political setback.

Overall, though, the proclaimed policy of market reform and openness in foreign policy remained unchanged. In 1995, Vietnam joined ASEAN, which was a significant event that allowed the SRV to acquire major external support in the SEA. That became the country's return to the SEA region, so China's habitual pressure was smoothed.

The new reality required addressing to the issue of the role of the state in Vietnam's political system. In this connection, in 1992 the National Assembly adopted a new Constitution. The state system was defined as “the state of the people founded by the people and for the people” (Article 2). Article 4, that fixed the leading role of the Communist Party in the state, remained, but the article on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism was abolished [Tsvetov 2014: 21].

As for liberal economic reforms in Vietnam they are not accompanied by introduction of corresponding democratic freedoms. Reforms in the SRV usually stay within the traditional paradigm of growth without development. According to some experts, Vietnam's development evolved towards the type of an authoritative political system well known in East Asia (its most successful implementation is exemplified by Singapore).

Lately, the Vietnamese leadership has been increasingly in favor of cooperation with the Republic of Korea. In November 2009, as the relevant Joint Declaration was adopted, the two countries' partnership took place. This is justified by numerous joint cultural events that attract young people.

As the renovation policy course progressed, orthodox communist ideas were reviewed. In the 21st century, the rollback in ideology is occurring at the civilizational level, including the incorporation of Confucian values in the ideological arsenal of the CPV.

Now we are witnessing the mental return to the glorious historical past, the distant golden age of Vietnamese history that has been typical of Vietnam since the early 1990s. The SRV leadership seeks to make maximum use of the resources of the former authoritarian state to achieve new aims, trying as far as possible to limit the erosion of the ideological heritage.

In this connection, the CPV/SRV leadership put forward and included in its ideology arsenal a new thesis saying that in the course of Vietnam's modern sociopolitical development on the new basis of market economy the traditional sociocultural and religious complex could perform integration functions [Thời báo kinh tế: 21.01.1999].

In conditions of harsh challenges of the 21st century, globalization and competition, the influence of traditional civilizational values in society will merely increase. These processes are characteristic of all former colonies, especially those stamped with the influence of Chinese civilization. In the Vietnamese scientific circles, the increasingly popular term and notion are Oceanic Civilization and the slogan, "We are of one blood!" [Titarenko 2000].

The charismatic posthumous cult of Ho Chi Minh. But incorporating traditional values in the political legacy of the CPV and appealing to examples of ancient history to confirm the legitimacy of one's power does not imply that Vietnam's leaders reject socialist rhetoric. "Renovation does not mean renunciation of Marxism-Leninism and ideas of Ho Chi Minh.... It means that Marxism-Leninism and the ideas of Ho Chi Minh form the ideological foundation of the CPV" [Đảng công sản 2006: 70].

The leadership of the country is resorting to Ho Chi Minh's ideology as one of basic means that cement the already sufficiently socially heterogeneous Vietnamese society (this refers especially to the younger generations who did not know the nearly 30-year heroic period of Resistance wars, but which served a basis of establishing and legitimizing the CPV power starting from 1945.) So already in the 1980s—1990s, Vietnamese universities started offering a new social discipline, Ho Chi Minh Studies [Tsvetov 2014: 61—62].

The glorification and exaltation of the image of the charismatic leader, Ho Chi Minh, his growing posthumous fame clearly point to the desire to resuscitate and aggrandize national spiritual values.

It is worth mentioning that this cult in its restored traditional form was not imposed from on high, but started evolving from below, and the authorities, far from impeding that, encouraged with every available means the sacralization of the leader's image in the spirit of traditional state ideology of Vietnam [Novakova 2009: 262].

With a good deal of confidence one can say that all Vietnamese feel more comfortable in terms of mentality now that the country has again acquired the guardian spirit of the nation. This belief is the most durable and ancient in Vietnam [Novakova 2009: 263].

Conclusion

The above prompts a typological identification of contemporary Vietnamese society. In 2005, they marked the 60th anniversary of the DRV/SRV, a fact eminently important to the Vietnamese mass consciousness because since the moment of establishing the present-day Vietnamese state the wheel of history has completed a full 60-year cycle. The elite generations are replacing each other (now Vietnam is governed by the third or fourth generation of leaders after the 1945 August Revolution, the so-called children of princes.) During the 20th and 21st centuries Vietnam absorbed the elements of several social epochs and civilizations at once, during its precipitous transformation, from society dominated by Confucian ideology, via a brief period of democratic republicanism and several decades of vigorous building up of Soviet-type socialism. We are witnessing the end of yet another cycle of evolution in Vietnamese society and a new one coming in. The country is returning to the firm ground of Vietnamese national political tradition tested for centuries, where the principal pivot is the Party (Ruler) — State tandem as an embodiment of the unity of power and society, politics, economics, and culture.

The reassessment under way now has affected the most important structure-forming values, and not just some areas, and this was the chief significance of that which occurred in the cultural life of East Asia in the 20th century and is still going on in the new 21st century.

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Maxim SYUNNERBERG,
Evgenia MARCHENKO

Symbolic heroines of the two resistance wars of independent Vietnam (1945—1975)¹

Introduction

Topicality of women's participation in wars is clear from a glance at the Vietnamese history, which counts several millenia and repeatedly features involvement into landmark world wars. XXth century is not the exception with its pivotal for Vietnam Resistance wars against France and the USA. The proverb “When enemy comes to their house, even women become soldiers” (Vietnamese: *Giặc đến nhà — đàn bà cũng đánh*) is a very fine example of thereof. It was women who led the national liberation struggle against the Chinese conquerors in the Northerh Vietnam back in the early years of the nation's history. No doubt that Vietnamese women with their long traditions of participation in national liberation struggle and having become its very symbol (as Trung sisters)², could not but contribute to the country's liberation from colonial dependence and consequent resistance wars with France and the USA. Women's involvement in the socio-political and revolutionary

¹ The paper was first published as Maxim Syunnerberg, Evgenia Marchenko “Independent Vietnam: democracy versus traditionalism: 1945-1946 — the early XXI Century”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 6 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2016), pp. 185—204. While most of information and analysis are still valid, some parts have been updated in line with recent developments in Vietnam.

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² The authors study traditional participation of Vietnamese women in wars in a separate paper [Syunnerberg, Marchenko 2016]. This paper only approaches the two Resistance wars — against France (1946-1954) and against the USA (1955—1973), as well as reunification struggle of the period from 1955 to 1975.

activities raised to a large scale in the 20th century, becoming an important factor of Vietnam's political development. For centuries population has been developing cults around heroines, as the authorities have been utilising the local heroes' cults in their nation-wide ideological targeting, and this tradition has been continued in the XX century. Therefore the few personified symbols of the Resistance wars have drawn so much attention.

The theoretical basis of the research. The extent of prior research of this subject cannot be count as substantial if compared to the significance of the women's input into the liberation struggle in the eyes of the Vietnamese themselves, as well as the attention paid to the Vietnam war in the global science. Domestic research is very valuable for it's factological abundance but usually focused at biography and description of the historical personalia, lacking in comparison, analysis and general conclusions. The most known of them are the works of Le Thi Nham Tuyet [Lê Thị Nhâm Tuyết 1978], the founder and director of the Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED) and Tran Quoc Vuong, one of the most prominent Vietnamese historians of the late XX century [Trần Quốc Vương 2000]. The young researcher Kim Van Chien might also be named among the authors, who chose problematic rather than descriptive approach, as his PhD thesis as well as several published papers study women's participation in Vanguard Youth teams induring the American war [Kim Văn Chiến 2007, 2013].

In the Western historiography, Vietnamese women's involmment in combat was covered mostly by the French researchers. Among those Francois Guillemot, the research engineer at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) deals specifically with this subject and more precisely — on Vanguard Youth. He published the book “Vietnamese women in the Civil War, 1945—1975”. The other half of the war [Guillemot 2014] and several other papers.

Despite the different time span, the research of Micheline Lessard also is seen as valuable input into women's problem as she focused at the women's patriotic activities during the French colonial period [Lessard 2010; Lessard 2013]. Her paper “More than half the sky: Vietnamese women and the anti-French political activism, 1858—1945” [Lessard 2010] emphasizes the early start of the women's political activity, stemming even before the very first Marxist organisations, and analyses its particular forms.

In Russia, so far there hasn't been any special works on any aspect of Vietnamese women activism in particular.

The purpose of this article is therefore to single out the reasons why the women's involvement into the national liberation struggle has become so

widespread by the middle of the XX century, and to outline the particular forms of women's participation in the Vietnam's two Resistance wars.

Research methodology. Since the time the Annales School was well established, historians started to pay special attention to the reconstruction of the mentality predominant in the society during the particular period under study. Such reconstruction becomes possible due to reading and interpreting common and even mundane materials of that society — first of all, fiction and press. We have systematically applied this method to Vietnam in general and the women's issue in particular under the project “Women in the Vietnamese history”, as well as in this paper.

Research materials. Research in the state-launched program movements in the DRV in 1960s helped understand the place for women in those movements and the role assigned to them. Scientific literature and press allowed to revive the biographical details. It should be noted that memoirs are quite useful when it is needed to get an insight into the life of a particular historical character. For instance, memoirs of the outstanding Vietnamese diplomat Madame Nguyen Thi Binh [Nguyễn Thị Bình 2012] provide us with the important details of her life and give a lively idea of the vicissitudes of the diplomatic activity of that period. Another example: memoirs of Nguyen Trung Nguyet (1909—1976), “first woman who went abroad to study revolution” and even “the very first female political prisoner in Vietnam” (caption to the portrait of Nguyen Trung Nguyet in the Ton Duc Thang museum, Ho Chi Minh City.) according to the Vietnamese historiography, are very helpful in understanding the motivation of Vietnamese women. Her memoirs have been incorporated quite recently in to a book by her niece, a Harvard professor Hue-Tam Ho Tai, and together with substantial historical data and necessary comments published under the title of “Passion, betrayal and revolution in colonial Saigon: memoirs of Bao Luong” [Huệ Tâm Hồ Tài 2010].

The main part of research

The Awakening of Asia, continued contact with the Western culture and European social traditions triggered the revision of the traditional values in the Vietnamese society, one of which being the “women's problem”. The role and place of woman in the Vietnamese society. in the family, the extent of her personal freedom, her access to the education and overall “rights of women” (nữ quyền) had become widely discussed in the Vietnamese press from the 1910s. Female emancipation began in 1920s and became the im-

portant factor of engaging women into the revolutionary activity. Contemporary fiction and discussions in the press help to uncover the main drivers which induced women to find their way to the revolutionary path in the 1920—1930th. One of the major drivers was that participation in revolutionary activity allowed them to cast off the “feudal shackles of the subordinated marital status” and to freely choose a partner. Those who wouldn’t follow the tradition of “sitting where the parents had you placed” (mostly indicating the arranged marriage) saw escape in their own social activism.

Many statements in the press condemned the rigid family and public customs established by an outdated social system, and also the colonial rule which authors described as supporting the strong and oppressing the weak.

As a result, Vietnamese people in general and Vietnamese women in particular, dissatisfied with any particular manifestation of the existing social system (police high-handedness, high taxes, family violence) turned to look for those who were going to change this system most radically.

No wonder that between the 1920s and the 1930s Vietnamese revolutionaries begin to mobilize women, Marxists through the Indochina Communist Party (ICP) created in 1930 and others through the National Party of Vietnam (created in 1927).

In October 1930 the Society of women for the liberation (Phụ nữ Giải phóng) was created — a prototype of the present Vietnam Women's Union (Hội Liên hiệp Phụ nữ Việt Nam). During the years of the People's Front rule in France the situation inside Vietnam became more liberal so that the Communist Party could publicly advocate democratic transformations, and the women's society was renamed in 1937 into “Democratic society of women” (Hội phụ nữ Dân chủ). Two years later in the face of Japanese imperialistic threat the Society changed its name to the “Anti-imperialist society of women” (Hội phụ nữ Phản đế), and since 1941 to the “Women's league for the rescue of Homeland” (Đoàn Phụ nữ Cứu quốc). Then in 1946 the “Women's union of Vietnam” was actually founded and soon incorporated the “Women's league for the rescue of Homeland”. So, women's participation in revolutionary activity and national liberation fight was formalized and organizationally framed at the mass level rather than a separate undertaking of certain persons as it was during the period of the “awakening of Asia” and the years after World War I.

Their chance to cast off the status of “slaving for the slaves” (i.e. the subordinated situation of women to the Vietnamese men, who in turn were lackeys to the colonial authorities) Vietnamese women suddenly saw in revolutionary activities in general and especially in Marxism. In this regard, words of the legendary Vietnamese XX century commander Madame Dinh

(1920—1992) are very indicative: in an interview on TV she once noted that “under feudalism and imperialism woman was being suppressed and crushed! We used to be nothing but breeding machines and toys for their lust...” [Nguyễn Thị Định 2011].

Apart from perception that revolutionary activity would free them from the family and society tethers, women had other drivers to join in the national liberation fight: solidarity with male relatives (father, brother, husband, son); desire to avenge relatives who had been killed in fight; purely patriotic feelings, too.

Women's readiness for self-sacrifice corresponded with the medieval traditions, especially the valued in the Vietnamese historiography category of “virtuous women” (liệt nữ), and became an important input to the revolutionary activities. This readiness is summed up in the words of a female Vietnamese revolutionary from the National Liberation Front of the Southern Vietnam: “Our death will not make any sense if it results from capture and tortures; at the same time, death in battle or death by our own hand will give us immortality of heroes. This ideal reproduces our heroic legends” [Guillemot 2014: 47].

There are several typical forms of participation of the Vietnamese women in the two resistance wars — against France (1946—1954), against the USA and then for the country's reunification. During the first resistance war (especially before 1950) women's input was not yet organizationally framed, mainly due to DRV's difficulties in management easy understood due to forced dwelling in remote mountain provinces for the most part of war. Although revolutionary activity of women was rather personal and limited to small back up in the big campaigns, it was during this period that young heroines rose to prominence and who many years became a symbol of national liberation fight of the Vietnamese people.

The most famous among them are Mạc Thị Bưởi (1927—1951) and Võ Thị Sáu (1933—1952). Both girls were messengers, both were captured and executed by the French colonial authorities. Despite not even being leaders of the national liberation movement, they managed to become its symbols. The former was already sufficiently described in a separate article [Tréglodé 2008] in “Traditional Vietnam”, Volume 3, so here we will concentrate on the latter — Võ Thị Sáu, who is widely worshipped nowadays across the country. As she was never a leader or a commander, she is the very representative in terms of the reasons, driving young women towards the path of joining the Resistance war.

Vo Thi Sau, a native of the Ba Ria-Vung Tau province, was one of the 6 children of a carter and a market food seller. In 1947 her elder brother intro-

duced her into the clandestine militia unit based in the jungle nearby. She was only 13 when she underwent special training and basic ideological schooling [Nguyễn Đình Thông 2014]. Such young a girl was charged with spying on the neighbors, at the market and tracking local administration and the rich — the proxies for the French colonial rule.

Her first “adult” task was to carry out an act of intimidation: on July 14, 1948, she threw a grenade at a group of French soldiers in the crowded market area, killing 2 of them and injuring 12. She escaped undetected. Late in 1949, she threw another grenade at a Vietnamese canton chief — a local man responsible for executing many suspected Viet Minh sympathizers. The grenade failed to explode, and she was caught by the French authorities.

Even in captivity Vo Thi Sau did not lose courage and together with other prisoners continued subversion work against colonialists. After a more than a year of investigation she was convicted for “murders, disturbance and undermining the protectorate” and sentenced to execution by firing squad. However, as she was a minor, French administration at that time faced a real legal problem: even a debate was held in France, and to avoid the possible riots it was decided to execute her on the remote island of Pulo-Kondor (Con Dao). Numerous testimonies prove that Vo Thi Sau was extraordinary brave while living, but it was her death that gained her enormous popularity even among the people who never knew her, resulting in national recognition. The description of her death usually is as long as that of her life. As an icon of determination in the face of suffering and death she came down in history of the Vietnamese resistance.

On January 23, 1952, the French brought the girl to the cemetery Hang Duong on Con Dao. Mere minutes before death, Vo Thi Sau was still singing out loud the Internationale and guerrilla songs and refused to repent, claiming that the sin is not on her but on the French aggressors, and met death without flinching. Her last words were “Long live Party and Ho Chi Minh, down with the French aggressors”. As depicted in her biography and in the picture exhibited at the memorial house¹, the firing squad of seven men was so distracted by her behavior that the first volley only wounded the convict, so that chief officer had to finish her by a confirming kill.

Vo Thi Sau introduced a new motto into the panel of liberation fight symbols and into Communist Party ideological arsenal, the words she is be-

¹ One of the authors, E. Marchenko in February 2016 undertook a field trip to the Vo Thi Sau's memorial complex and native places in Đất Đỏ county, Bà Rịa — Vũng Tàu province and collected some valuable testimonies and visual data about her life and especially on her nascent government-guided cult.

lieved to have said just before the execution when ordered to kneel: “I only know how to stand, I do not know how to kneel!” (Tao chỉ biết đứng không biết quỳ) [Đặng Hùng, 2012]. This phrase is one of the verbal formulas familiar to all Vietnamese since school, like Russian war mottoes “not one step back”, “we shall not surrender a single inch of Motherland to the enemy”.

Subsequently such act was interpreted as manifestation of unrestrained spirit of the young revolutionary and became an example for imitation: when the guerillas and political prisoners had nothing left but death, they knew that they can become heroes by acting like she did.

Vo Thi Sau has become a legend through both official mythogenesis and the state propaganda.

Vo Thi Sau was proclaimed Hero of the People's armed forces by the Presidential Decree No. 149-XT/CTN on March 2, 1993.

It was possible to become a symbol through a single bright action not necessarily connected with a tragic death. For example, due to particular behavior in court (and Vo Thi Sau excelled in that, too). In this regard, the most striking example from the second resistance war is Vo Thi Thang (1945–2014) — also native of the South (Long An province). At 16 years she joined the ranks of the National Liberation Front of the South Vietnam, got arrested during famous 1968 Tet offensive, prosecuted and sentenced to 20 years of hard labor. The picture of her open cheerful smile, captured by a foreign photographer during the trial, made history as “a victory smile” (nụ cười chiến thắng).

She is also famous for challenging the judges after receiving a sentence: “Are you sure that your authorities will exist for 20 more years for me to serve the sentence in full?!” [Phunuonline 2014].

Vo Thi Thang became one of the Vietnamese revolutionary women symbols. It is curious that a recent private questioning among Vietnamese to mention the very first woman they remembered in connection with the Vietnam wars in the 20th century revealed that many mentioned Vo Thi Thang first for her bright smile.

Since 1950, after the People's Republic of China and the USSR's diplomatic recognition of DRV and creation of the State of Vietnam, the communists launched a large-scale program of people mobilization against the French colonial regime. And from this time on, women's participation in military operations and new state-building process took actually organized order.

The movement “Vanguard Youth” (Thanh niên Xung phong) became the first example of such order. Academic literature envisages several approaches in the term's translation due to ambiguous interpretation of the Vietnamese term. The word Xung phong means “a person ever ready and

willing to charge/attack or to provide any help”; at the same time, it is both “volunteer” and “storm-trooper”. Alternative French translations of the term are “Young volunteers” (*Jeunes volontaires*) or “Crews of assault youth” (*Brigades de jeunesse de choc*), into English — also “Young volunteers” and “Shock youth brigades”.

The foundation for this movement was laid in the spring-summer of 1950 with the aim to launch the first large offensive “Border operation” (*Chiến dịch biên giới*) against France in the fall of 1950. F. Guillemot in “Vietnamese women at war. Other half of the war, 1945—1975” provides data on Communist Party directives of May 3, 1950 on creation of similar teams [Guillemot 2014: 99]. Modern Vietnamese scientific literature and the press consider July 15, 1950 as the date of the movement creation, the date when “The central group of voluntary youth” was born. In 2015 Vietnam organised at large the 65-year anniversary of this movement.

Movement's main task during war was logistics: transport routes construction and repair, building of bridges, repair roads after bombings, supplying food for soldiers. They were always to be “the first come and the last to leave” the battlefield.

Initially this movement was led by *Vuong Bich Vuong* and consisted of only 225 people divided into three groups 75 people each, recruited mainly from the provinces *Phu Tho*, *Thai Nguyen*, *Bac Ninh*, *Bac Giang*, aged from 18 to 25 years. Subsequently *Thanh Hoa*, *Nghe An* and *Ha Tinh*, provinces of the North of the Central Vietnam historically renowned for their input into various uprisings and in addition also the most densely populated, became the main supplier of manpower for this movement.

At first, there was only one female member in the movement — a nurse *Vo Thi Thangy*. But gradually it experienced the shift which F. Guillemot named “war feminization”. Influence of the Chinese military experts should be taken into account, too, who emphasized the necessity of large-scale women involvement in liberation fight in Vietnam. The number of women (from ethnic minorities at first) further increased in the main Vanguard Youth campaign — preparation and participation in the *Dien Bien Phu* Battle in 1954. By that moment, the number of these groups reached 15—20 thousand people and they played the major role in this great victory, providing logistics to the Vietnamese military personnel and heavy weapons, evacuating the wounded, and also, if necessary, directly engaging in battle by replacing the fallen soldiers. By the time of the *Dien Bien Phu* battle, authorities of DRV managed to mobilize a total of about 1.5 million civilian population (generally as porters; Viet. — “*dân công*”) of which about a half were women [Guillemot 2014].

After the war against France, in the attempts to reunite Vietnam (divided into two parts under the terms of the Geneva Accords) there was a further mobilization in which women were more and more involved. Feminization of war came also in the projects focused on women. In Northern Vietnam, the Three Duties (Ba đảm đàng)¹ project was launched in 1965, Women's Union encouraged women to fulfill three main responsibilities. These were: encouraging their male relatives to fight in the war, taking all of the household burdens on themselves, and taking jobs in the industrial and agricultural workforces [*Phong trào* 2011].

In the South, controlled by the Republic of Vietnam, DRV deployed another social project focused on women in March 1965, which received the name Five Determinations (Năm Xung phong):

1. Determination to destroy enemy forces;
2. Determination to accompany troops and to participate in guerrilla groups;
3. Determination to join ranks of “civil workers” and voluntary youth teams for joining the front line;
4. Determination to participate in political struggle in urban and rural areas, determination to capture enemy soldiers;
5. Determination to increase agricultural production.

There were also purely military women's units in Vietnam which constituted a phenomenon of “Braided Army” (Đội quân tóc dài). This type of troops appeared during the Dong Khoi uprising (including the Ben Tre insurrection) in 1959—1960. The most prominent role in it belonged to Nguyen Thi Dinh (1920—1992), whose outstanding biography is worth presenting here.

She was born into a poor family in the South Vietnamese province Ben Tre, being the youngest child. She suffered from weak heart and asthma since childhood and therefore was surrounded with ultimate care from her relatives. The girl early took interest in the revolutionary activity, introduced to her by her elder brother Chan, and began to help him in 1936. Her parents wouldn't accept her clandestine work and upon her 16th birthday began to prepare her for successful marriage, which would be easy to arrange due to her good looks. To refuse a marriage was not within her power, but her brothers put much effort into their parents' choice: eventually they sanctioned her marriage with Nguyen Van Bich, a young revolutionary. Soon after the wedding her husband got arrested, and not long after the birth of

¹ Preceded by the Three readiness (Ba sẵn sàng) project, launched in 1964 and aimed at all youth in general.

their firstborn she was arrested too. Her husband died in Con Dao prison, and their son was raised by relatives, but he died in 1960, too.

Nguyen Thi Dinh spent four years in prison, having become a kernel of unity for political female prisoners. Released due to health problems related to the existing heart disease, she returned to revolutionary path in 1944 and in took part in mission of Southern revolution cadres to the DRV and was received by Ho Chi Minh himself. Ho Chi Minh was so impressed with her personal traits, that she returned to South as the head of arms supply team and became a member of a quasi-legal Viet Cong authority of the Ben Tre province, opposing ruling regime. She inspired the creation of the “Braided Army” (Đội quân tóc dài), the women who were openly fighting against “strategic villages” establishment and other actions of Republic of Vietnam authorities in Ben Tre. In 1960 she headed a so-called Ben Tre Uprising (Đông khởi Bến Tre), and became Secretary of provincial party committee. The Braided Army campaign made Ben Tre province in 1960—1975 nearly out of government control and an island of resistance with a well-defined structure of communist authorities and served as a core to spread the influence of DRV in the south.

Since 1961 Nguyen Thi Dinh became the chairman of the Women's Union for liberation of the Southern Vietnam, the deputy commander-in-chief of the National Liberation Front (NLF, more famous as Viet Cong). She put forward the “three arrows of tactical advance”: armed forces, political arena, introduction of agents (Ba mũi giáp công: quân đội, chính trị, Binh vận). Since 1964, Nguyen Thi Dinh became a member in the Presidium of the Central Committee of the NLF. After the end of the war and the country reunification she remained in the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and in 1974 became the first woman who received a military rank of major general of the Vietnam National People's Armed Forces, just as she had been de-facto when president Ho Chi Minh mentioned her in his speech in 1966: “The deputy commander-in-chief of the NLF is Madame Nguyen Thi Dinh. Perhaps in whole world we are the only nation to have such a female commander, it is the glory of our South and all our people” [Thạch Phương 2000: 124]. Since 1987 until the end of her life Nguyen Thi Dinh served as vice-president of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with Nguyen Thi Binh succeeding her.

Nguyen Thi Dinh is well-known among Vietnamese people as a simple, vigorous and dynamic personality and attributed a title “legendary lady-commander” (Nữ tướng huyền thoại). In 1968 she was awarded the USSR-founded Lenin Peace prize of the world, and in 1973 she became the first foreign laureate of the Soviet Order of Friendship of Peoples. In many

Vietnamese cities, including Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, streets were named after her. In 1995 she was posthumously proclaimed Hero of the National Armed forces. Following the well-established cultural pattern, a temple for worshipping the national heroine was erected in her native commune with a scale appropriate for such an outstanding figure of revolution and national liberation, with the statue of Nguyen Thi Dinh specially offered to the temple by the Vietnam's Ministry of Defense [Trần Hoàng Huân 2015]. A small part of her ashes was brought to Hanoi and placed on a separate altar in the temple of Trung Sisters in veneration for her contribution to the national liberation struggle [Trần Hương 2011].

The term “Braided Army” referred to all women's movements opposing official Republic of Vietnam authorities. This unique phenomenon came to life during the Ben Tre Uprising on January 17, 1960 based on the Communist Party Central Committee Resolution No. 15 which sanctioned combination of political campaign with combat for the sake of success in the South. The movement was active mostly in rural areas, but also staged several actions in the South Vietnam cities. The head count and structure of this army cannot be precisely estimated, but the fact is that almost all the women in Ben Tre province more or less took part in it while in other areas participation was not so common. Calculations made by the Museum of South Vietnam's women show that since 1960 the movement organized 1 million direct fights with the enemy and 9 million mass mutinies (quần chúng nổi dậy), helped to disperse 200 000 military and voluntary units of enemy forces, and more than that, “exempted from fetters” 895 of 1193 communities in the South, having established direct control in 22 communities. “Braided army” main types of action were the following: elimination of strategic villages, sabotage of army call-in, opposing to sweeping purges and shell fires, deserters catching. Lacking in arms, women usually resorted to raising disturbance, kicking a racket, disorganizing local administration, capturing weapons and supplies in favor of guerrilla forces, extermination of collaborators and active informers of ruling regime, holding to positions. These insignificant, at first sight, actions later were appraised by the state: “Their force tied down planes, put stoppers in nuzzles, held up the enemy's advances and broke the sweeping plans”. In other words, the army of women, both spontaneous and aptly handled by the Party, succeeded in opposing and pressuring the local authorities (who were not at all strangers, but rather neighbours in the same villages), and exhausting much of the RV army resources [Đội quân tóc dài 2005].

Apart from combatting, other contributions were of high value at war. Nurses and physicians were in highest demand. Notably, the first girl in

Vanguard Youth was a nurse. One of the best known symbolic figures of all the Vietnamese female doctors in the American war is certainly Dang Thuy Tram (1942—1970). She was born to a family of high-ranking medical cadres — her father, an outstanding surgeon, managed a hospital in Hanoi, and her mother taught at pharmacological faculty of the Hanoi Medical University. The girl followed the path and graduated with honors from the Medical University, but then threw all the brilliant prospects aside in 1966 and volunteered to the Southern frontline as it was where her beloved was fighting at the moment. They did not reunite as she was charged to manage a local hospital in a settlement of Duc Pho, Quang Ngai province in the Central Vietnam. Every day at the work she had to solve the most difficult problems both medical and mundane, directly operated the wounded and ill, managed hospital supplies. In 1970, during an American airstrike and sweeping, she got killed while returning from a duty journey to the mountain area.

Dang Thuy Tram could have forever remained one of the anonymous victims of war or just obscure to a wide audience, if not her diary which re-emerged in 2005 when a Vietnam war veteran who had snatched it from her dead body on the day of the attack presented it in the USA and gave wide publicity to his efforts to find the author's relatives. The diary which she had kept writing for two years in two notebooks represents not only the live historical evidence, but also the special literary phenomenon thanks to her fine education.

The diary of Dang Thuy Tram has been published in several languages, including English and Russian. The film “Don't Burn” (Đừng đốt) is based on this diary. A memorial complex and a first-aid post in Duc Pho, where she was in charge of the hospital, is named after her, as are the streets in Hanoi, Ha Long, Vung Tau etc.

Concerning Vietnam war history, we have to mention a very special form of women's political involvement and peace-making: Buddhist nuns of the South Vietnam. During the “Buddhist crisis” in 1963, Buddhists of the South Vietnam intensely protested Saigon authorities, women were especially active. After the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem and escalation of military operations, Buddhist nuns of South Vietnam followed the example of Thich Quang Duc who committed the act of self-immolation in the summer of 1963. In total 32 acts of self-immolation were committed between 1963 to 1970 in South Vietnam and a half of them by women. Nhat Chi Mai (1934—1967) who committed self-immolation in May 1967 is one of the most renown. She left 10 letters of poetry which called for restoration of peace in Vietnam. The American researcher R. Topmiller in his research on peaceful fight of the Vietnamese Buddhists indicates that apart from

purely patriotic and generally humanitarian motives there was a peculiar step to emancipation in their self-immolations as thereby they “were freed from the strict hierarchy controlled by men” [Topmiller 2005].

Another significant contribution to the national liberation and the peace campaign belongs to well-known in the West Madame Binh: Nguyen Thi Binh (born in 1927), who is a diplomat and a politician, the head of the Provisional revolutionary government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the head of delegation of Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of the Republic of South Vietnam on quadripartite Paris Peace negotiations. This woman successfully and gracefully represented one of the main forces in the conflict and her signature is the one of the four signatures under the Paris Peace Accords, while the rest three were put by men.

Nguyen Thi Binh (true name — Nguyen Thi Chau Sa) came from an educated family. Her maternal grandfather was Phan Chu Trinh, one of the most prominent figures of the national liberation movement in the early 20th century. Sa spent her childhood and youth in Phnom Penh, Cambodia where she studied in the elite lycee Sisovat. After school, she joined patriotic students and youth campaigns in Saigon, for which she got jailed for 3 years. In 1954 she moved to the North and underwent special political training as a promising young leader. She subsequently was recommended to change her name to Nguyen Thi Binh for secrecy reasons, and then took over Viet Cong's external relations [*Nguyễn Thị Bình* 2012]. Due to her good looks and fair command of French she excelled in promoting NLF's interests through creation of favourable perception across the world and charm offensive in favor of NLF.

Since 1968 she led PRG mission at the Paris peace negotiations (as PRG all-terms Foreign Minister) along with representatives of the DRV, the USA and the Republic of Vietnam. The next four years of participation in negotiations brought to her worldwide attention and fame of a talented diplomat under the name of “Madame Binh”.

In her autobiography, she admits that initially PRG delegation focused not so much on the negotiations results, but on the task to attract the maximum attention, and that Madam Binh did quite well [*Nguyễn Thị Bình* 2012: 88].

Despite already broad participation of women in revolutionary and political struggle of those years in Vietnam, no other person but Nguyen Thi Binh was selected for the role due to confluence of factors from her origins and upbringing to her personal skills. According to lady Borton (the American writer who had been working in Vietnam since 1969 with peacekeepers and has recently translated Nguyen Thi Binh's autobiography), “Only [*Hồ*

Chi Minh] would have chosen her; only he would have chosen a woman. It was a brilliant choice, because she was gorgeous, and fluent in French, granddaughter of the very famous patriot Phan Chu Trinh—who all sides accept as a patriot—gracious and outgoing” [Ryan 2015].

Upon arrival in Paris, besides direct participation in negotiations she embarked on ideological campaign: gave up to three interviews a day [Nguyen Thi Binh 2012], attended meetings of the Vietnamese immigrants in France, even visited London in April, 1969 and gave a speech in support of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons at the meeting on the Trafalgar Square [Ryan 2015], that should be considered quite a significant event, taking into account that the public response and national protests in the USA and Europe exerted considerable impact on terms of signing and contents of the Paris Peace Accords.

After the Vietnam War, she was appointed Minister of Education of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and from 1982 to 1986 was a member of the Central Committee of Vietnam's Communist Party, since 1987 to 1992 was Vice Head of the Central External Relations Department of Party. The National Assembly elected her twice to the position of Vice President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the terms 1992—1997 and 1997—2002. After her retirement in 2002 Nguyen Thi Binh concentrated on presiding over the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation, the Vietnam Children's Fund and the Culture Fund in memory of Phan Chu Trinh. Nowadays, at the age of 90, she continues to busy herself with forums and actions, interviews, speaking, in particular, on the threat from the People's Republic of China, just like General Vo Nguyen Giap, who used to be quite outspoken on the issue even after his hundred years' anniversary.

Other remarkable example of women patriotic involvement is collective. Family contribution and suffering in the war is represented by 45 thousand women awarded the title “Vietnamese Heroic Mother” (Bà mẹ anh hùng Việt Nam) which is awarded or posthumously awarded since 1994 to mothers who have made numerous contributions and sacrifices for the cause of national liberation, in particular to those who had lost in battle two and more children; one child, and another becoming disabled; the only child; one child and the spouse; her own life.

In 1994—2001 Vietnamese government awarded 44.253 women, including 15.033 — in the North and twice more, 29.220 — in the South [Mẹ Việt Nam 2015]. Nearly 9 thousand had lost the only child, 1.5 thousand women had lost both children, and 258 women had lost more than five children. A huge monument “Heroic mother of Vietnam” was finished in 2015 with the total expenses of 410 billion dong (about 18 million US dollars).

Social, business, educational and governmental organizations set up “pilgrimages of remembrance” (hành trình về nguồn) on regular basis, which mean short or long trips to Mothers' houses and contributions to their welfare, visiting memorial houses and burning incense sticks in veneration. Heroic mothers are the collective embodiment of the sacrifice made by women to war, fight for freedom and independence.

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Authors are also grateful to the guides in memorial houses of nation heroines Vo Thi Sau and Nguyen Thi Dinh, who provided useful details and insight into the specifics of merging state support and popular cult of veneration concerning these particular personalia.

Result analysis. Summing up the results of the research, we can point out the following typical categories of the women involved in war.

1. Members of Vanguard Youth, who remained mostly nameless, but were numerous and made the biggest contribution to the common cause. Vanguard Youth de-facto was overwhelmingly female organization while almost all the young men fought at the frontline.

2. Symbols of the revolution and guerrilla fighting which are remembered for their bravery and single deeds, like Mac Thi Buoï, Vo Thi Sau and several others.

Glorification of historical events and persons is one of effective ways of fostering patriotism and, in a broader sense, building national identity in younger generations, no doubt more positive than another common method of enemy demonizing and encouragement of nationalism up to chauvinism. Glorification of history has always been one of the effective tools of the politics for ensuring national unity of the nation, while personalization of the historical phenomena and events considerably simplifies use of this tool.

Vietnam has long-standing traditions of such glorification — the pantheon of nation protectors' spirits has been shaping since the very early Vietnamese states era. Traditional veneration of historical heroes as patron spirits is also common in modern Vietnam. In this article, Vo Thi Sau is the best example¹. The state policy goal is to embed in the popular perception the notion of the Communist Party unique role in expelling the colonizers and winning the independence, thus it directed both revolutionary idols and national liberation heroes into the same frame of the national defenders'

¹ A special study on the cult of Vo Thi Sau has been prepared by the authors [Marchenko, Synnerberg 2017].

spiritual veneration cult, and naturally merged them together thanks to the CPV propaganda efforts. The goal is to teach the new generations patriotism and priority of the national idea of independence and sovereignty, and keep the political elite legitimate through traditional institutions. Moreover, the sacralization of the female heroine of the struggle against the invaders is inherent to the Vietnamese culture. [Marchenko, Syunnerberg 2017].

3. Warriors, represented by Nguyen Thi Dinh, who organized the whole movement well-known across the nation, and built a considerable carrier in the army. This category also comprises Nguyen Thi Tien, the first woman awarded the Hero of the People's Armed Forces in DRV and Ta Thi Kieu from the South Vietnam who met Ho Chi Minh in person 6 times. To promote their contribution and ensure the historical memory, streets and schools and parks are named after them.

4. Doctors and nurses and other skilled personnel, of whom Dang Thuy Tram became symbol for her diaries ("Last night I dreamed of peace" in English translation);

5. Diplomats and politicians, represented by Nguyen Thi Binh during the war and post-war period including "normalization";

6. Buddhist nuns, many of whom actively engaged in the so-called "1963 Buddhist crisis", i.e. a series of mass protests of South Vietnamese Buddhists against the policy of the Saigon's regime.

Conclusion

The wide popularity of female historical figures shows three important things: first, this subject is now in demand in the Vietnamese society; second, the authorities managed to build an integrated approach to nation's ideological education; and third, women's organizations are keeping vigorous activity, especially the Vietnam Women's Union.

We argue that the scale and diversity of women's input to the national defence and development demonstrates that women in general were not a stand-alone specific force in opposition, and did not enjoy special privileges because of being the weaker sex. They tried as hard as men did and though results were not always equal, their contribution to common cause was not smaller. Women had to substitute men not only in supportive military preparations like in Vanguard Youth teams, which played a great part in infrastructure repair and food supply, but sometimes in outright battle.

Vietnamese women, who in peace times are the support for men, and often the main labour force in farming and trade, in wartime become not only a reliable back-up force, but also a tip of the spear to fight the invaders.

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Alexey POLYAKOV

The Problem of the Confucianism Initial Expansion in Daiviet¹

Introduction

The issue examined in this paper appears fairly important. It relates to a political and spiritual choice of direction in development of Vietnamese society in Dai Viet² during the rule of the first long-term national independent dynasty of the First Later Ly (1009—1127)³.

According to historical sources, in the 11th and 12th centuries, as well as in the last quarter of the 10th century, the dominant religion was Buddhism. Most scholars are unanimous in recognizing that Confucianism started to dominate in the political and ideological life of Daiviet during the period of the Tran dynasty (1226—1400). During the rule of the Later Le dynasty (1428—1789) it reached the highest point in its development becoming the state ideology and pushing Buddhism into the background. As for the rule of both Ly dynasties, all Vietnamese and foreign experts admit an ultimate domination of Buddhism.

Thus, there emerges a problem. Why, given so total a unanimity as to the time of the beginning of disseminating Confucianism in Daiviet and the

¹ The paper was first published as Alexey Polyakov “The Problem of the Confucianism Initial Expansion in Dai Viet”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 3 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2013), pp. 242—262.

² Dai Viet (the Great Viet), the name of the Vietnamese state in the 10th-18th centuries.

³ In Vietnamese and foreign historiography the Ly dynasty is seen as unified and uninterrupted (1009—1226). In the early 1990s, I put forward a hypothesis, having analyzed the historical events of the early 12th century, that in 1127, there was a covert replacement of dynasties. So, I propose dividing the Ly dynasty into two, the First Later Ly and the Second Later Ly [Polyakov 1996: 148—149].

dominance of Buddhism during the rule of the Ly dynasties, all Vietnamese and foreign researchers in their works accept as an indisputable matter of course the idea that several Confucian establishments were created at the end of the 11th century, the Temple of Confucius (Văn miếu), the Sons of the Fatherland School (Quốc tử giám), and the Academy (Hàn lâm viện). Among the Russian Orientalists, Professor D.V. Deopik, Doctor of History, begs to differ. In his textbook, *A History of Vietnam*, he writes, “Buddhist monks and also the priests of the ancestral cult enjoyed all manner of protection, while there is no reliable data on Confucians. As for crude attempts by later Confucian chroniclers at inserting in the 11th century history obviously made-up ‘facts’ about the spread of that ideology, they merely confirm the impression that it was poorly represented” [Deopik 1994: 98]. The authors of the Russian translation of the *Complete Book of the Historical Records of Daiviet* assume an ambiguous position on the issue. In the annotations on this source, they write that the infrequently mentioned creation of Confucian institutions in the late 11th century “may be due to both subsequent inserts by Confucian historiographers in the 15th century, and purposeful selection of information by Buddhist historiographers of the Tran dynasty epoch” [Complete Book 2012-3: 347].

What makes the subject topical is its novelty. In this paper, I put forward a substantiated hypothesis without analog in other research works on the matter. It consists in the fact that the appearance of the said Confucian institutions is an interpolation of later Vietnamese historical sources. This hypothesis helps fill the gap in the study of Vietnam's medieval history.

Research procedure. In this research, I analyzed information about the religious and philosophical situation in Daiviet the 11th century. I compared the time of the Confucian institutions establishment in Vietnam and China.

Research methodology. The subject was researched by comparing information from earlier and later Vietnamese chronicles until the time when Confucianism started to be disseminated in Daiviet. I conducted etymological analysis of the Confucian terms given above too.

Research materials. In this paper, to prove my hypothesis, I resorted to the Vietnamese chronicles *A Brief History of Viet* [Việt sử lược 2005], the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Dai Viet* by Ngo Si Lien [Đại Việt sử ký 2002], *Short Annals of An Nam* by Le Tac [Lê Tắc 2002]. Among the works used were papers by Vietnamese and Russian scholars, and also a Chinese etymological dictionary.

The research is written on the basis of my previously published works. The first article on the subject, *On the Date of the Construction of Van Mieu in*

Thanglong and the Beginnings of Confucianism in Vietnam, was published in the *Hanoi University Bulletin* in 1988 [Poliakop 1988: 37–45). In 2009, I delivered a report in Hanoi on the role of Confucianism in Daiviet during the rule of the First Later Ly dynasty at an international conference on Confucianism in Vietnam [Polyakov 2009: 689–704]. In 2013, I had the article *On the Issue of the Beginnings of Confucianism in Daiviet* published in the collection of papers named *Vietnam Studies* by the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies of the Institute for *Far Eastern* Countries, the Russian Academy of Sciences [Polyakov 2013: 242–262]. In the same year, the journal *Historical Research* of the History Institute under the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences published the article *On the Beginnings of Confucianism in Daiviet* [Polyakov 2013: 9–19].

Each publication was a substantial supplement for the previous one and contained a fuller proof base for the hypothesis. It should be said that these publications did nothing to sway the traditional point of view of Vietnamese historians on the issue. In the four-volume *History of Vietnam* published in 2012, Professor Phan Huy Le wrote, as was customary, that Van Mieu was built in 1070. Yet he made a footnote to the effect that A.B. Polyakov did not think that Van Mieu had been built then [Lịch sử 2012: 550]. A likely reason for the unshakeable conviction of Vietnamese scholars as to the time when the Confucian temple and the Sons of the Fatherland School were created is that these institutions are proclaimed the first Vietnamese university, the national pride of the country.

The main part of research

The Beginnings of Confucianism in Daiviet. In Jiaochau¹ during the Northern Dependence, the Chinese administration did its best to disseminate Confucian ideology. Vietnamese historian of the 14th century Le Tac in the chronicle *Short Annals of An Nam* reported certain facts about the matter. In Chapter XIV, *Educational Institutions*, he writes that Jiaochau, with the help of examinations and behavior standards, enlightened the people up to a point [Lê Tấn 2002: 251]. It should be pointed out that at the time penetration of Confucianism into Vietnam is highly unlikely. The Qin dynasty (246–207 B.C.) whose army leader and official Zhao Tuo was (eventually proclaiming himself the Emperor of Namviet) followed the

¹ Jiaochau is an administrative unit corresponding to the northern part of today's Vietnam that was named by the Chinese during the Northern Dependence in the early 2nd century.

ideas of legism and severely repressed Confucianism by “burning books and interring Confucians.” One can suppose that since the time of Zhao Tuo the only thing disseminated in Jiaochau was the Chinese hieroglyphics. Further Le Tac writes that during the rule of the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-8 A.D.) Chinese administrators set up educational institutions and taught the people to observe virtue [Lê Tấn 2002: 242]. It is perfectly possible that from then on Confucianism started taking hold in Vietnam. Apparently under the Tang dynasty (618–907), schools were set up and Confucian temples were built in Jiaochau, although there is no specific information to this effect. Le Tac also wrote about competitive examinations during the Ly rule. By the end of the 9th century, the Tang dynasty had fallen into decay. In 880, the Chinese administration and troops of that dynasty left Jiaochau.

From 880 to 1009, the first year of the First Later Ly reign, 130 years elapsed, it is a period of a life of several generations. Then Confucian officials of the Tang dynasty with Vietnamese or Chinese roots had long been dead. Most Confucian written monuments had been lost, and there were no new supplies from China. Previously, people normally wrote on silk and bamboo. At the same time, Buddhist canons written in Wenyen were carefully preserved, rewritten and brought over from China.

From 880 to 968, the real power in the regions belonged to the local nobility who had their own considerable armed forces. They all fought with each other to get more territory and central power. All of them, like the rulers of the first short-lived independent dynasties of Khuc (905–923) and Ngo (938–965) had no use for a complex bureaucratic Confucian apparatus to govern. Buddhist monks at the time did not yet take part in governance.

Under the Dinh (960–980) and Earlier Le (980–1009) dynasties Buddhist monks were beginning to serve as civil servants and even advisors to the emperors. They exerted noticeable influence on political decisions, and also participated in diplomatic contacts with the Song dynasty (960–1279) as they were literate in Chinese, the language of Buddhist canons. In the late 10th and 11th centuries, the Buddhist Sangha was dominant in the state. Buddhist monks, such as Khuong Viet and Van Hanh, were advisors to the emperors of the Dinh and Ly dynasties. Vietnamese historian of the 13th century Le Van HUU, author of the *Historical Records of Đại Việt*, reported that by the time of Emperor Le Dai Hanh's demise (1005) “... there were no Confucian subjects who could help and explain the rules of giving posthumous names” [Đại Việt 1998 Vol.1: 231]. This phrase points to the fact that by 1009, the time when the First Later Ly dynasty came to power, the state

apparatus contained virtually no Confucian officials. Further Le Van Huu wrote, “A mere two years elapsed since Ly Thai To¹ ascended the throne, but temples of the ancestors have not yet been built, the altars to the deities of the Earth and Cereals have not been put up, and there are eight [Buddhist temples] already built in the Region of Thienduc, besides, temples and monasteries have been restored in the provinces. In the capital, more than a thousand men have taken monastic vows.... More than half of the people are monks; in the country, wherever you look, there are temples everywhere” [Đại Việt 1998-1: 242].

Among literate people, Buddhist monks were in an overwhelming majority. They continued to hold official posts at court, and took part in dealing with state problems. They also played a considerable role in the covert replacement of dynasties in 1127. The centers of literacy were temples where the children of aristocrats, officials, and Buddhist monks were taught. Improvement of the state apparatus was achieved by increasing the numbers of officials trained at temples. That, too, helped the Buddhist Sangha carry weight at the court.

On the Issue of Setting Up Confucian Institutions in the 1070s. Vietnamese historiographer of the 15th century Ngo Si Lien, a subject of the Le dynasty (1428—1527), was the first to write in the chronicle codex *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt* about the establishment of Confucian institutions in the second half of the 11th century in the capital of Dai Viet, Thanglong. Under the year 1070 he reports, “In that year Van Mieu was built, the statues of Confucius, Zhou Gong and four canonized [followers] were sculpted, the portraits of seventy-two disciples [of Confucius] were painted. Sacrifice was given in four seasons. The crown prince was taught there” [Đại Việt 1998-1: 245]. Under the year 1075, “An edict was issued to select experts in the canon and run a competition in the Confucian teaching for three state examinations” [Đại Việt-1: 277]. Under the year 1076, “civil officials who could read and write were selected and sent to the Sons of the Fatherland School” [Đại Việt 1998-1: 280]. Under the year 1077, “...examinations were held for officials in writing, count, and criminal law” [Đại Việt 1998-1: 280]. Under the year 1086, “they held examinations for educated people in Celestial Empire and sent them as officials to the Academy [Đại Việt 1998-1: 281].

The chronicle codex of Ngo Si Lien is so highly respected that no one took trouble to wonder why he was the first and the only one to report so

¹ Ly Thai To (974—1028), the first emperor and founder of the First Later Ly dynasty.

precipitous a progress in Confucianism in Daiviet in the second half of the 11th century. Subsequent historical sources speak of the same thing, but always after him and with references to his chronicle codex, or without references as of something that goes without saying. Earlier chronicles that have survived to this day, such as the *Brief History of [Great] Viet*, annotations by Le Van Huu, which are in the chronicle codeex of Ngo Si Lien, *Short Annals of An Nam* by Le Tac, and also epigraphic sources of the Ly dynasty rule say nothing of Van Mieu, School of the Sons of the Fatherland School, the Academy and Confucian competitive examinations in the second half of the 11th century (with the only exception of Le Tac who wrote about Confucian competitions, more of which later).

Ngo Si Lien based his chronicle codex on the chronicle by Le Van Huu, *Historical Records of Đại Việt* (13th century), and the chronicles by Phan Phu Tien who followed up the work of the latter. Neither chronicle has survived; after they had been used by Ngo Si Lien, they disappeared. How Ngo Si Lien felt about his sources can be seen from the text with which he prefaced the chronicle codex *The Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*, “Should any events be forgotten or missed, they [are] to be added; if the customs are indecent, they are to be rejected, if there are sections in the writing that are not properly written they are to be altered, if occasionally there occur kind of evil acts that people can be weaned from, one must express one’s opinion omitting any coarseness” [Đại Việt 1998-1: 100]. Small wonder then that Confucian Ngo Si Lien could have filled the “gap” in the history of Confucianism in Daiviet transferring the Confucian institutions of the Tran and Later Le dynasties to the period of the Ly dynasties’ rule.

Let me say at once that historical literature habitually uses the incorrect translation of the name of the Confucian temple as the Temple of Literature, Van Mieu in Vietnamese, Wen Miao in Chinese (文廟)¹, for it distorts the meaning. To discover when and how the name of the Confucius Temple Wen Miao (Van Mieu) appeared in China, let us turn to the Chinese encyclopedic dictionary *Ci Yuan*. In the entry *Wen Miao* the term is translated as the Temple of Confucius (孔子廟), and not as the Temple of Literature. The

¹ As I have said earlier on, in 1991 a special issue of the periodical on Vietnam studies came out in Vietnam in English and French, *Vietnamese Studies and Etude Vietnamienne*. In that issue the Temple of Confucius, Van Mieu, is translated as Temple of Literature and Le temple de la Litterature, with the name Van Mieu-Quoc Tu Giam in brackets. The same issue carried an article of mine, in English and in French, accordingly, “On the Date of the Construction of Van Mieu (Temple of Literature) and the Beginnings of Confucianism in Vietnam.” In both the title and the text of the article the Vietnamese editors translated it as Temple of Literature on their own initiative.

same entry says that in the year 27 of the Kaiyuan reign (739) of the Tang dynasty (618—907) Confucius was titled Wen Xuan Wang (Văn Tuyên vương in Vietnamese), and the Temple of Confucius was named the Temple/miao of Wen Xuan Wang (Вэнь Сюань-ван мяо, 文宣王廟). Later, under the Yuan (1280—1367) and Ming (1368—1644) dynasties the commonly accepted name was Wen Miao (Văn Miếu in Vietnamese) [*Ci yuan* 1980: 1362]. That is the result of a curtailed appellation derived from Wen Xuan Wang miao by removing the two middle Hieroglyphs. Thus it turns out that in Vietnam the term Van Mieu (Wen Miao) appears 200-odd years earlier than in China! Obviously, this could not have happened. This fact juggling of Ngo Si Lien's alone makes one doubt his reports of the establishment of the Sons of the Fatherland School and the Academy in the 1070s.

Another weighty proof of the subsequent interpolation of Ngo Si Lien's words in the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt* about the building of the Temple of Literature in 1070 is the following thing. One of the four canonized Confucius followers whose statues, according to Ngo Si Lien, were erected in the temple was Ancient Chinese philosopher Meng Zi. Interestingly, his statue was introduced in the pantheon of the Confucius Temple on the initiative of Chinese reformer Wang Anshi (1021—1086) who became the first minister in 1070. As the initiative was far from the first thing he proposed in his lofty post, it turns out that the Vietnamese outpaced the Chinese in this matter, too, which certainly could not have been the case [Nguyễn Tôn Nhan 2005: 828].

It may be interesting to note that not only Le Van Huu, but the man who reported the establishment of these Confucian institutions as well, Ngo Si Lien, omit to comment in any way on the seemingly positive initiatives by Ly Thanh Tong and Ly Nhan Tong. In this case, the impression is that all these Confucian innovations were inserted in the chronicle codex *The Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt* even after Ngo Si Lien's time.

If one is to believe the information given by Ngo Si Lien, one may think that in the second half of the 11th century the ideological system of Dai Viet experienced a radical shift from Buddhism to Confucianism. The centers for training literate officials were now allegedly not Buddhist temples, but Confucian institutions. In that case, it would be natural to expect a sharp increase in the number of Confucian officials. Besides, the dynamics of setting up similar institutions imply also the predominance of top-level Confucian officials at court who had managed to get the position of Sangha weakened drastically in the political life of society. Contemporary Vietnamese historians, in compliance with the tradition, still believe that the establishment of Confucian institutions in the second half of the 11th century in Thanglong was a

fact. At the same time, they are forced to admit that at the time there were very few Confucian officials at court and their influence was insignificant. In the first volume of *A History of Vietnam* issued in late 2012 under the general editorship of Professor Phan Huy Le it says, “The number of educated people at the imperial court was in reality fairly small. One might say that the state during the Ly period started setting considerable store by Confucianism, yet Confucian scholars did not yet play a major role at the imperial court or in the administration in the regions at all levels” [Lịch sử 2012-1: 551].

In a way, however, this kind of figure could be the First Minister of Ly Thanh Tong, Ly Dao Thanh (?–1081), but only some researchers consider him to be Confucian (in particular, Vietnamese historian Trần Trọng Kim wrote about this in his monograph *Confucianism*) [Trần Trọng Kim 1971: 370]. Historical sources give no direct indication that this was so, moreover, in the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt* Ngô Sĩ Liên criticizes Ly Dao Thanh for worshipping the spirit of the late Ly Thanh Tong in the temple while pretending to venerate Buddha [Đại Việt 1998-1: 289]. By the Confucian norms, venerating the spirit of the deceased emperor could be done only in the imperial temple by the emperor himself, and certainly not by his subjects.

Measures by the First Later Ly in the Religious and Ideological Sphere.

The rule of Ly Thai To (1009–1028). The coming to power of his dynasty had been predicted by Buddhist monk Van Hanh who was the monarch's mentor in the Temple of Luc To. With this kind of upbringing the emperor became a firm adherent of this religion and pursued policies aimed at disseminating Buddhism in the country. “He built temples and stupas, selected more than a thousand capital dwellers making them Buddhist and Dao monks” [Brief History 1980: 143]. The emperor collected Buddhist canons. He sent to China envoys for Tripitaka. The chronicles speak of many miraculous signs during his reign. It says of monk Van Hanh that he did not die but was reincarnated, which is in keeping with the Buddhist teaching of karma rebirth [Brief History 1980: 144]. It is reported that two temples were built and four statues erected to celestial rulers. According to Mahayana Buddhism, they, together with 12 causes and effects, constituted that which had originally engendered Buddhism. Direct mentions of Confucius and Confucianism are absent from the texts. The lengthy and flowery title given to the emperor by officials at the ascent to the throne contains some elements typical of Confucian concepts. Various titles were subsequently conferred on every Ly emperor without exception. However, despite a number of Confucian concepts used in the title, the titles themselves blatantly ran counter to Confucian norms. Already Le Van Huu in the 13th century, and

Ngo Si Lien in the 15th century, in their annotations to the chronicle codex *The Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*, criticized the system of titling emperors of the Later Ly dynasty for excessive number of hieroglyphs that at times amounted to 50, and incorrect use of their elements from the point of view of a Confucian, if not a person of Chinese culture as such [Đại Việt 1998-1: 239]. They explained these mistakes by the fact that the emperor and his officials were not well versed in Confucian canons, and considered these titles mere self-aggrandizement. To substantiate his criticism Ngo Si Lien cited a passage from *Shu jing* which said that ten hieroglyphs in the title of an emperor were already in excess. The titles of Vietnamese aristocrats and names of civil servants' posts outwardly resembled Chinese analogs, yet their content was different, and so the Chinese were baffled by them. That was remarked on by Chinese ambassadors visiting Daiviet.

The rule of Ly Thai Tong (1028—1054), the second Ly emperor, had been predicted by a prophet [Brief History 1980: 146]. In the wake of his predecessor, he continued to protect Buddhism. He built 150 Buddhist and Dao monasteries [Brief History 1980: 147]. The chronicles speak of discoveries of Buddhist relics and ancient Buddha statues, thus emphasizing the oldness of Buddhism in Vietnam. *A Brief History of [Grate]Viet* in the chapter on Ly Thai Tong gives the first mention of Confucianism: a miracle occurred in a temple that not only had nothing to do with Confucianism, but like any miracle was alien to its spirit, yet the emperor ordered a Confucian official to compose an ode to mark that unusual event” [Brief History 1980: 150]. What comes to the fore is, therefore, the miracle that occurred in a Buddhist temple, while the Confucian official is mentioned in passing, his importance is belittled, and the task itself would have been indignantly rejected by a genuine Confucian. Thai Tong arranged praying sessions for granting progeny in Buddhist temples.

The third emperor of the First Later Ly dynasty, Thanh Tong (1054—1072), is reputed to have descended from a deity. The chronicles relate a legend in the Buddhist spirit about immaculate conception which resulted in the birth of Thanh Tong [Brief History 1980: 154]. The construction of pagodas and stupas continued across the country, among them the thirty-tiered stupa built in 1057, the first of its kind. On the emperor's orders a pagoda was erected in Bashon to pray in for progeny to be granted [Brief History 1980: 158]. Set up in the imperial palace were the statues of arhats, Brahma, and Shakyamuni Buddha [Brief History 1980: 156]. The court favored Champa (the country in Central Vietnam) music whose canons were translated by the emperor himself. It should be added that the music did not in the least conform to the Chinese Confucian ritual music. The emperor's

predilection for Buddhism is also shown by the huge hieroglyph Buddha he personally painted, as the chronicles said.

During the reign of Ly Nhan Tong, the fourth emperor of the dynasty (1072—1127), especial attention is given to the Buddhist cult rites. For example, after the monarch's ascent to the throne the rite of washing a Buddha statue was performed, and a solemn procession came out to meet the statue transported from the temple of Phap Van to the capital to pray for a sunny day. Nhan Tong, like his predecessors, sent envoys to China for Buddhist canons (e.g., for the Great Tripitaka). The frequent instances of this religious literature brought into the country can also imply that it was used in teaching would-be monks and civil servants.

Buddhism, therefore, remains a dominant religion. Along with Buddhism, the traditional Vietnamese ancestor cult was also practiced.

As for staffing the official corps with literate people, *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* has a curious piece of information under the year 1272, "An edict was issued to select monks who gave [the emperor] poetry, and also monks and civil servants acquainted with writing and to be placed under the authority of *thu jia* so as to make up the deficiency of civil servants" [*Brief History* 1980: 164]. As I have said above, the characteristic thing is that, according to the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*, two years previously, in 1070, the Temple of Confucius (Van Mieu) had allegedly been built, while in 1075, Confucian examinations were held. It should also be mentioned that information about all those Confucian reforms is to be found only in this chronicle codex, while in *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* it is conspicuous by its absence.

All emperors of both Ly dynasties were devout adherents of the Buddhist teaching, which in Daiviet had also incorporated some elements of Hinduism and Daoism. At court, a lot of attention was given to fortune telling, prophesying, interpretation of various signs. Even Ngo Si Lien himself, following Le Van Huu, criticized them for that in his annotations.

Which historical events could be favorable to the Confucian reforms specified above? Here are the chief events that occurred at the time: 1069, the major Champa campaign of Daiviet troops under the command of the emperor himself; 1070, military operations against highland tribes' chieftains; in the same year, a severe drought afflicted the country; 1071, emperor Ly Thanh Tong fell gravely ill; in the first moon of 1072, the emperor passed away, and Ly Nhan Tong ascended to the throne; 1073, court conspiracy; 1075—1077, war with the Songs that took all the forces of Daiviet. As we can see, the time from 1069 to 1077 was not conducive to setting up Confucian institutions.

At the Problem of Confucian Examinations in the 11th Century. Let us look more closely at the issue of Confucian competitive examinations during the rule of both Ly dynasties. Le Tac in his *Short Annals of An Nam* wrote, “By the time of the Song reign Annam had become a state, the House of Ly had set the rules of competitive examinations to be held once every three years, and established [the degrees] *trang nguyen*, *bang nguyen*, *tham hoa lang*, making that a classical standard [Lê Tắc 2002: 251]. Thus, Le Tac insists that competitive examinations in the Ly period were Confucian. This is totally wrong. According to the chronicles, those examinations in the Ly dynasty period were examinations of three religions. Confucian examinations proper start with the Tran dynasty. According to the self-same Ngo Si Lien, the degrees of *trang nguyen*, *bang nguyen* and *tham hoa lang* also begin to be conferred at the same time. The allegation that examinations were held every three years is not correct either. Le Tac, a subject of the Tran dynasty, transferred the system of competitive examinations held in the reign of the Tran dynasty to the time of the Ly dynasties' rule. That reminds one of a similar move by Ngo Si Lien, who was a subject of the Le dynasty, when he transferred the creation of Confucian institutions that existed under the Le dynasty to the period of the First Later Ly dynasty rule.

In the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*, Ngo Si Lien mentions only five competitive examinations during the reign of both Ly dynasties. They were held in 1086, 1152, 1165, 1185, and 1193. According to the book *Vietnamese Winners of Competitive Examinations in 1075—1919* issued in Hanoi in 2006, throughout the reign of the Ly dynasties historical sources mention just 11 winners [Các nhà khoa bảng 2006: 35—37]. That is, 11 winners in 150 years that elapsed since the establishment of the Sons of the Fatherland School and alleged start of competitive examinations! This information makes doubt the entire system of holding Confucian competitive examinations under the Ly. What attracts attention is the fact that during the time when the so-called Confucian reforms were carried out there were only two of the first winners, Le Van Thinh and Mac Hien Tith. The other nine took part in examinations held in the reign of Ly Cao Tong (1176—1210) and Ly Hue Tong (1211—1225), that is after 1176. It seems rather doubtful whether the supposed first winner, Le Van Thinh, of the supposed competition in 1075 was a Confucian. In 1096 (according to Ngo Si Lien himself) he wished to stage a coup d'etat and assassinate the emperor; characteristically, to do that, he allegedly turned into a tiger with the help of magic [Đại Việt 1998-1: 297]. Indeed, an extremely unusual Confucian, who not only omitted observing the duty of a subject toward his emperor, but also so aptly resorted to magic invariably condemned by Confucians. The second competition winner

known to us, Mac Hien Tith, is no shining example of anything either; according to Ngo Si Lien's chronicle codex, that laureate took part in the 1086 competitions and was sent to the Academy, while the *Brief History of Great Viet* says the following about him, "At the time king (vua)¹ was young, [Mac] Hien Tith started an affair with the widowed empress. So, he was uniformly feared." And further it is reported that after the demise of the widowed empress he was sent into exile [Brief History 1980: 198–199]. The said chronicle does not mention Mac Hien Tith's participation in examinations, moreover, it describes his adultery with the widowed empress, which by Confucian standards is unmitigated blasphemy and should be severely punished. Another circumstance that catches the eye is that *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* dates the events involving Mac Hien Tith 1189, that is a hundred years later than the date of Ngo Si Lien's report of the man. It should be noted that to this day no one has noted this controversial information in the sources.

Meanwhile, *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* also contains most interesting facts about the competitive examinations in the reign of the Second Later Ly. Under 1179 it is said, "Vua, together with the widowed empress, watched the children of Buddhist monks and civil servants(!) examined in the knowledge of Prajna paramita by heart," and also deigned to visit the palace of Phuong Minh where *hoang nam* were examined in writing verses by ancient poets and count. In early winter, during the tenth moon, [vua and the widowed empress] deigned to visit the palace of Xung Tuong where the children of Confucians, Daoists, and Buddhists were examined in writing ancient verses, and also in writing odes, poetry, interpretation of classical books, count, and other subjects" [Brief History 1980: 195]. This passage in the chronicle suggests the following. Some Buddhist examinations held at the time involved not only the children of Buddhist monks but also civil servants; the children examined represented three religions, so those were not merely Confucian competitive examinations; some examinations were held specifically for *hoang nam*, i.e. free peasants of communities (not even their children), which implied both the presence of literate people in that milieu, and a chance of their rise to another, higher, estate of officials. The thing that catches one's attention is that all examinations were held in one or another palace, not at Van Mieu or the School of the Country's Sons, which would have been in the nature of things. This may be yet another proof that they did not exist at the time.

¹ In the chronicle *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* the Chinese editor replaced the hieroglyph 皇帝, *emperor*, with the hieroglyph 王 — *ruler, prince, monarch*; *vua, vuong* in Vietnamese.

The Dating of the Building of the Confucius Temple in Hanoi. As to the issue of the Confucius Temple, there is information on that both in *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* and in the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*. Both chronicles report under 1156, “the Temple of Confucius was built.” *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* is the first to mention the Confucius Temple (the temple in the text is denoted by another hieroglyph, 孔子廟 and 孔子祠, respectively). Under 1171, both chronicles speak of repairs to the Temple of Van Tuen vuong, i.e. Confucius. The code of Ngo Si Lien uses the hieroglyph 脩, while *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* has its synonym, 修. Both hieroglyphs mean primarily *to correct, repair*, yet they also mean *to build, erect, construct*. It is noteworthy that in this case the earlier chronicle *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* also writes about repairs to the Temple of Van Tuen vuong. These reports of both chronicles are not to be doubted, as the name of the Confucius Temple, Van Tuen vuong Mieu, in contrast to the later contraction of Van Mieu, existed, as I have observed earlier on, since the Tang dynasty. As to the series of examinations held in 1179 in palaces instead of in the Temple, it points to the fact that it was simply a temple for worshipping Confucius, not a Confucian school. In this context, the words of Ngo Si Lien to the effect that Van Mieu was built in 1070 and the crown prince was educated there look erroneous.

It is also interesting to look at the following report in Ngo Si Lien's chronicle codex under 1253 that described already the reign of the Tran dynasty, “In the sixth moon, the State Higher School was founded, statues of Confucius, Zhou Gong and Meng Zi were put up, 72 pictures were painted by the [more capable] disciples” [Đại Việt-2: 25]. As we see, the pantheon of this school looks uncannily like that of Van Mieu in 1070.

Let us look in more detail at some points in the report of Professor Nguyen Tai Thu at the first international conference on Confucianism in Vietnam, “Confucianism of Vietnam in the Beginning Period of Independence and the Time of Foundation of Van Mieu at Thanglong” (2004). The professor writes, “During the reign of Ngo, Dinh, Early Le and the beginning of the Ly rule, Buddhism was still more powerful than Confucianism; moreover, the number of Confucian scholars at the time was small, so it was a problem to found Van Mieu in Vietnam; this could only be achieved during Northern Dependence” [Nguyễn Tài Thu 2006: 98]. That is, he wants to say that, owing to lack of knowledgeable Confucians, in 1070 it could only be repaired, but must have been built considerably earlier. He cites as proof the hieroglyph *tu, to repair* (脩), which Ngo Si Lien uses in his chronicle codex. But this hieroglyph, as I have said earlier, also means *to build (construct, create, found, establish)* [Nguyễn Tài Thu 2006: 97]. Incidentally,

translators of the chronicle codex into Vietnamese translated this hieroglyph as *built* (*lam*, in Vietnamese). However, in my view, Van Mieu was neither built nor repaired in 1070. I fully concur with the opinion of Professor Nguyen Tai Thu. More than that, I can add that if there were no proper conditions for creating the Confucius Temple at the time, there were even fewer grounds for establishing the School of the Country's Sons and the Academy. But I do not agree to the term Van Mieu, which refers to a later period. The professor himself writes of the Confucius Temple during the reign of the Tang dynasty, “Tang Thai Tong not only ordered building a Temple of Confucius (Khổng miếu) at the metropolitan higher education institution (nhà Thái học) to worship the Perfectly Wise Confucius and Teacher Nhan Hoi, but also ordered all schools in all provinces and districts to build Confucius temples” [Nguyễn Tài Thu 2006: 99]. That is schools first, and Confucius temples afterward attached to the former, while Ngo Si Lien has it the other way around.

Given the above, one can put forward two hypotheses that explain the appearance in the by Ngo Si Lien information about the creation of Confucian institutions and competitions in 1070—1077.

Hypothesis number one. Constructing the Temple of Confucius (Van Mieu), holding examinations and founding the Confucian “college,” the School of the Sons of the Fatherland School, and the Academy at the time is fiction. Confucian Ngo Si Lien could have moved these events back to an earlier date than was the case. The reason for this falsification could have been the desire to prove that Vietnam had from the start of its rebirth been a civilized state by Confucian standards. Attempts of Vietnamese Confucians at moving real historical events or myths further back into the depth of times are clearly reflected in several historical sources. For instance, the fantastic dating of the emergence of the Hung vuong dynasty (the year 2879 B.C.) stands out, as it allegedly remained in power (with 18 rulers) until 258 B.C. This dating occurs in the same code by Ngo Si Lien. By way of comparison, let me observe that *A Brief History of [Great] Viet*, an earlier and so a more trustworthy source, gives a less fantastic date of the emergence of the Hung vuong dynasty, the 7th century B.C., which roughly corresponds to the time of Dong Son culture. The fact that *A Brief History of [Great] Viet* omits to mention the Confucian undertakings of 1070—1077 is apparently no accident.

Hypothesis number two. During the reign of Ly Thanh Tong — Ly Nhan Tong, the building of a temple in Confucius' honor (not Van Mieu), Confucian examinations and foundation of a state school and the Academy could have been announced strictly nominally. In that case, the emperors of

the Ly dynasties, for considerations of prestige, formally copied the Chinese institutions of the time without filling them with real content.

The first hypothesis appears more plausible. The entire construction of the Temple of Confucius, competitive examinations and foundation of the School of the Country's Sons and the Academy in the second half of the 11th century could not have sprung out of nowhere. For that, it was necessary to have a certain number of Confucian officials and their growing influence at court. However, as all Vietnamese and Chinese historical sources suggest, that did not happen. They all criticize Buddhist ways at court and the pro-Buddhist policies of the two Ly dynasties, moreover, the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*, as I have said earlier, is no exception. The state apparatus of the time contained no high-ranking Confucians who could set up similar Confucian institutions.

Research results. Based on this research, I concluded that during the rule of the First Later Ly dynasty, or of the Second Later Ly dynasty, for that matter, Confucianism played no significant role at court or in state governance. Information about the establishment of such Confucian institutions as the Temple of Confucius, the Sons of the Fatherland School, and the Academy in the 1070s in Daiviet is a later interpolation (the 15th century) of Ngo Si Lien, author of the *Complete Book of Historical Records of Đại Việt*.

Conclusion

The absence of Confucian institutions in the late 11th century certainly did not point to lack of culture in Daiviet. On the contrary, the country had a flourishing highly developed Buddhist culture that steadily progressed since the Northern Dependence, and once the latter was shaken off, Daiviet embarked on its own independent road of development. And only much later, as the socioeconomic relations progressed and grew increasingly complex, did the country's leaders volunteer to adopt Confucianism, proceeding from their inner needs.

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PART FIVE CULTURE

Nina GRIGOREVA

The Muong Ritual Narratives: from “Superstitions” to Intangible Cultural Heritage¹

Introduction

The article analyzes the specific features as well as historical and cultural significance of the ritual narratives of the Muong people (one of the Northern Vietnam's ethnic minorities) in both global and local contexts, traces the changing perception of these narratives in the DRV-SRV and also considers some problems related to heritagisation process. The more detailed study is focused on the body of narratives united in the mythoepic cycle *The Birth of the Earth and Water*.

The **subject is topical** as there have been no proper scholarly interpretations of Muong ritual narratives in the international academic milieu so far while in 2015 they were given the status of Vietnam's national cultural heritage.

Research materials. The research is based on the published texts of narratives collected and recorded in various provinces of Northern Vietnam, my own field materials gathered during the 2015—2016 expeditions, as well as secondary sources on the research subject.

Research procedure. The research was conducted through gathering and grouping information on traditional culture of the Muong people, their beliefs and rites; content and purpose of various kinds of narratives, place of

¹ The research was supported by the Russian Foundation for Humanities, Project 16-24-09001. The paper was first published as Nina Grigoreva “The Muong Ritual Narratives: from “Superstitions” to Intangible Cultural Heritage”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 6 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2016), pp. 309—323.

rituals accompanied by narratives within social life of the Muong in the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, and on their treatment by the Vietnamese state.

Research methodology is based on content and comparative analysis of the narratives, related rituals and their interpretation in Vietnam within the specified period.

The theoretical basis of the research is built based on the concept of differentiation between the Viet and the Muong suggested by Taylor [Taylor 2001]; understanding of cultural heritage policies in postcolonial countries [Herwitz 2012; Salemink 2001, 2013, 2016]; conceptual approaches of Russian and international scholars to understanding oral and oral-derived traditional epics.

The main part of research

The Muong are one of the 53 officially recognized ethnic minorities in Vietnam, the closest ethnolinguistic relatives and neighbours of the Viet (Kinh) people, the majority ethnic group in the country. According to the modern classification of Vietnam's ethnic groups, the Muong and the Viet form the Viet-Muong subgroup within the Vietic peoples; their shared origin and cultural affinity is invariably emphasized both in scientific descriptions and mass media.

Unlike the Vietnamese who do not maintain the tradition of oral narration, the Muong still reproduce many forms of traditional folklore when performing rites. The largest and most significant in historical and cultural terms is the body of narratives performed during the funeral rite. An important part of these narratives is made up of tales united into the mythoepic cycle *The Birth of the Earth and Water*.

In 2015, the Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO conferred on the Muong ritual narratives in the Hoa Binh province (*Mo Mường Hòa Bình*) the title of national intangible cultural heritage. This event emphasized the tremendous cultural importance of the Muong oral traditions and crowned the process of complicated interaction between the state and Muong folk culture unfolding over several decades in the second half of the 20th century.

This paper attempts to examine the specific features of the Muong ritual narratives and analyze the changes in their perception in Vietnam from the mid-1950s to the mid-2010s. The research is drawn on published texts of the narratives in Vietnamese and in Muong languages, my own field materials, as well as secondary sources on the traditional Muong culture and their oral heritage.

The Muong, The Muong and the Viet. In the past, when ethnic categories were not yet a common notion in Vietnam, the word *mường* was used by Viet speakers in the valleys of the northern part of the present-day Vietnam territory to denote groups of people resident west of them, upstream, in small settlements in the foothills. Historically, the term was used not only to denote Viet-speaking groups (ancestors of the modern Muong), but also to name the Tai-speaking population in the same areas¹.

The idea that the Muong represent a separate ethnic group, according to Keith Taylor, goes back to the 1920s, when the name *Muong* became a category of the French knowledge to denote the population of the foothills whose language was close to that of the Viet people living in the valleys². The term *Muong* established as the official appellation of that ethnic group is an exonym and is not used by the Muong for self-identification. The Muong themselves use this term only to denote a group of several settlements, a district, or, by association, each of the four worlds that make up their cosmological system. In this meaning, the term *Muong* is close to its meaning in Thai languages. The autonym of the Muong is *Mol/Monl/Moan*, depending on the dialect; it is a Mon-Khmer word meaning *man*.

The term *Viet* (*Việt*) adopted to denote ethnic Vietnamese is a Vietnamese version of the term that is pronounced *yue* in modern Mandarin Chinese, *yuht* in Guangdong dialect or *dit/yit* in Muong. Currently, this term is used by ethnic Vietnamese as self-identification, along with the word *Kinh*³, which is considered as the official ethnonym. According to Keith Taylor, the term *Viet* is not indigenous to Vietnam [Taylor 1991: 42]. One can add to this that originally it did not function as an ethnonym either; it was a politonym used to designate the state (*Đại Việt*, Great Viet). Eventually, as the term continued to denote the dwellers of the country and primarily its ruling elite it gradually acquired the function of an ethnonym.

The ancestors of contemporary Muong people can also be included in the category described by the term *Viet*. Vietnamese scholars ubiquitously

¹ Muong is a Thai word (เมือง) which means in Thai languages such things as *country*, *administrative district*, *settlement*

In the texts written in Vietnamese demotic script (*Chữ Nôm*) there is the combination *Muong Man* (*Mường Mán*, 茫蠻), where *Man* (*Mán*, 蠻) is the same Thai word with the same meaning, but in its Han-Viet form. Originally, the term *Man* was used by Chinese authors to denote all “southern barbarians”. Obviously, the combination *Muong Man* was also used by Vietnamese authors in pejorative context.

² For more information, see [Taylor 2001].

³ The designation *Kinh* goes back to the Han-Viet term meaning *capital city* (京) and more broadly, *capital inhabitants*

emphasize that in the distant past the ancestors of the two peoples set up a community of the so-called 'Ancient Viets' (*người Việt cổ*). With regard to later historical periods, various authors also admit that the Muong can be placed in the same category as the Viet people¹. The initial affinity of the Viet and the Muong is also borne out by the fact that there are several common exonyms used by the peoples of Northern Vietnam in relation to both the Viet and the Muong — *Cheo/Cheo Chi* or *Keo*, and also *Nhà Lang (Nhà Lang)*².

As for the Muong themselves, they, especially older people, avoid calling ethnic Vietnamese by the term *Viet*, preferring place names — *Kinh* (capital inhabitants) or *Kẻ Chợ* (market people). Like some other peoples of Northern Vietnam, the ancestors of those who are referred to today as the Muong most probably perceived the term *Viet* not as a designation of the valley dwellers but rather as a symbol of political power. This is evidenced, for instance, by the fact that in Muong epics the morpheme *Viet* is used in the name of the first ruler, King Dít Dang/Yít Yang (*Dít Dàng/Yít Yàng*), where Dít/Yít is the Muong pronunciation of the term *Viet*.

Viet and *Muong* were not, therefore, the categories for denoting two different ethnic groups; in retrospect, they were two overlapping categories, unlike *Kinh* and *Muong* which were and are still opposed each other as terms denoting different areas of habitation and different degree of closeness to the elite. However, despite the contradictions described above, during the 20th century both terms got firmly established as the names for two different peoples of Northern Vietnam — the ethnic Vietnamese who constitute the largest ethnic group and the Muong who are considered an ethnic minority.

¹ Cuisinier considered the Muong as “backward Vietnamese (Annamites)” (des Annamites attardés, [Cuisinier 1946: 563]); Stratanovich queried whether the Muong should be considered the elder or the younger brethren of the Viet people [Stratanovich 1977: 62]; Taylor and Li cite several examples of well-known figures in Vietnamese history who should rather be viewed as Muong in modern ethnic terms [Taylor 2001; Li 2010]. One of the most vivid examples in this vein could be the Emperor Le Loi, the founder of the *Later Le* dynasty (1427-1789) Chinese authors in the 16th century wrote of him as 'a barbarian amongst the barbarians' because Le Loi came from the inner part of today's Thanh Hoa province which in contemporary terms can be considered Muong or Thai areas [Li 2010: 95; Taylor 2001: 33].

² *Teo/Teo Ti (Cheo/Cheo Chi)* or *Keo (Keo)* are terms derived from *Giao Chi*, the name of the territory of the present-day Northern Vietnam in the 1st millennium AD. These names are used by the Thai speaking peoples of Vietnam. *Nhà Lang* is the appellation of the rulers at the local level and landowners among the Muong. The term is used to denote Viet and Muong people by certain groups of Hmong (Meo). *Nhà Lang*, moreover, is one of the self-appellations of the Muong in the Thanh Hoa province [Dang Nghiem Van 1998: 143].

Despite the fact that, according to the current List of Ethnic Groups in Vietnam, the Muong and the Viet constitute two different groups, Vietnamese researchers quite often assume that the Muong are the bearers of the 'ancient Viet' traditions that underwent considerable transformation among the Viet (Kinh) people owing to their contact with Chinese culture¹. This vision of the situation appears basically correct even taking into account the fact that the Muong adjacent to the Thai people took in and keep a lot more elements of Thai culture than the Viet people do. The differences in the cultural traditions of the Muong and the Viet peoples are clearly manifested in the sphere of religious beliefs and oral tradition.

Religious Beliefs and Ritual Narratives of the Muong. The religious beliefs and ritual practices of the Muong are based on animistic ideas. The Muong believe in numerous spirits of natural objects and phenomena, and support the idea of the soul/souls inherent to humans². The main religious cult among the Muong is the cult of ancestors. Such universal religions as Buddhism and Christianity widespread among the Viet people did not catch on in the Muong communities.

While the canonical pieces of Vietnamese folklore were recorded in the Middle Ages and since then are mainly represented in written form³, the Muong oral tradition has survived to this day due to the regular oral performances. Traditional storytelling still accompanies major rites of the calendar, economic and life cycles of the Muong: New Year celebrations, stages of rice field cultivating, harvesting, funeral and wedding rituals, and rituals related to the building of a new house, tree cutting, hunting certain types of animals, traditional healing practices, curse lifting, etc. These narratives in Muong and Thai languages are commonly designated by the term *Mo*. The word *Mo* in Muong language functions as a verb denoting ritual recitation and as a noun denoting ritual narratives as such (the body of texts). This term is also

¹ In this context, it is interesting to look at the opinion of Phan who, analyzing the history of Sino-Viet-Muong language contacts, concluded that the common proto-Viet-Muong language endured the influence of Chinese first and then split into Vietnamese and several Muong dialects [Phan 2010].

² The Muong believe that several dozen souls (up to 90) find refuge in the human body in various organs. If even one of these souls weakens or leaves the body the person falls ill for such cases, there are special rituals to perform accompanied by narratives to strengthen or return and secure souls.

³ The reference is to collections of Vietnamese legends and tales recorded in the 14th–15th centuries such as *Collection of Strange Tales of Lĩnh Nam* (*Lĩnh Nam chích quái liệt truyện*) and *Collection of Stories on the Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm* (*Việt điện u linh tập*).

involved in denoting ritual masters, shamans and storytellers — *ông Mo* or *pô Mo* (which corresponds to *ông Mo*, *bố Mo* in Vietnamese; also *thầy Mo*).

Interest in Muong ritual narratives took its clear shape in Vietnam in the early 1970s. At that time, researchers, both the Viet and the ethnic Muong, had realized that this priceless layer of folk culture is seriously threatened by the eroding of traditional way of living and pervasive language shift from Muong to Vietnamese¹.

The second half of the 20th century was marked in Vietnam not only by fighting for independence and unification of the country but also by precipitous modernization of social life. On the one hand, the Muong experienced such changes through an expanding network of primary and secondary schools, hospitals, roads, electricity in remote highland areas and mountain valleys. On the other hand, in the course of the mid-1950s land reform and the campaign against 'superstitions' (*mê tín dị đoan*) that unfolded in the subsequent decades, their traditional mode of life underwent substantial transformation: during the expropriation of land property and elimination of the traditional system of governing (*Lang đạo*) the families of aristocratic landowners — Nha Lang (*Nhà Lang*) and Nha Cun (*Nhà Cun*)² — lost their authority and privileged position in society. Meanwhile, their houses traditionally were the place where the most lavish rituals involving Mo narrations were held. That was followed by persecution of ritual performers, Mo shamans, who were hereditary guardians of oral heritage. Likewise, as a part of the anti-superstition campaign, the main traditional rituals were banned. Thus, in the second half of the 20th century, the maintenance and preservation of the Muong traditions of storytelling was facing serious danger.

While traditional rites involving shamans and performance of ritual narratives were banned in Vietnam during the 1960s—1970s, in remote highland settlements, where state control was hampered, the Muong continued

¹ In Muong areas, schoolchildren are taught solely in Vietnamese; printed media, television and radio broadcasts in Muong are absent. The younger generation of the Muong people is gradually losing the knack of speaking their native language the use of which is increasingly confined to household matters and communication with older family members.

Officially, it is assumed that Muong is an unwritten language. Yet, it is possible to record texts in Muong with Latinized Vietnamese characters Quoc Ngự (*Chữ Quốc ngữ*), which is what scholars collecting Muong folklore usually do. As Vietnamese linguists report, developing and using a unified script for the Muong language is extremely problematic because there is no language norm, since what is commonly known as the Muong language is in fact a bunch of numerous dialects.

² The Muong aristocratic landowners who governed Muong districts were, as a rule, members of several big clans, such as *Dinh*, *Quách*, *Bạch*, and *Hoàng*.

to practice their ancient traditions¹. It was there, in the Muong back-of-beyond, that ritual narratives and tradition of their performance survived, in spite of the state prohibition. Paradoxically, precisely then, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Vietnamese scholars of folk culture, the Viet² and the ethnic Muong, for the first time took up purposeful gathering and interpretation of Muong narratives.

By the start of the 1970s, researchers had discovered that one of the narrative groups performed during the funeral rite constituted a cycle whose content and artistic features resembled the phenomenon related to the notion of epics in the culture of other peoples of the world³. Around the same time, epic forms comparable to the world's greatest epics were found in oral tradition of other ethnic minorities in Vietnam. As a result of this, narrative traditions of minorities were seen as a source of values to be protected and explored. The Muong narratives were no exception to this trend, yet the connection between narratives and rituals was pointedly ignored. In the 1990s, with the start of renovation policy and liberalization of social life, when many previously banned rites and rituals started to be performed again, research on the oral culture of Vietnam's ethnic groups, the Muong included, was given new impetus.

Over the past decades, Vietnamese scholars published a whole series of works that gave a general description of Muong ritual narratives, analysed their main content and artistic features, and the performance technique⁴. Some authors did not overlook the fact that the Muong ritual narratives and rite practices were not unlike those of Vietnam's Thai peoples. For example,

¹ One of my informants described the situation in such a way: “How could we convey the soul of the deceased to the otherworld without rituals and performing narratives?! Without a proper ritual there would be no difference between a dead person and a dead animal! In our villages we always tried to hold traditional rituals, especially for the dead, despite the ban It always happens, doesn't it, that 'the emperor's edict is inferior to the village rules' (*phép vua thua lệ làng*)”.

² One of the most eminent researchers of traditional Muong culture of that time was Nguyen Tu Chi who often wrote under the pseudonym Tran Tu (Nguyễn Từ Chi / Trần Từ) For more information about him and “alternative ethnography” in Vietnam, see [Truong Huyen Chi 2014: 13–18].

³ In Vietnamese the notion of epic is expressed by the terms *sử thi* (lit. narrative poetry) or *trường ca* (lit. long song), both of which accurately reflects the essence of the epic genre.

⁴ See, eg, [Đề Đất Đẻ Nước 1973; Đề Đất Đẻ Nước 1988; Trương Sĩ Hùng 1992; Mo Mường Hòa Bình 2011].

The Muong mythoepic cycle *The Birth of the Earth and Water* was the subject of several Russian-language publications by Nikulin [Nikulin 1985; Nikulin 1995; Nikulin 1999].

Bui Thien pointed out that Mo narratives in Muong and Thai languages could be mutually replaceable under certain circumstances and the techniques of their performance have several shared features [Đề Đấ Đê Nước 1973: 93].

Ritual narratives are usually recited with musical accompaniment by a group of woodwinds, and also gongs, sometimes one or several drums. Depending on the content of the narrative and the purpose of the rite they accompany, Muong ritual narratives fall into four groups.

- narratives that go with prayers for well-being (New Year, weddings, prayers to the guardian spirit of the village, prayers for a good harvest, and some others.)
- narratives for summoning and strengthening souls¹.
- narratives performed to exorcize evil spirits and protect people against them.
- narratives accompanying the funeral rite.

Five types of melody are distinguished depending on the musical and rhythmic features of recitation. Their names match the type of the introduction i.e. the first few syllables pronounced by the shaman at the start of recitation: “*Ồ hoi*”, “*Dà dê*”, “*Hâm mo*”, “*Dà đơông*”, “*Hệu kệu*”.

The most significant and most extensively studied body of texts is the narratives accompanying the funeral rite, especially the mythoepic cycle *The Birth of the Earth and Water* within that.

The Mythoepic Cycle *The Birth of the Earth and Water*. Unlike all other Muong narratives that accompany funeral rites², narratives united into the Earth and Water epic cycle have a certain sequence and share common characters. These stories are defined as narrative/narration in Muong (*Mo Tlêu*) and are performed only with the most lavish funeral rites. The Earth and Water epic cycle shares characteristics with both cosmological and heroic epics. The tales describe the origin of natural phenomena, plants, animals, first humans, elements of culture, rulers and their deeds. Every episode in the cycle represents a complete story; all episodes begin with a new *rằng*, saying that.... The first two episodes that relate the “Birth of the Earth” and the “Birth of Water” gave the name to the whole cycle. Characteristically, in the Viet-Muong tradition, the combination of the Earth and Water (i.e., lands and waters) makes up the notion of the country (*đấ nước*).

Since the Muong language remains unwritten, the epic cycle tales, like all other ritual narratives, are handed down from one generation to another

¹ See reference 10 about the Muong ideas of the soul/souls.

² For instance, narratives of the *Mo Vai* cycle (*Mo Vai, The Road to Ancestors*).

in oral form. They are preserved in the families of ritual masters, Mo shamans, whose functions include recitation. Narratives are learnt in a certain order and, if necessary, are performed from memory throughout lengthy funeral rites that take several days. The narrator can improvise using fixed narrative formulas and rhythm models, which makes for considerable variability of the tales. By now, three of Vietnam's provinces, Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa and Son La, can boast over ten versions of the epic cycle collected and published. The size of the cycle ranges from three and a half to sixteen and a half thousand metric lines; an average version has about eight thousand lines.

The Earth and Water epic narratives are performed at dusk, with numerous family members of the deceased and neighbours gathered around the coffin mounted in a spacious, formerly always pile dwelling of the Muong family. The recitation is accompanied by a group of musicians; the narrator can have two assistants. The purpose of the rite is to convey the soul of the deceased to the other world. Simultaneously, the elements of traditional culture and historical memory get passed on within the group. Thus, the living Muong epic tradition that has preserved its ties with ritual is ideally suited to the concept of primary epic which is primarily meant for oral performance.

The Earth and Water cycle narratives display a lot of universal archetypes and motifs which are also represented in the oral tradition of other peoples of the world, such as the flood before the Creation, the egg (numerous eggs) as the source of life, incest between forebears, the World Tree. Many of these motifs carry both obvious and veiled relations to the Vietnamese legends and myths. Characteristically, some "weird" places in the Vietnamese origin myth can be unambiguously interpreted through Muong parallels. For example, comparative analysis of the Vietnamese myth and Muong narratives explains why, according to the myth, the first Viet people hatched from eggs; why their ancestors, the Father-Dragon and the Mother-Fairy, had to separate and go to opposite directions (in Muong epic tales the corresponding episode is presented as punishment for committed incest).

An interesting vision of the common Viet-Muong past is reflected in the Muong tales of the King Viet, *Dit Dang* or *Yit Yang*. The image of this hero is related to the idea of political power and migration of some of the Muong population from the highlands to valleys, where the capital and markets were located (*Kinh Kỳ Kê Chợ*). Characteristically, this image is given in more detail in those versions of the Muong epic that were recorded closer to the country's current capital, Hanoi (in the provinces of Hoa Binh and Son La).

Vietnamese scholars commonly associate the image of the King Viet (*Dit Dang* in Muong) with Hung Kings, the mythical founders of Vietnamese statehood [Đề Đât Đê Nước 1988: 8]. In my view, the analysis of the ori-

gin and deeds of this character shows that in the Vietnamese folklore there are two heroes at once who correlate with the King Viet in Muong tales — Father-Dragon Lac Long Quan and the first Hung King, his son. The main difference between the Vietnamese and Muong versions of the early history is the localisation of political power: whereas in Muong tales the capital and the royal residence are associated with plains, the Vietnamese myth places the Hung Kings and the capital of their state Van Lang (*Văn Lang*) in upland areas. A typical episode in the Muong epics seems to be the description of the ruler Viet's ingratitude toward the highlanders, which results in a devastated capital and his palace going up in flames.

Opinions differ as to how and when epics emerged as an element of religious life of the Muong people. Some Muong authors believe that it could have happened in the 15th century. As a proof, they cite the fact that the family trees of hereditary shamans, according to surviving genealogical records, dates back to the end of the 15th century [Bùi Huy Vọng 2010: 29]. And while this point cannot act as solid evidence in favour of this suggestion, there is reason to believe that it could be so owing to some other circumstances. One of these circumstances is that the other part of the Viet-Muong population of Northern Vietnam, the Kinh lowlanders, who would eventually call themselves Viet, also created their myths and legends around the same time. Their tradition became somewhat different from the Muong one but demonstrate an obvious connection with it.

The Ritual Narratives of Hoa Binh Muong as Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2015, the Muong ritual narratives of the Hoa Binh province (*Mở Miếng Hòa Bình*) were recognized by Vietnam's National Commission for UNESCO as a part of intangible cultural heritage¹. For postcolonial countries, including Vietnam, listing cultural items as heritage is of especial importance, as it promotes the new image of national culture through association with such categories as antiquity, diversity, and uniqueness². For many postcolonial countries in Asia that have been going through a phase of rapid economic development, the strengthening of national states and positions in the world in the last few decades, the culture of ethnic minorities, formerly marginalized and discriminated against groups, offers vast opportunities to represent national culture through a combination of its distinctive elements.

¹ In January 2016, under Resolution 246/QĐ-BVHTTDL of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam, the Muong ritual narratives in the Hoa Binh province were included in Vietnam's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

² For more information about the importance of cultural heritage for postcolonial countries, see [Herwitz 2012].

Analysis of the culture policies toward ethnic minorities in Vietnam was previously given in the collective monograph *Viet Nam's Cultural Diversity: Approaches to Preservation* published under the aegis of UNESCO in 2001 [Cultural Diversity 2001]. This edition summed up the materials of the 1994 international meeting of experts in preserving and revitalization of the intangible cultural heritage of the ethnic minorities in Vietnam. Even though the monograph was published more than 15 years ago many of the issues raised there remain topical. For example, in the article suggestively entitled *Who decides who preserves what?* Salemink discusses the problem of selective preservation policy conducted by the Vietnamese state with regard to the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. The author connects the origin of that policy with the traditional vision of ethnic minorities and their culture in Vietnam as inferior to the culture of Kinh, the valley-dwelling majority: in accordance with the principle of mutual assistance “the latter should help the former in 'catching up' with the latter to assimilate into a new Vietnamese culture” [Salemink 2001: 208]¹. There, as Salemink points out, the state not infrequently inappropriately intrudes into the sphere of traditional ethnic culture: some elements of that culture are considered as something of high value and worthy of the heritage status, while others, often related to the former, are labelled as superstitions and signs of backwardness to be eradicated. Based on the analysis carried out, the author formulates a recommendation for protecting and promoting the intangible cultural heritage: “it would be wise not to draw the line too clearly between religion and superstition, between 'good' and 'bad' customs, between progress (*tiến bộ*) and backwardness (*lạc hậu*)” [Salemink 2001: 210].

Another problem revealed by experts that has lost none of its topicality is the issue of the transformed nature of the cultural phenomenon recognized as a heritage. Salemink argues that in many cases elements of culture recognised as intangible heritage get decontextualized. For instance, while folk dances and music are viewed as traditions and skills of unquestionable cultural importance and are encouraged by the authorities, the ritual context for their performance is ignored, which results in distortions and even disappearance of priceless layers of traditional culture [Salemink 2001: 209]. Besides that, many elements of intangible cultural heritage can alter in accordance with ideological guidelines of the state and ethical standards which causes a rupture between culture items and their traditional context.

¹ In another work, Oscar Salemink speaks of a neo-Confucian model of ethnic majority and minority interaction in Vietnam where minorities are seen as junior siblings to be protected and patronized [Salemink 2008: 264–267].

Once the Muong ritual narratives in the Hoa Binh province were recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage the authorities of the province and Vietnamese state will strive to make this artefact of folk culture a part of the intangible heritage of humanity. The process has involved convening an academic conference that summed up the results of studying the narratives and related elements of traditional culture; establishing a specialized information portal on ritual narratives of the Muong in the Hoa Binh province¹; creating a standardized alphabet for the Muong language in Hoa Binh; devising a set of measures to preserve this kind of oral heritage and support its main bearers, Mo shamans, now referred to as Mo performers (*nghệ nhân Mo*). One may confidently assume that all the measures listed here will promote preservation and further study of Muong narratives, yet, as in the other cases of heritagisation of intangible culture, the process of interference in the sphere of folk traditions can involve a few problems.

If one regards the process of making Muong narratives an item of heritage from the point of view of selective preservation [Salemink 2001: 210] the selection or rather random choice of elements included into the intangible heritage applies not only to the item itself (narratives separated from the rituals they are to accompany), but also to the bearers of heritage, i.e. groups of people involved in heritage maintenance: only the Muong narratives of the Hoa Binh province are considered as heritage although ritual narratives are performed wherever there is Muong population. This situation raises a question: whether the narratives performed in the provinces of Thanh Hoa, Son La or Phu Tho are of less cultural value? To my mind, recognizing the entire set of ritual narratives of the Muong (not only in the Hoa Binh province), as well as involving as many performers and versions of narratives as possible could significantly increase the value of this component of intangible culture.

As for the problem of changing nature and distortions of the 'heritagized' cultural phenomenon, the Muong ritual narratives, like some other items of intangible heritage related to religious rituals², require a very delicate approach based on considering the traditions of folk culture in their

¹ See, <http://momuonghoabinhgovvn/> (Retrieved on May 14, 2016).

² In Vietnam, among such objects are the Practices related to beliefs in the Mother Goddesses of Three Realms (*Thực hành Tín ngưỡng thờ Mẫu Tam phủ của người Việt*) included in the Representative List of Intangible Heiritage of Humanity in December 2016 and the Culture Space of the Tay Nguyen Gong Music (*Không gian văn hóa Cồng Chiêng Tây Nguyên*) recognized as intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2006 and in 2008 included in the Representative List of Intangible Heiritage of Humanity. For more information on the problems that arise in the process of heritagisation of such items see [Salemink, 2013; Salemink, 2016].

entirety. Taking performer traditions to the stage, turning them into a theatrical show for an uninitiated audience should be avoided as such actions destroy the strong ties between the narratives and their ritual context. Any external regulation regarding the content or the sequence of narratives, which inevitably happens when the texts get recorded, as well as standardization of the performer traditions should be minimized as far as possible.

Results analysis. The research revealed that ritual narratives represent an essential part of the Muong traditional culture; they are performed during the most important rites of the life and calendar cycles. A number of most significant narratives that are performed during the funeral rite form a mythoepic cycle entitled *The Birth of the Earth and Water*.

In the 1950s–1970s, performance of narratives during rituals was seen as practicing superstitions and persecuted by the authorities. Since the late 1980s, within the course of political and social liberalization that started with the policy of reforms (*Đổi Mới*), narratives have been gradually resumed in the rite practices. In 2015, the Muong ritual narratives of the Hoa Binh province were recognized as Vietnam national intangible cultural heritage. That event, on the one hand, has signified recognition of the Muong narratives as a valuable cultural phenomenon, but on the other, posed a threat that can distort living narrative tradition in the course of inevitable formalisation and decontextualisation imposed by the process of heritagisation.

Conclusion

Including Muong ritual narratives in the intangible cultural heritage of Vietnam marked a turning point in the process of difficult interaction between the state and Muong folk culture that unfolded over several decades since the second half of the 20th century. As shown above, traditional Muong narratives and rituals they accompany witnessed a major shift in their perception and evaluation in Vietnam from denial and bans to recognition as national cultural heritage.

In the coming years Vietnam is expected to strive for including Muong ritual narratives in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This process, on the one hand, will create more favorable conditions for formal preservation and further study of the narratives, especially against the backdrop of the dramatic events in the 1950s-1960s, but on the other, may threaten the essence of the living narrative tradition owing to inevitable standardization and decontextualization which often accompany the process of heritagisation.

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Vadim LARIN

Symbolism in Vietnam: Hypotheses of Formation¹

Introduction

This article deals with certain basic aspects of Vietnamese symbolism. The subject is little studied, primarily its historical, philosophical and esthetic concepts, although certain works by Russian scholars of Vietnam contain various examples of symbols, which have been born on Vietnamese soil or come from other cultures during the long history of Vietnam. A hypothesis exists that the myth about Lac Long Quan and Au Co has Viet roots, but has not come from the second Chinese myth about the progenitors of people — the divine twins Fuxi and Nuwa. Another hypothesis concerns the model of the Viet state originated from mountains and seas. The third one speaks of the influence of the Chinese script on the movement of the Viets to the territory determined by the present Vietnamese-Chinese border.

As an introduction to the world of Vietnamese symbols, we have chosen *The Magic Book of Patterns* compiled by art scholars of the State Museum of the Orient and *Encyclopedia of Oriental Symbolism* compiled by K. Williams. Works by Manly P. Hall, E. Blavatskaya, Dao Duy Anh, D. Deopik and E. Berzin were also used for determining the concept.

Research methodology. We also used a theoretical method of investigation and within its framework — comparative historical, retrospective, and logical methods. Thus we compared the Vietnamese and Chinese myths about the origin of man and suggested a hypothesis that the Viet myth about

¹ The paper was first published as Vadim Larin “Vietnam symbolism: a brief biography”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 6 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2016), pp. 244—261.

Lac Long Quan and Au Co independently explains the origin of the Vietnamese people and state.

Research procedure. This article is part of monodisciplinary historical research. We tried to build a modern model of Vietnamese symbolism, which had been formed by nature and many centuries national experience of economic activity, struggle and creative work in the spirit of ancestor reverence, and the Chinese and European symbolic traditions.

The theoretical basis of the research. For elaborating this subject we deemed it logically correct to choose a reverse approach to the one used by Manly P. Hall in his encyclopedic work on symbolic philosophy. The main condition for our choice is the traditional use in Vietnam of both Oriental and Western symbolism. Rehashing M.P. Hall, our task is "...to introduce the reader to a circle of hypotheses which are, if partly, within the limits of materialist theology, philosophy, and science" [Hall 2000: 11].

This attempt is quite in line with Ye. Blavatskaya's interpretation of "symbolism as an imaginative expression of an idea or a thought". Initial script had no letters at first, usually a symbol expressed an entire sentence. A symbol, therefore, is a written-down parable, and the latter is an oral symbol. The Chinese script is nothing but symbolic writing in which each of the several thousand characters is nothing but a symbol [Blavatskaya 1892].

This assessment of the Chinese script, as we will show further, corresponds well enough to the hypotheses of our brief investigation, when the symbolic world of Vietnam is closely connected with the foreign, primarily Chinese tradition, when the allegoric and symbolic meanings and values of the acting social forces and leaders only emphasize their historical and present-day role for Vietnamese society and for the outer world in which symbols hold an important place as before.

The main part of research

Ancient symbolics

The Elephant Mountain

"The Creator is unsurpassed in cunning.

He erected a mountain on Earth,

And it was named Elephant.

As if before the Lord

The Elephant is genuflected..."

[Phẩm Thái 1518].

So far, we can suppose that the myth about the origin of the Vietnamese is connected, above all, with the neolithic culture Dabut [*Thanh Hóa* 7th-6th millennia B.C.] and the study of material on this problem will, evidently, allow us further to use the “nearest neighbor” method, or another method of interpolation with a view to confirming or reconstructing as closely as possible the conditions of its emergence. The Vietnamese origin of the myth is confirmed by the fact that the center of the bronze Dongshon culture (5th-2nd centuries B.C.) was the province of Thanh Hoa. Dao Duy Anh, referring to Chinese bibliography, definitely points to the Vietnamese origin of bronze drums [*Đào Duy Anh* 2011: 62, 63] and other works. One of the most well-known drums is “Ngoklu” (Figure 1).

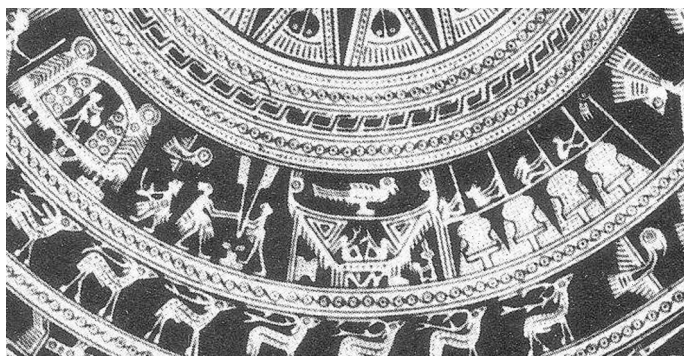


Fig. 1. “Ngoklu” drum
Source: [Nguyễn Xuân Quang]

A similar drum was found in 1976 on the territory bordering with the Chinese Yunnan province. About that time, in the early 1980s, Nguyen Van Son found a Dongshon drum when building a house on Laishon Island situated some 60 kilometers to the south of Rach Gia (administrative center of the South Vietnamese Kien Giang province). Inside the drum there were several bones, a skull, teeth, a copper hook, two copper axes, two die-molds for making hooks, one ceramic and several metal pieces. The Vietnamese researcher Nguyen Duy Ty supposed that this exhumed grave dated back to the late 3rd or 4th century B.C., as reported by the Committee on Social Sciences of Vietnam in the book *New Archeological Discoveries in 1984* [Lan Van Toi, 2015: 61].

Apart from that, attention should be turned to the artifacts of the Hmong nationality culture in Sapa [Petroglyphs 25.06.2016].

We should note that additional, or critical, data could include zoological data, namely, those about the former habitation range of oviparous animals, for example, the Chinese soft-bodied tortoise *Pelodiscus sinensis*, or, all the more so, crocodiles. In any case, labor skills, along with animistic ideas served as the sources of the emerging myth [Deopik 1972: 88]¹.

How truthful is this hypothesis in the light of the well-known story about “The Marriage of Lac Long Quan and the Emergence of One Hundred Eggs”? “Lac Long Quan and Au Co parted, the dragon took fifty sons and took them to the sea, and the fairy with the remaining fifty sons took to the mountains. The first of the fifty sons of the dragon, Hung Lan, having become the third ruler of Hung Vuong inherited Lac Long Quan and formed the state of Van Lang of 15 Lac Viet tribes. This was reflected in the proverb *Con Rong, chau Tien* (Children of the dragon, grandchildren of Gods) [The Marriage: 15.05.2016].

We also pay attention to a district near Dongtinghu, a large, but shallow lake in the northeast of the Chinese province of Hunan up to the provinces of Thanh Hoa or Nghe An. One can see certain similarity of the Viet myth with the another Chinese myth about the progenitors of men — divine twins Fuxi and Nuwa who lived on the sacred mountain Kong Lun: “They were the children of the sea, the great God Shennong who took the appearance of half-people-half-snakes. The twins had human heads and bodies of sea serpent-dragons” [Chinese myth: 12.05.2016].

Thus, examining the Viet myth as a borrowing we should compare the chronology of the South Chinese and North Viet neolithic and bronze civilizations:

The Chinese “Southern” zone was situated in the basin of the middle reaches of the Yangtze River on the territory of Hubei and Hunan provinces, the eastern part of Sichuan and the southern tip of Henan provinces. To date, several basic cultures were found (all of them were discovered during the 1980s–1990s): *Gaomiao* 高廟 (7400–5300 B.C.), *Songxikou* 松溪口 (6800–5700 B.C.) in the southwestern and western parts of Hunan (discovered at the end of the 1990s), *Pengtoushan* 彭頭山 (7080–5800 B.C.), northern tip of Hunan, and *Chengbeixi* 城背溪 (4900–3700 B.C.), southern part of Hubei province). Substrate communities of the “southern” zone are *Daxi* 大溪 (4400–3300 B.C.) in the eastern part of Sichuan, western part of

¹ Deopik, D.V. (1993) Dongshon civilization was a hotbed of independent development, more independent than the long-considered main basin of the middle reaches of the Yellow River. See Deopik, D.V. (1993) Dongshon civilization economy and society. Retrieved on June 25, 2016 from <http://www.ipos-msk.ru/lib/pdf/sbor-deopik.pdf>. C. 73; 311.

Hubei, and the north of Hunan; *Quijaling* 屈家嶺 (3500—2600 B.C.), the first discovered southern culture (1954, near the village of the same name, 120 kilometers to the northeast from Wuhan, an area occupying the entire basin of the Yangtze and Hanshui 漢水 rivers stretching up to the northwestern tip of Hubei, and *Shijahe* 石家河 (2500—2000 B.C.) in the southern part of Hubei.

Taking into account the fact that the upper paleolith on the territory of North Vietnam was referred to the 25th—11th millennia B.C. [Deopik 1994: 17—20]¹ it is quite evident that the spreading of civilization from the south up north should have begun much earlier [Deopik 1972: 73]².

The territory, mainly of North Vietnam, abounds with limy rocks with caves thanks to which the enormous labor expenditures like those in Ancient Egypt, became unnecessary. But it was precisely the cult of the sea and mountains that was expressed in myths about the origin of the Vietnamese people. Certain monuments of the Dabut type (Thanh Hoa, 7—6 thousand years B.C.) can, apparently, be called a semblance of Egyptian pyramids.

“There were shell piles, thick layers of broken shells of edible mollusks; people lived on these piles and were even buried there.” [Deopik 1994: 20].

In the epoch prior to the appearance of a written language, the polyethnic population of this region, including the Muong with their similar myth [Grigoryeva 2013: 304], had a common cultural code, and only after the appearance of the Shanyin script (16th—11th centuries B.C.), evidently at the stage of Zhou bronze (11th—end of 3rd century B.C.) the Han wrote down this myth, thus confirming their “copyright” on it. And the ways of spreading the Shan and then Zhou bronze and the ways of spreading the Shan and then the Zhou writing coincide.

It is quite possible that the more effective development of the written language and literature among the Han people could contribute to ousting the Viets to Northern Indochina, even despite the fact that the bronze Shan and Dongshon cultures were meeting halfway.

Dongshon culture, the early-class civilization of the Bronze Age, was one of the few independent seats of high culture in Asia on the junction of

¹ Dongshon's graphics and sculpture have come a long way from a realistic depiction of almost all aspects of life to highly stylized symbols, and in later peripheral schools — to a rethinking of symbolism and secondary realism in local form. See Deopik, D.V. (1993) Dongshon civilization economy and society. Retrieved on June 25, 2016 from <http://www.ipos-msk.ru/lib/pdf/sbor-deopik.pdf>. P. 76

² Dong Son civilization was a hotbed of independent development, more independent than the long-considered main basin of the middle reaches of the Yellow River [Deopik 1972: 73].

Fig. 2. Hieroglyphic “document” from Dien Kingdom

Source: [File archive for students]

the Mon-Khmers, Viets, Ancient Malays, Thais, and Burmese. Later, the Dien Kingdom (3rd-2nd centuries B.C.) near Lake Dali in the upper reaches of the Hong Ha River became known not only by drawings on bronze drums, but also by pictographic script of economic accounts and an original counting system [Deopik 1972: 76]¹.

Pictograms were cut on copper plates; slaves and cattle were counted in tens and ones (Figure 2). Parallel with this, there was a sextuple system in which the figure 18 was considered sacred. It is believed that it was in Dongshon culture that the image of the Dragon-crocodile appeared, which spread even to Northern Europe (the name of the dragon was Lac, one of the ethnonyms of the Viets; the capital of modern Vietnam Hanoi was called previously *Thang Long* (Soaring dragon)).

The cult of birds distinguishes the Viets from other peoples of Indochina, it has common features with beliefs of the inhabitants of Rapa Nui Island and the Aztecs. The cult of Kim Quy (Golden Tortoise) and the toad (Kok), who taught the Viets to speak, read, and write still exists. The tortoise helped King An Duong build the Koloa Fortress and presented a magic sword to the hero Le Loi.



¹ Dongshon graphics and sculpture have come a long way from a realistic depiction of almost all aspects of life to highly stylized symbols, and in later peripheral schools — to a rethinking of symbolism and secondary realism in local form [Deopik 1972: 76].

The most ancient Vietnamese state was Van Lang (Land of the Tattooed People, 4th—3rd centuries B.C.). It was followed by Au Lac (the kingdom of bird and dragon), which was seized by the state Nam Viet (Southern Viet, Nan-yue in Chinese; 258—111 B.C.). In the 10th century, the Chinese script came to Vietnam (Dai Co Viet) under the Emperor Dinh Bo Linh (there is information about the earlier use of hieroglyphs, in the 8th century) [Chinese hieroglyphs 25.06.2016].

Acceptance by the Viets of the Chinese written language instead of their own pictographic writing confirms the abovementioned statement. The further retreat of the Viets to the South could stop precisely due to their learning the Chinese written language and, possibly, due to incorporation of pictographic elements in Chinese characters. But this is a subject of special philological research, although the structure *chu nom*, to a certain degree, illustrates the character of such convergence.

Our mentioning Egypt is not accidental, inasmuch as the pyramid is the symbol of the state. Due to the affinity of the two myths and largely common Vietnamese and Chinese history we can turn to the history of Ho Quy Ly 胡季犛 (1337—1407). It is connected, among other things, with the modern investigation by the Vietnamese historians Do Dinh Truat and Tran Van Giap of the deposition of the Vietnamese monarch in Eastern China [*Nhân duyên* July 12, 2013]. The ruler Dai Ngu 大虞 Great Calm), a Chinese by origin Ho Quy Ly was taken prisoner and exiled along with his other 16.000 fellow compatriots when the Ming army of Emperor Yongle (Zhu Di) invaded the country. Scholars believe that the remains of the Vietnamese monarch lay at rest in Jiangsu province, the old territory of the Shang state. In this case we suppose that cooperation of scholars of the two countries contributes to mutual understanding, all the more so since the descendants of the Ho royal house have been living in the Kimlang village in Laoshon Mountains for 600 years already, where mieu Ho Quy Ly and other graves still exist [*Nhân duyên*: 12.07.2013].

Having no data and information we cannot say to what degree the monarch Ho Quy Ly personified the mythological idea of the birth of the Viets and the formation of their state [Grigoryeva 2014: 231]. However, there is no doubt that his rule was a symbol of military victories and economic progress, which were of great importance for the history of Vietnam [Reforms of Hồ Quý Ly: 12.05.2016].

New political realities in symbolic expression. The questions of succession and thus legitimacy of power are ones of the main subjects of Vietnam's history. This is due to the ancestor cult, which exists in Vietnam to this day.

An attempt to combine Marxism with phenomenology in Vietnam was undertaken by Tran Duc Thao (1917—1993, the author of the book *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* (1951). However, the change of life itself and its symbolic picture and the appearance of nontraditional symbols in it have been determined by European, Christian influence. Undoubtedly, *symbolism* should have been referred to it as one of the main trends in literature, music, and fine arts in France in the 1870s—1880s, reaching its peak at the turn of the 20th century there, as well as in Belgium and Russia.

As the French poet and philosopher Rene Ghil (1862—1925) said, “imagination creating analogies or harmonies and expressing them through images — this is the formula of symbolism.” But we can presume that a combination of Marxism was taking place not only with Western phenomenology, but also with that of the Orient, primarily the Chinese tradition. Suffice it to see the well-known picture of Chung-Kuo, hermit and magician of the 7th-8th centuries B.C., who possessed supernatural abilities, for example, to become invisible. Usually, he was accompanied by a white mule.... [Williams 1996: 64]. In Chung-Kuo lao's image we definitely find Ho Chi Minh (Figure 3).



Fig. 3. Ho Chi Minh saddling up the mule, 1945

Source: [IMGator]

As we know, the leaders of the Communist party and the state — Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan were canonized and magnificent temples like the ancient ones are erected in their honor. On the days of communist feasts

streets are filled with banners and posters, and red flags are hoisted not only over Badin Square and the ancient citadel of Hanoi, but also over fishermen's boats, and the Bitexco Tower in Ho Chi Minh city. A uniform cultural entity between traditional beliefs, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Communist ideology emerges, which is not at all a novelty against the background of synergistic religion Cao Dai existing in the southwest of Vietnam. It has a whole range of spiritual mentors from the most varied cultures and epochs: Jeanne d'Arc, William Shakespeare, Vladimir Lenin, Louis Pasteur, Winston Churchill, and Camille Flammarion.

We see in Vietnam today the integration of Buddhism and Marxism in the form of revering the bodhisatwa of our epoch Ho Chi Minh, one of the sources of which was Soviet symbolism (if we have in mind the mausoleum).

In the present conditions, as A. Sokolov believes, culture should be regarded as a certain aspect of globalization. The Communist party is striving to adapt this process to Vietnamese realities. The party turns its attention to controlling the sphere of intellectual development [Sokolov 2010: 1–2].



Fig. 4. The rule in the hands of Nuwa and vivid lunar reptilian roots

Source: [Answers]

Knowledge expressed by symbols and letters — Chinese, European, and Vietnamese (including nom) find the most practical use in the construction of buildings with the help of various instruments and substances (Figure 4). It is known that eggs were used in ancient times as a binding substance by stonemasons, and this is why this symbol is well known in various cultures and is also perceived, although in an abstract form, in the context of myths about the origin of the Vietnamese. Isn't it a reason why the Vietnamese people have been so strong and staunch during their entire history?

Active house building is under way in Vietnamese towns, which is distinguished with a great variety both in civil and religious sense. Architects and designers from various countries are granted broad opportunities for realization of their ideas and plans and use the latest technologies. The British “Atkins Company” has begun building a 400-meter-high skyscraper which will be the tallest structure in the country. This 81-storey “Landmark Tower” is being erected in the business quarters of Ho Chi Minh city.

The role of the Catholic Church of Vietnam is quite important both inside the country and in relation to the foreign diaspora. Despite difficulties, Vietnam's relations with Vatican have developed positively in recent years. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI had a meeting with Vietnam's President Nguyen Minh Triet during which both leaders mentioned a progress in their bilateral relations [Relations progress: 11.12.2009].

In July 2015, the Central Committee President of the Vietnamese Fatherland Front (VFF) Nguyen Thien Nhan met in Rome with Vatican's Secretary of State Pietro Parolin to discuss the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Nguyen Thien Nhan noted that the protection of the environment for all mankind has long been the policy of the Communist party and the Vietnamese state. The Central Committee of the VFF planned to coordinate its activities with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam in carrying on the necessary and useful work with a view to mobilizing the population and Catholics to take part in the protection of the environment in answer to Pope Francis message to the Catholics of the world. Nguyen Thien Nhan confirmed that the CC VFF highly valued the contribution of the six million Vietnamese Catholics to the country's progress [Government of Vietnam 3.07.2015]. New Christian churches are built in Vietnam and the biggest statue of Christ has been erected in Vung Tau (*see color drawing 11*).

We should also tell you about the activity of the outstanding national enlighteners of the 19th century Truong Vinh Ky and his predecessor — the priest Philippe Bin in Portugal in whose verses Oriental symbolism merged with European one, particularly in his poem *Sail, mast, ship*, of which

N. Nikulin wrote in his article *The Western Sky Moved Closer to Me...* [Nikulin 2003].

Is Russia taking part in this creative movement? The answer is “Yes.” The guest house also named “Crazy House” (in Vietnamese *Ngôi nhà quái dị*) is a building of an original architectural design built in Dalat City by the architect Dang Viet Nga, who had graduated from the Moscow Institute of Architecture. It is in the form of a “fairy” house (see color drawing 12). Outwardly, it resembles a giant tree with decorative elements in the form of animals, mushrooms, a giant web, and caves.

Expressionist features of the architectural design emerged under the influence of the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi. Dang Viet Nga has designed many buildings which adore the landscape around Dalat, including a Palace for children and the Catholic church in the Lien Khuong Airport [Kosenko: 12.05.2016]. The “Crazy House” can, apparently, be regarded as an example of conceptual art from the point of view of a guest living in the house in allegoric style in an artistic medium.

The excessive urbanization of Ho Chi Minh city has resulted in a considerable curtailment of the green belt zone — up to 25 percent of the total area. In order to change the general picture, the studio “Vo Trong Nghia Architects” has designed a housing estate on the roofs of which real trees have been planted. Similar project in the form of a giant tortoise has been created for Hanoi.

It should be noted that symbols, in general, in the spirit of a new tradition characterize the economic progress of Southeast Asian countries, which are sometimes called “dragons” or “tigers” both in the press and literature. For example, V. Mazyrin speaking of economic progress calls Vietnam a “postsocialist tiger” in one of his works [Mazyrin 2012]. A. Akimov uses the word “symbol” in relation to the rapidly growing number of automobiles in the developing countries in the context of ecological problems [Akimov 2016]. It is generally recognized today that more attention should be paid to the protection of the environment, including the problem of the wild nature of Vietnam, when the reduction of the rare species of wild animals, tigers, for example, is due to human economic activity [WWF 21.04.2016], otherwise, their images will be found only in art.

Nature has made a great impact on the emergence and existence of Vietnamese symbols, which is described in the well-known work by Nguyen Phi Loan *Main Features of Vietnamese Decorative Art*. Land and sea merged there together, and in this context we can also touch on modern trends (see color drawing 13).

On March 2, 2014, in Hanoi the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPV and head of the Political Department of the Vietnamese People's Army Colonel General Ngo Xuan Lich received representatives of the Lao-tian, Cambodian, and Chinese armies in connection with their participation in a special joint cultural program Boundaries of Friendship.

Vietnam with its long shoreline and prolonged maritime history can be referred to the type of states (ancient, medieval, or modern) whose entire economic, political, and cultural life has been centered on the activity connected with the sea, in one way or another, due to a shortage of land resources or a special geographic position. This was shown, among other things, by holding a conference on maritime civilizations in Hanoi in 2014. Some time earlier, in May 2012, an exhibition was opened in Hanoi on "Natural, Cultural, and Historical Heritage of Vietnam. The curator of the "National Museum of Vietnamese History" Nguyen Van Cuong said that "with this exhibition we'd like to pass on to all Vietnamese and our foreign friends our message of love of the sea and Vietnam's sovereignty over the sea and islands in the Eastern Sea.... This exhibition was dedicated to the 122nd birth anniversary of Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Vietnamese revolution, and the Museum Day" [Exhibition 5.06.2015].

Ancient and modern art traditionally take part in the creation of the atmosphere of official and friendly international discussions with a view to finding solutions in various, sometimes difficult, political and economic conditions. Evidently, Vietnamese society has no illusions concerning an "ideal nature of the world," but symbolism should contribute to the creation of this "ideal nature" in the present reality, and also to faith in the future.

*"...I turned to the quarter of weavers on my way,
and learned their habits.*

The sweet smell of Lotus led me to the garden....

[*Giáp Hải* 1501].

Results of analysis. The result of study is a general picture of Vietnamese symbolism in its historical development for about nine thousand years.

A view into the distant past makes it possible to see that the model of the ancient Viet state had formed under the influence of mountains and seas rather than the pyramidal model of Egyptian civilization. However, it would be natural to refer to such artificial model monuments of the Dabut type, also (Thanhhoa, 7th-6th millennia B.C.).

The Viet vocal legend about the children of the dragon and the fairy was evidently written down in Chinese characters at the Zhou bronze stage (11th-end of 3rd century B.C.). This myth could have included excerpts of the epic of the Hmong, Muong, Thai, and other peoples.

We supposed that the Chinese written language in the Zhou epoch contributed to ousting the Viets to the area outlined by the present Vietnamese-Chinese border. This suggestion corresponds, above all, to the materialistic concept, inasmuch as the writing systems can mainly be referred to the technical means of the society management.

Conclusion

In our view, Vietnamese symbolism today is manifested in the sphere of modernism, that is, the existing reality, if we have in mind Marxist-Leninist materialism as the dominant ideology of contemporary Vietnam. This premise corresponds to both the dominant Marxist-Leninist ideology, and is also in line with the Confucian premise of the Golden age (that is, the ideal past). At the same time, Vietnam's joining Christian symbolism gave it (and continues to give) new architectural and building trends in urban construction.

Undoubtedly, we can call Vietnamese symbolism a through phenomenon, more exactly a trend “deep in mountains and seas” which is seen in religion, politics, culture and the arts, as well as in other spheres of public life. Research in the field of natural traditions and mysteries, and also state symbolism, will, undoubtedly, help complement the existing sphere of Vietnam studies, all the more so if this quest is independently developed.

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Alexander SOKOLOVSKY

**Working
with Vietnamese Students
at the Far Eastern Federal University¹**

Introduction

The history of the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU), where the body of foreign students grows by the year, goes back to the end of the 19th century. Then, in 1899, Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast witnessed the establishment of the Institute of Oriental Studies, which marked the beginning of higher academic education in the Russian Far East. Such venerable and well-known Far Eastern universities as the Far Eastern State University and the V.V. Kuibyshev Far Eastern Teacher Training School that merged organically to make the FEFU in 2010, have always rightly considered the Institute of Oriental Studies their forerunner, and were proud of the fact. The FEFU today also pays homage to history and treats with respect both that and its own origins.

One hundred and seventeen years ago, the geopolitical situation in the Far East dictated the need to set up an institute in Vladivostok whose purpose would be the training of finely educated specialists intimately familiar with the region and such of its languages as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian, which could ensure that Russia's international relations with its neighbors developed apace. And one must say that the Institute of Oriental Studies was eminently up to the task.

¹ The paper was first published as Alexander Sokolovsky “The activities of Vietnam's culture and education center in the Far Eastern Federal University”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 497–504.

The main part of research

In the 1980s and 1990s, a new center of global influence, the APR, started forming in the Pacific Region, with ASEAN for leader. The new times raised the issue of the need to train specialists in Vladivostok, experts in the region and such of its countries as India, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia (while obviously continuing to educate experts on China, Korea, and Japan.) But previously SEA countries and their languages had never been studied in Vladivostok. The FEFU did not launch relevant courses until the early 1980s. Starting with Vietnam and the Vietnamese language, it then passed on to Thailand, India, Indonesia, and their languages. At the moment, these are studied at the FEFU under the Foreign Regional Studies Program, as part of Asian Research at the Pacific Asia Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies — School of Regional and International Studies. Among the areas studied are the state and political systems in those countries, geography, history, economics, culture, and also the languages — Hindi, Vietnamese, Thai, and Indonesian.

And, truths to tell, these studies can already boast quite a long track record.

For example, Vietnam and the Vietnamese language have been studied there for all of 38 years (since 1979). We took up studying India and Hindi in 1993 (that is, we have been studying India for all of 24 years.) Thailand and Thai studies began in 1999 (and so are 18 years old.) The most recent line is Indonesia studies (we started studying Indonesia and Bahasa Indonesia, i.e. the Indonesian language, in 2006.)

As for students from Vietnam taking courses at the FEFU, their numbers have lately been growing substantially. Thus, while a mere three years ago there were no more than a couple of dozen Vietnamese undergraduates at the university, nowadays they have far exceeded 100 and are about to touch the 200 mark¹. Moreover, the increase in the number of Vietnamese students is not just the FEFU phenomenon; other further education institutions in the city can likewise boast a similar trend — the Admiral G.I. Nevelsky Maritime State University, the Far Eastern State Technical Fisheries University (Dalrybtuz), and Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service.

Why the numbers of Vietnamese students at the FEFU continue to grow must be chiefly because the university is the largest of its kind in Rus-

¹ Of the foreign students at the FEFU, the largest community is from China (70 percent of the total of 3.200 persons), the second largest group is Uzbek students, while Vietnamese students come third in terms of numbers.

sia's Far East, is up to international standards and provides good-quality education. The university leaders are working hard to promote the FEFU in APR countries.

By now, the FEFU has established partnership relations with more than 100 universities in the region, including with the Daqing Pedagogical Institute (China), Kim Il Sung University (DPRK), Pyongyang Foreign Languages University (DPRK), the Northeast University (China), Hanyang University (Republic of Korea), Tohoku University (Japan), Qiqihar University (China), Nha Trang University (Vietnam), Hanoi University of Science and Technology (Vietnam), the University of Da Nang (Vietnam), Vietnam National University (Hanoi). FEFU delegations regularly visit the leading APR universities to establish relations of cooperation with them. In March 2012, a group of FEFU representatives (headed by the Vice Chancellor for International Relations) visited Japan's Tohoku University and the FEFU's Hakodate Branch. Active cooperation is also developing with Vietnam. A FEFU delegation visited Vietnam's topmost universities and institutions in the cities of Hanoi, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City, Vung Tau, and Can Tho. The purpose of the visit was to discuss issues of academic and scientific cooperation, and also to sign cooperation agreements. A good deal of attention is also given to subject contests at foreign higher education institutions, which help winners to enter the FEFU on easy terms. For example, in February 2017, the Russian Center of Science and Culture in Hanoi (Vietnam) held the first Russian language contest. It attracted almost 100 Vietnamese participants. The FEFU also organizes similar contests in physics and mathematics in other major Vietnamese cities. The best of the young people taking part are given a chance to study at the university under the intergovernmental quotas program.

The FEFU was named among Russia's leading universities in 2017 and as such is entitled to conduct contests in Vietnam for obtaining quotas from the RF Ministry of Education and Science for free education. The participants can choose the university they wish to enter, and most of them are interested in what the FEFU has to offer.

Apart from the FEFU, the project involves Tomsk Polytechnical University, the MPhI National Research Nuclear University, the Moscow Institute OF Engineering and Physics (Technical University), and Kurgan State University. School leavers and undergraduates are selected within the framework of the Universities of Russia long-term program aimed at boosting Russian-Vietnamese cooperation in education and science. FEFU representatives also give presentations at universities and schools of

Hanoi, Haiphong, Hai Duong and other cities of North Vietnam, and discuss with their colleagues opportunities for organizing joint events and projects.

At the moment, the Far Eastern Federal University is training over 100 Vietnamese students who show good progress in mastering curricula in Russian. In 2016, Vo Van Tien, a Vietnamese undergraduate at the FEFU School of Natural Sciences, won the bronze medal at the superfinal of the International Mathematics Contest. The total number of foreign students at the FEFU in 2016—2017 reached 3,200 persons from 52 states. What else motivates Vietnamese youth to take up a course of studies at the FEFU? The answer suggests itself. Vladivostok and Primorye Territory offer comfortable accommodation and good training conditions for foreign students. The area has an international community that evolved over a long period of time and shows tolerance to alien culture representatives [Russian as a Foreign Language 2010: 7]

Vietnamese are aware of that, and also of the fact that in the 1920s and 1930s their spiritual leader and liberator Ho Chi Minh more than once visited Vladivostok, which is recorded on a memorial plaque put up in his honor on the building of the railway station [Sokolovskij 2015: 10—11].

Among the Vladivostok dwellers there are lots of seamen and veterans of the Far Eastern Shipping Company who know at first hand what Vietnam is like and harbor deep respect for the Vietnamese. Quite a few of them have been awarded Vietnamese government decorations. Any signs of xenophobia are conspicuous by their absence. The chief university (FEFU) has been offering courses in Vietnam studies and the Vietnamese language for nearly 40 years. Many of the people in the city and in the area at large prefer to vacation in Vietnam in winter.

The territory has a successful and ingenious organization functioning there, the Primorye Territorial Society of Friendship with Vietnam, which looks after Vietnamese nationals and holds lots of entertaining events jointly with the Vietnamese community (including with Vietnamese students.)

Also the FEFU has an efficiently working Vietnamese Culture Center set up in 2000, still in the FESU era, on the initiative of its Chancellor V.I. Kurilov who was subsequently decorated with the Vietnamese Order of Friendship, and Consulate General of Vietnam in Vladivostok with active support from the Primorye Territorial Society of Friendship with Vietnam and the Vietnamese Businessmen Association in Primorye Territory. It remains so far the only culture, education, and methodology center of its kind in Russia.

The Center conducts diverse work in the following areas:

- lectures on the history of Vietnamese culture;
- lectures on the history of Vietnam and on Russian-Vietnamese relations;
- classes in Vietnamese for the general public;
- contests in the Vietnamese language;
- festivals and soirees of friendship;
- celebration of national and ethnic Vietnamese festivals;
- conferences, master classes, shows, and seminars;
- rendering necessary support to Vietnamese students studying at the FEFU and other universities and institutes in the Territory.

The Center initiates and directly participates in regular city shows and Days of Vietnam. For example, it held such exhibitions as The Streets and Lanes of Hanoi (on the 1000th anniversary of the Vietnamese capital), The Vietnamese Miracle exhibition dedicated to Vietnam's accession to WTO, the exhibition Vietnam: New Encounters, an exhibition of paintings on silk, and many others.

The Department of Pacific Asia at the Oriental Studies Institute — School of Regional and International Studies, and Consulate General of Vietnam in Vladivostok take part in organizing annual contests in the Vietnamese language held by the FEFU Vietnamese Culture Center. The topics used for these contests, among others, were the 50th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's flight in space, the APEC 2012 Summit in Vladivostok, the 70th anniversary of Vietnam's independence, the 65 years of diplomatic relations between Russia/U.S.S.R. and SRV/DRV, the 125th anniversary of Ho Chi Minh, and others. Students who take part in these contests prepare reports and presentations in Vietnamese and give them before an exacting and demanding panel of experts. Interestingly, among the participants there are also Vietnamese students studying not only at the FEFU, but also undergraduates from other Vladivostok universities, e.g., from the Admiral G.I. Nevelsky Maritime State University, Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service, etc. They present their essays in Russian.

The Vietnamese Culture Center also carries out extensive research work. Jointly with the Pacific Asia Department of the FEFU, and assisted by the Primorye Territorial Society of Friendship with Vietnam and SRV Consulate General, the Center organizes and conducts conferences and seminars on various levels, including international, and issues conference materials, collections of papers, teaching aids, and other literature. In a matter of just a few years, they issued the following books.

- Vietnam in the Contemporary World. Materials of international conference. Vladivostok, FESU Press, 2005.
- Russian-Vietnamese Relations. History and Modernity. Materials of the theoretical-practical conference dedicated to the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Russia and Vietnam. Vladivostok, FESU Press, 2010.
- A.V. Rogovtseva and A.Ya. Sokolovsky, The Vietnamese Language for Every Day. Teaching aid. Vladivostok, FEFU Press, 2010.
- About Vietnam with Love. For the 40th Anniversary of the Primorye Territorial Society of Friendship with Vietnam. Vladivostok, FEFU Press, 2011.
- Vietnam. The Problem of Civilizational Choice (1945—2015). Materials of the international theoretical-practical conference, Vladivostok, April 29—30, 2015 (Academic supervisor A.Ya. Sokolovsky, compiler Ye.Ye. Vlasov.) Vladivostok, FEFU Press, 2015.
- V.V. Korskov, International Aid from the Soviet Far East to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1976—1985). Vladivostok, Russky Island, 2016.

The FEFU Vietnamese Culture and Education Center maintains international cultural ties. It promotes cultural exchange between art groups of Vietnam and Russia. With the assistance of the FEFU Vietnamese Center Vietnam's well known folklore Teo Theater company from Haiphong managed to take part in the 6th Biennale of Visual Arts in Vladivostok in September 2009, and Vietnam's famous photo artist Pham Vu Dung showed his pictures.

The FEFU Vietnam's Culture Center supports the Golden Lotus student theater headed by Ms. Yelena Rybachenko, senior lecturer at the Pacific Asia Department, who took a 12-month course at Hanoi University. This amateur theater company includes Russian students of the Vietnamese language, their teachers, Vietnamese students studying at the FEFU and other Vladivostok universities. They perform Vietnamese folk and modern songs and dances, as well as staging classical Vietnamese plays.

The theater frequently performs on various stages of Vladivostok during Vietnam Days in Vladivostok normally held in May to coincide with momentous dates in the history of our peoples (Dien Bien Phu Victory Day, Liberation of South Vietnam, Victory Day of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War of 1941—1945.)

On the eve of the APEC 2012 Forum, Golden Lotus took part in the gala performance named Hello, APEC Summit! The concert in the city Palace of Children's Arts was a roaring success. Among the numbers performed were several excellent pieces from the theater repertoire. One was the Viet-

namese Royal Dance of the Le age staged by the spouse of Consul General, Ms. Le Thi Minh, the Vietnamese Dance of the Wind performed by Svetlana Maklakova, a FEFU student of Vietnamese. Besides, there were songs in the Vietnamese language, *Vladivostok-Haiphong*, and *Song of Vladivostok* by prominent Vietnamese composer Trong Dai to the lyrics by Ms. Le Thi Minh.

At present, Golden Lotus performs on various stages showing scenes from the immortal epic poem *The Tale of Kieu* by the famous 18th-century Vietnamese classic Nguyen Du. Among the actors are Russian and Vietnamese students. They appeared at the opening ceremony of the Traditional Culture of Vietnam show during the Second Eastern Economic Forum held on the FEFU campus on Russky Island, and also at the launching of the exhibition dedicated to the 45th anniversary of the Primorye Territorial Society of Friendship with Vietnam in December 2016 hosted by the Primorye Maxim Gorky Territorial Library for Blind.

The Vietnamese Culture Center works in close cooperation with Vietnam's Consulate General in Vladivostok and the Vietnamese Businessmen Association. It renders information, methodological and other kinds of assistance to organizations and institutions of Primorye Territory and the whole of the Far East.

Russian and foreign students have, therefore, a singular chance of meeting one another during sports, cultural, and other extracurricular events. And it needs to be said that foreign students enthusiastically participate in them as they can thus learn more about Russia and its culture, while our students get acquainted with the culture, customs, and traditions of their countries. They do this also at the annual Native Language Days, during Lunar Calendar New Year celebrations, at the Thai-Lao festivals of Songkran and Loi KraThong, at Bunkasai (festival of Japanese culture), while celebrating the Indian Holi and Diwali festivals, at the oriental fete of Mid Fall widely celebrated in China, Vietnam, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea, as well as in other countries where representatives of these peoples reside.

Foreign students invariably delight in celebrating together with their Russian friends the Russian spring Pancake fete with its pancakes, honey, jam and hot tea, they get to know Christian Easter, learn to paint eggs and bake Easter cakes. An especially fascinating festival much loved by foreign students is International Student Unity Day held at the University every year for two days. On day one, FEFU students from various countries present their material culture, including cuisine and costume, and the next day, they perform their songs and dances.

The Golden Lotus Student Theater described above took part in the culture and tourism festival the Red River Delta hosted by Haiphong (Vietnam) two years ago. The performance by the FEFU theater at the gala concert in Haiphong, Vladivostok's twin city, was a great success, as its program included not only Russian folk songs and dances, *Kalinka*, *Barynya*, but also Vietnamese ones, such as the Rice Drum, songs in Vietnamese about Haiphong and Vladivostok, and also the royal Cung Dinh dance.

The same theater took active part in the solemn ceremony when a monument to the world famous song *Katyusha* was unveiled in Vladivostok. Students sang *Katyusha* in several languages, Chinese and Vietnamese included.

The locals of Vladivostok and Primorye Territory often attend events telling about the culture and art of Vietnam and other ASEAN countries.

For example, the city witnessed an impressive gala performance, National Art of Vietnam, which was held with the assistance of the FEFU Vietnamese Culture Center. The event was part of the culture and tourism festival Vietnam, Enduring Beauty, an international cultural program planned to coincide with the APEC 2012 Summit. The festival was actively prepared and run by the FEFU Vietnamese Culture and Education Center, Primorye Territory Administration, the Far Eastern Federal University, and Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service.

The festival was attended by Vietnam's Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, Mr. Hoang Tuan Anh who made a complimentary address. He expressed his gratitude to the festival organizers remarking that it would further relations in the area of culture and tourism between Russia and Vietnam on the whole, and between Vietnam and the Far East in particular. The program of the grandiose concert included performance by popular Vietnamese music and dance companies and soloists. The audience gave a rousing welcome to numbers with traditional musical instruments and songs of Vietnam. The ritual New Rice Dance was a particular success thanks to its rhythm and fancy acrobatics.

Conclusion

Ethnocultural work is no random thing at the FEFU; it continues on a regular basis in order to enhance the degree of awareness, mutual understanding and friendship between Russian and foreign students. It aims at promoting integration of the FEFU into the educational environment of the APR and ASEAN, which consists in providing permanent sites for student contacts and joint youth projects.

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PART SIX

PHILOLOGY

Valentina ANDREEVA

Certain Issues of Compiling the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary¹

Introduction

In the early 1990s, a joint Russian-Vietnamese team of lexicographers started work on the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary (CVRD). The Dictionary came out in December 2012. At the turn of the 21st century, quite a few large Vietnamese-foreign language dictionaries were issued, the most noticeable of them being the Vietnamese-French Dictionary by Lê Khả Kế and Nguyễn Lâm [Lê Khả Kế, Nguyễn Lâm. Từ điển Việt-Pháp 1992], the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Đặng Chấn Liêu and Lê Khả Kế [Đặng Chấn Liêu, Lê Khả Kế. Từ điển Việt-Anh 1992], the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Bùi Phụng [Bùi Phụng, 1993], the Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary by Glebova and Sokolov [Glebova 1992]. However, not one of them could fully meet the requirements of today's users for a number of reasons. For example, the word lists of the dictionaries were not complete enough; they lacked both fairly traditional and new lexical units that had appeared in the Vietnamese language in considerable numbers at the start of the new millennium. For instance, in the set of relatively

¹ The paper was first published as Valentina Andreeva “On the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 4 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2014), pp. 295–302. While most of information and analysis are still valid, some parts have been updated in line with recent developments in Vietnam.

common lexical units, such as *bãi nại* (recall a claim), *bãi nhiệm* (sack, send into retirement; recall), *bãi rác* (rubbish heap); *bãi tắm* (beach), *bãi thải* (slug heap, waste bank; dump) the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Bùi Phụng did not contain the word *bãi nhiệm*; the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Nguyễn Lân and Lê Khả Kế and the Vietnamese-French Dictionary had only *bãi thải*; the Dictionary by Glebova and Sokolov had none of these words. There was lack of contemporary economic, legal, and computer terms. Thus, none of the said dictionaries had such words as *đồng tác* (partner), *doanh nhân* (entrepreneur, businessman), *kiểm toán* (audit), *tập tin*, *tệp*, *tệp tin* (file), etc. The vocabulary bodies of the aforementioned dictionaries differed from one another a good deal. For instance, whereas in the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Đặng Chấn Liêu and Lê Khả Kế the family word *thịt* (meat) had just one derivative entry *thịt thà* [Đặng Chấn Liêu 1992: 977], the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Bùi Phụng offered 60 entries derived from the word *thịt* (meat), among them, as self-contained entries, were, e.g., such units as *thịt luộc* (boiled meat), *thịt hộp* (meat preserves), *thịt khô* (dried meat), *thịt mỡ* (fat meat), *thịt ôi* (meat gone off), etc. [Bùi Phụng 1993: 1368]. Either approach seemed unacceptable. Numerous queries also arose with regard to the treatment of dictionary entries. Thus, the polysemantic verb *đánh* in the Bùi Phụng dictionary was given only three meanings [Bùi Phụng 1993: 355], while the Explanatory Dictionary of the Vietnamese Language edited by Hoàng Phê contained 27 such meanings [Từ điển tiếng Việt 2000: 285—286]. In many cases the fact that parts of speech were not emphasized in the entry resulted in translated equivalents of various parts of speech being separated merely by a comma, without differentiating and considering the actual functioning of the word in the language. For example, the Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary by Glebova and Sokolov gives the following translation equivalents to the word *đói*: feel hungry, be famished; go hungry; hungry; starving; hunger [Glebova 1992: 213]. The dictionaries lacked an integral system of part-of-speech, branch, frequency, stylistic, and etymological labels. Some branch labels were present in the Vietnamese-French dictionary, but part-of-speech labels were absent; the Vietnamese-English Dictionary by Đặng Chấn Liêu and Lê Khả Kế put part-of-speech labels on units and in some cases also stylistic labels, but lacked the branch ones; the Bùi Phụng dictionary had no labels whatever; the dictionary by Glebova and Sokolov had a quantity of stylistic and frequency marks, but no part-of-speech labels on dictionary units. And none of the dictionaries contained etymological labels.

The theoretical basis of the research. The authors resolved to create a bilingual dictionary that would reflect the fundamental trends in modern

lexicography, in particular the trend toward polyfunctionality of dictionary editions. To quote Ju.D. Apresjan, a distinctive feature of entire modern lexicography is “the synthesis of philology and culture in a broad sense of the word”, “transition from a purely philological description of the word to an integral philological and cultural description of the word-thing, word-notion, involving elements of encyclopedic and ethnolinguistic knowledge” [Apresjan 1993: 6, 7]. When compiling the dictionary, the authors were to solve a number of theoretical and practical problems to do with the makeup of both the macrostructure (word list) and the microstructure (dictionary entry) of the dictionary. First of all, they had to define the volume and quality of the vocabulary body. Alas, as V.P. Berkov pointed out, “objective criteria for selecting words for the vocabulary body in a large bilingual dictionary are yet to appear” [Berkov 1996: 22]. When selecting the language material to make up the word list the dictionary authors were guided by the field principle and tried to incorporate the entire mass of words in general use that constitute the nucleus of the lexical system of modern literary Vietnamese, as well as a portion of peripheral vocabulary treated in the dictionary less comprehensively and in less detail, such as neologisms, rarely used words, archaisms, historicisms, the most commonly used specialized terms, dialecticisms, and low colloquialisms. When defining the vocable for the entry the snag was that Vietnamese as an isolating language had a good few cases of nominally indistinguishable morphemes and primary words, as well as, especially, compounds and fixed or free word combinations. While concurring with several scholars who maintain that even in form-binding languages “dictionary entries in explanatory and translation dictionaries can be headed not only by words, but also by segmented lexical units” [Morkovkin 2001: 34], the authors included in the list of the dictionary's head entries a quantity of lexical units whose status in Vietnamese is yet to be defined, proceeding primarily from the principle of user convenience. Developing the microstructure (dictionary entry) also took a number of problems to be solved. Criteria for discovering the part-of-speech nature of units were to be developed, methods of distinguishing between word meanings and finding the sequence (principles) of placing the meanings of the word were to be worked out, and uniform lexicographic shaping for each type of entry was to be created. It is commonly accepted that “on the strength of practical moments, the overwhelming majority of bilingual dictionaries is addressed to two users at once” [Berkov 1996: 9], which normally results in a certain superfluity of the dictionary. As for the addressee focus of the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary, its authors have from the start intended to address their dictio-

nary to both Vietnamese and Russian speakers, and in that they were guided by the principle of contrastive description of Vietnamese units against the background of the language system of Russian, emphasizing language differences, and, therefore, also those difficulties that the speakers of both languages may encounter, as well as the principle of maximum consideration of these difficulties at all levels of the language system.

The main part of research

Developing the macrosystem (word list) of the Dictionary. The word list determines the volume and quality of any dictionary. Unfortunately, in Vietnamese lexicography there is still no unified and scientifically balanced vocabulary body for a comprehensive explanatory dictionary; at the moment, a team of the Lexicography Section at the Vietnam Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia is only just beginning to compile this kind of dictionary. Not only the word lists of the existing Vietnamese-foreign language dictionaries, but also those of Vietnamese explanatory ones differ considerably from one another. Among the most popular dictionaries of the Vietnamese language that have been repeatedly re-issued, the Dictionary of the Vietnamese Language edited by Hoàng Phê [Từ điển tiếng Việt 2000] and the Comprehensive Dictionary of the Vietnamese Language edited by Nguyễn Như Ý [Đại từ điển tiếng Việt 1999] stand alone. The Comprehensive Dictionary of the Vietnamese Language is the biggest in terms of entry numbers, yet, in my view, it does not maintain the balance between commonly used and peripheral vocabulary. For instance, in the Dictionary edited by Hoàng Phê there are 29 entries derived from the word *gà* (chicken), while the one edited by Nguyễn Như Ý has 158 such entries. Apart from various chicken breeds, bird species of the Gallinaceae order, and phraseological units, among the head entries there are also numerous dishes of the Vietnamese cuisine such as *gà luộc* (boiled chicken), *gà nấu hạt sen* (chicken with lotus seeds), *gà xào măng* (chicken fried with bamboo shoots), etc. [Đại từ điển tiếng Việt, 1999: 697—699]. Among the head entries, there are lots of narrowly specialized terms and dialecticisms without any special labels, while many of the modern lexical units in common usage are absent. The best balanced seems to be the word list of the Dictionary of the Vietnamese Language edited by Hoàng Phê, which was used as a basis by the compilers of the New CVRD. The vocabulary body was complemented with a number of peripheral vocabulary items, such as neologisms, dialecticisms, terms, slang words, and obsolete words. The dictionary also grew in size

thanks to the inclusion of set phrases, mostly of the terminological nature, and phraseological units. Obviously, the CVRD is primarily a dictionary of words as basic language units. It incorporates primary monosyllabic words, and also disyllabic ones whose status by and large evoked no doubt. They were singled out according to clear-cut criteria, for instance, presence within the word of one or two dependent morphemes; one morpheme of Chinese origin; presence of a derivative element within the derived word; a disyllabic word wholly borrowed from Chinese; non-Vietnamese sequence of components in a polysyllabic word (the determinatum is in postposition to the attribute). However, in practice it turned out that the above criteria were frequently not enough to unambiguously separate compounds from set or free phrases. Thus, Vietnamese dictionaries are inconsistent in defining the status of compound units formed by the coordinating connection between components, like *quần áo* (clothes), *bát đĩa* (crockery). While the first word is present in explanatory dictionaries, the second one is not. The compilers tried to single out similar units and include them in the Dictionary. One more example, *máy rửa bát* (dish washer) is present in the explanatory dictionary, while *máy rút tiền* (cash machine, ATM) is not. The dictionary compilers used an additional contact approach based on lexico-semantic comparison of Vietnamese and Russian vocabulary units. Thus, considering the obvious nominative function, and also presence of a one-word equivalent in Russian, the compilers singled out a series of head units that do not figure as head ones in Vietnamese explanatory dictionaries, e.g., that was the case with kinship terms: *bố vợ* (father-in-law for the husband), *bố dượng* (step-father), *bố chồng* (father-in-law for the wife), *mẹ chồng* (mother-in-law for the wife), *mẹ vợ* (mother-in-law for the husband), etc. There are numerous debatable cases when formal criteria do not allow the unit's status to be defined unambiguously. The authors, therefore, included in the dictionary as head units compound formations whose status (compound word or set phrase) is as yet impossible to define unambiguously, and this kind of sweeping goal was not pursued. Also, for the sake of the user's convenience, the dictionary includes as head units steadily reproduced terminological combinations, for instance, *phòng vệ chính đáng* (justifiable defense), *ổ đĩa cứng* (hard disk, Winchester), *ống dẫn lưu* (drainage med.) The dictionary also uses as head units word-formation morphemes and grammatical markers. Thus, the word list of the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary is made up of three types of vocables: words, units larger than words, units smaller than words.

The development of the microsystem (entry) of the Dictionary. When developing the dictionary entry the compilers were guided by the principle

of contrastive description of Vietnamese language units against the background of the Russian language system and the principle of comprehensive consideration of problems encountered by the users, whether Russian or Vietnamese speakers. The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary singles out various types of entries that differ in the nature of development. (1) The entry with a word that is part of the commonly used vocabulary is characterized by the deepest and fullest description of the vocable's meanings and its functioning in speech. Apart from part-of-speech, stylistic, and other labels, Russian translation equivalents and usage illustrations showing combinability of the word and translation problems, the entries carry additional information; there are classifiers and classifying elements for nouns, the vertical wavy line marks examples of regular usage in the attributive function; for verbs, the entry contains in its final section various word-formation and form-building models, shows the formation of verbal nouns with substantivizers, gives forms of reduplications with phonetic alterations; for attributes, there are also reduplications with their grammatical meaning specified, and nouns derived from them with the help of substantivizers; for grammatical markers and word-formation elements, there are detailed functional grammatical descriptions of these units with examples illustrating all shades of meanings and instances of usage. (2) The entry for a word of country-specific vocabulary contains the interpretation, description, and additional explanations of an encyclopedic nature, plus cultural and historical commentaries. (3) The entry with a terminological unit contains the Russian equivalent and if necessary offers an example of usage; for nouns denoting plants and animals, there are Latin names. (4) The dictionary entry for Chinese and other foreign-language borrowings carries an etymological label in the original language and contains usage illustrations for a more precise understanding of the word semantics. If the lexical unit happens to be obsolete and is no longer used in today's language, there is merely its translation into Russian without examples. (5) For a phraseological unit (idioms in the Dictionary are given as head entries), the literal translation is given in italics with the image basis preserved; this is followed by a Russian semantic translation, and then a full or partial Russian phraseological equivalent or phraseological analog should there be any. When developing the structure of the dictionary entry, the authors sought to achieve maximum completeness of lexicographic information about the unit, and give typological peculiarities of Vietnamese language units that distinguish them from Russian language units, always considering the difficulties encountered by the user.

Research methodology. In the course of compiling the dictionary, the methods used ranged from comparative-typological and comparative-contrastive to field structuring, contrastive semantic analysis, descriptive, component analysis, linguistic interviewing and informant questioning.

Participants. The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary is a Russian-Vietnamese joint venture. Work on it began in the early 1990s, on the initiative of V.M. Solntsev, Director of the Institute of Linguistics, the Russian Academy of Sciences, and Hoàng Tuệ, Director of Vietnam's Institute of Linguistics. The project pioneers were Nguyễn Văn Thạc who compiled the primary word list, Nguyễn Tuyết Minh and A.N. Sitnikova who worked on the dictionary concept. In 1991, there appeared a smallish brochure, the Dictionary Makeup. Then, the team of dictionary authors was joined by seven more scholars (in chronological order): A.A. Beletskaya, V.A. Andreeva, Vũ Lộc, Trần Văn Cơ, V.V. Ivanov, D.V. Letyagin, and I.Ye. Aleshina.

Research procedure. Taking part in entry writing were both Russian and Vietnamese compilers. The work was done in pairs, by Russian and Vietnamese authors each of whom built an entry of their own with materials to be later exchanged for mutual initial semantic and stylistic editing of the Vietnamese section and Russian equivalents and translations of illustration material. By the start of the 2000s, the compiling had been largely completed and the team took up the entry editing. By then, for a number of reasons, practically all Vietnamese compilers of the dictionary had returned to Vietnam (with the only exception of Nguyễn Văn Thạc), and some of the authors on the Russian side had died (Sitnikova, Aleshina, Letyagin). For a while the person at the head of the project was N.V. Solntseva who suggested a new form of closer cooperation with the Vietnam Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia. The Dictionary materials started to be sent to Vietnam for editing and discussed in the course of joint work on them by the Russian and Vietnamese colleagues, both in Vietnam and in Russia. In Moscow new people were recruited for editing, Vietnamese speakers Đặng Thị Hồng Hạnh and Nguyễn Thanh Lâm, and Vietnam experts S.E. Glazunova and A.A. Sokolov. By then, the dictionary materials were crying to be reworked on the basis of a uniform approach to both the formation of the dictionary body and the entry making. Besides, the issue of updating the CVRD word list became topical since the Vietnamese language acquired considerable numbers of new vocabulary units at the turn of the 21st century. That work took roughly a decade. In the course of the work, there also emerged quite a few theoretical problems to do with fine-honing the Dictionary that had to be solved. In 2006, they managed to publish Vol-

ume 1 of the Dictionary (letters A to C)¹, yet eventually the team had to give up the work on the four-volume edition and take up a new project, the two-volume New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary. The entire work on the Russian side was headed and coordinated by myself (V.A. Andreeva); my Vietnamese counterpart was Nguyễn Tuyết Minh. The two of us became chief editors of the joint venture and thanks to a good deal of efforts finally managed to complete the fundamental work.

Results. The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary has come out, an extensive academic dictionary, the fullest of the existing Vietnamese-foreign language dictionaries that includes nearly all the words of the contemporary Vietnamese language and incorporates some features of such dictionary types as encyclopedic, explanatory, linguistic-cultural, etymological and terminological. The dictionary is intended for both Russian-speaking and Vietnamese users. The edition uses a bilingual approach taking into account the problems encountered by both groups of users.

Discussion. The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary appears to be today a dictionary with the most complete and scientifically balanced word list among the existing bilingual and maybe also explanatory dictionaries of the Vietnamese language. Another thing that distinguishes it from other dictionaries is the detailed entries with maximum lexicographic information and ample illustrations. Among the innovations used one can single out the following. The vocables are given part-of-speech labels. In the event of grammatical homonyms, they are set off and are given within the same entry after Roman numerals. For example, in entries with kinship terms there are grammatical homonyms — the noun, the pronoun, and the classifier. Should grammaticalization remain incomplete, and the word functions as a different part of speech, this usage is given after the vertical wavy line with corresponding Russian equivalents. The dictionary resorts to an extensive system of grammatical, stylistic, branch, frequency, and reference notations (nearly 250 in all). The vocable, often with the *also* mark, is supplemented with dialectal, orthographic, and position versions, as well as close synonyms. In order to better explain the word semantics there are often antonyms in the entry. Countable nouns are given classifiers or classifying words in square brackets without which they cannot be used with numerals. At the end of the entry after the // sign there are various word-formation and form-building models. With verbs and adjectives there are substantivizers:

¹ Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary in four volumes. Vol. 1: A-C. Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences. Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura Publishers, 2006.

bàn cãi *vb.* debate, argue // [sự, cuộc] bàn cãi argument, discussion, debate; nhìn *vb.* look // cái nhìn gaze, glance; buồn *adj.* sad, dejected // sự (nỗi, việc) buồn sadness, sorrow, anguish, boredom. Given with verbs and adjectives are divergent reduplications with phonetic variations and labels pointing to different modifications of the lexical meaning — feature weakening or intensification, iteration, duration, etc. For instance, chát *adj.* astringent // *red.* chát chát *weaken.*; khập khiễng *vb.* limp // *red.* khập khà khập khiễng *intens.* Adjectives are also given units formed with the help of feature establishment markers ra, đi, lại: đẹp *adj.* pretty // đẹp ra grow prettier; già *adj.* old // già đi grow old, age. For a series of words with a collective generalized meaning there is literal translation of the components. In the case of phraseological units, the literal translation in italics preserves the imagery and is supplemented with an explanation where necessary. In many cases, there is an italicized explanation about the vocable collocations. Onomatopoeic words are given an italicized description of the object of sound imitation in brackets. Flora and fauna terms are supplied with Latin names. Words borrowed from Indo-European languages have an etymological label in the original language. Polysyllabic Chinese borrowings are supplemented with hieroglyphs. The principles of giving hieroglyphs with Chinese borrowings were stipulated by the Vietnamese side. Russian equivalents in some cases causing problems for Vietnamese have special labels, e.g., the gender of the Russian noun is specified if it cannot be recognized from formal properties; special cases of plural formation for nouns and of the perfective aspect of verbs; difficult cases of verbal government; diminutive-hypocoristic forms of nouns.

Conclusion

The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary in two volumes (nearly 80.000 entries) was compiled by a team of authors from the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences on the basis of jointly elaborated theoretical principles of presenting the vocabulary of typologically different Vietnamese and Russian. The Dictionary is characterized by a full and profound description of the Vietnamese language vocabulary, systemic information provision based on contrastive analysis and consistent comparison between the lexico-semantic and grammatical systems of the two languages. Being an academic dictionary, the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary combines certain features of such dictionaries as encyclopedic, explanatory, linguis-

tic-cultural, phraseological, etymological, and terminological. Regrettably, for a number of reasons, the print run was an utterly inadequate 800 copies and the Dictionary is already a bibliographic rarity. The authors of the dictionary hope that it will take a fitting place in bilingual Vietnamese-Russian lexicography and will make a contribution to the cause of cooperation and mutual understanding between the peoples of Russia and Vietnam.

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Elena TYUMENEVA

On Floronyms in Vietnamese Phraseology¹

Introduction

The reason for taking up this subject was the desire to comprehend the national and cultural specific features of the linguistic consciousness of Vietnamese speakers, which finds expression in the form of concepts, notions, and words not to be found in the Russian linguo-cultural community. The rich plant diversity of Vietnam's tropics and subtropics caused the existence in Vietnamese phraseology of a substantial layer of phytonymic vocabulary. Floronyms used in proverbs and sayings have emotional and esthetic connotations that convey additional meanings, semantic or stylistic nuances. Because Vietnamese and Russian floronyms differ in their semantic capacity, it is necessary to study the conceptual picture of the world in the minds of the Vietnamese, which is closely linked to the geographical position, ground features, climate, animal and plant world, that is everything that surrounds people throughout their life.

The **subject is topical** because it is necessary to reveal the specific features of phraseological units as signs of the language and culture, which is particularly important now that relations between Russia and Vietnam are on the up. The geography of teaching Vietnamese is expanding; considerable numbers of fiction pieces are translated; new bilingual and explanatory dictionaries are compiled. Yet the subject is clearly underexplored by Russian scholars. There is a lot of work ahead to study and analyse Vietnamese and Russian paremies.

Research procedure. By way of research objects, I have taken proverbs and sayings with floronymic components. The paremies have been trans-

¹ The paper was first published as Elena Tyumeneva “Floronims in Vietnamese phraseology”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 391–401.

lated by the morpheme, and the phytonymic components within them have been analyzed. The sources of selection were contemporary lexicographic and phraseological dictionaries.

The goal of the research was to reveal connection between the phytonymic vocabulary and the conceptual picture of the world in Vietnamese. I singled out and examined four groups of plemies with floronymic components; also, I defined the features underlying the metaphoric reinterpretation of plant names. In this connection, I showed the anthropophytic nature of basic phytonymic images in Vietnamese phraseology.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by Russian and Vietnamese scholars on phraseology from the angle of culturology and linguo-regional studies. The chief working method was that of definition analysis, comparative, etymological, and linguo-regional studies.

In conceptual terms, I tried to discover regularities in interpreting the outer world, forming cultural and ethnic stereotypes, and creating a conceptual picture of reality. This is important in practical terms, as these regularities have to be taken into account when studying not only the Vietnamese language, but also other languages of the Far East and Southeast Asia.

Research materials. The research is largely built on data from bilingual and explanatory phraseological dictionaries. The sources of selection were the *New Greater Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary* in two volumes edited by V.A. Andreyeva and Nguyen Tuet Minh [*New Greater Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary* 2012], the *Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary* edited by I.M. Oshanin, and Vu Dang Ata [Glebova 1961], the *Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary* edited by I.I. Glebova and Vu Loc [Glebova 1992], the two-volume *Dictionary of Proverbs, Sayings, and Doggerel of Vietnam* by Việt Chương [Việt Chương 1995, 2010], the *Explanatory Dictionary of Vietnamese Phraseological Units* edited by Nguyễn Như Ý [Từ điển giải 1998]. This research also incorporates views of Russian and Vietnamese authors who touched upon the subject.

The theoretical basis of the research is contemporary theoretical works which develop the ideas of ties between the language, thinking, and reality, as well as relationships between language and culture and shaping of linguo-culturologic knowledge.

The main part of research

Floronyms in Vietnamese Phraseology. The rich plant diversity of Vietnamese tropics and subtropics made sure that Vietnamese phraseology acquired a vast layer of phytonymic vocabulary. Floronyms used in proverbs

and sayings carry emotional and esthetic connotations that add to their meaning, and impart to them semantic or stylistic nuances. The ethnic and cultural specifics of the linguistic consciousness of Vietnamese speakers assume the form of concepts, notions, and words not to be found in the Russian linguo-cultural community. Comparison of plant names in Vietnamese and in Russian shows the presence of different connotations related to the specific features of the national culture of the Vietnamese and Russian peoples. The word *sồi* has the Russian dictionary equivalent of oak. In the Russian language, apart from the nominative meaning, the name of this tree also has the connotative meaning of a stupid, thickheaded person. For a Vietnamese, it is utterly impossible to compare a man and an oak in this sense [Tymeneva 2015: 249—250].

Given the different semantic capacity of Vietnamese and Russian floronyms, it is necessary to study the conceptual picture of the world of the Vietnamese, which is closely linked to the geographical position, ground features, climate, animal and plant world, that is, all that a person sees around him/her throughout his/her life.

To study the connection between phytonymic vocabulary and the Vietnamese conceptual picture of the world in lexicographic and phraseological dictionaries I selected proverbs and sayings with floronyms. The entire body of selected paremies with phytonymic vocabulary was split into four groups.

The first group includes proverbs and sayings sharing the names of plant items: **cây**/tree, **hoa**/flower, **rau**/vegetables, **cỏ**/grass, and their parts: **lá**/leaf, **quả**/fruit, **cành**/branch, **rễ**/root, **dây**/vine, creeper, liana, **hột**/stone, **vỏ**/skin, **củ**/tuber.

1. **Cây một rễ lá một cành** (literally, trees of the same root, leaves of the same branch/ cf. the Russian *Одного поля ягода* (Birds of a feather, soul-mates).

2. **Cây tiền cây thóc** (literally, money tree, rice tree/ cf. the Russian money bag).

3. **Cây già lá úa** (literally, old tree, wilted leaves/ cf. the Russian *Old age is a trying stage*).

4. **Cưỡi ngựa xem hoa** (literally, admire flowers while riding a horse/ cf. the Russian *do smth carelessly, in a rush*).

5. **Ăn hồng cả hột** (literally, eat quince with the stones/ cf. the Russian *a grasping person*).

6. **Quả cấm quả ngọt** (literally, forbidden fruit, sweet fruit/ cf. the Russian *Stolen pleasures are sweetest*).

7. **Vỏ quít dày móng tay nhọn** (literally, the tangerine skin is thick, the fingernail is sharp/ cf. the Russian *Нашла коса на камень* (One has met

one's match, When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war, diamond cut diamond).

The second group includes the names of specific plants.

1. leo **cau** gần đến buồng (literally, climb an areca palm, nearly reach a bunch/ cf. the Russian within two paces from one's goal).

2. há miệng chờ **sung** (literally, open one's mouth, wait for a fig/ cf. the Russian wait for smth/smb like manna from heaven).

The third group contains phraseological units (hereinafter, PhU) with a generic name and the name of a specific plant.

1. **dây cà** ra **dây đuồng** (literally, an eggplant stem turns into that of a water potato/ cf. the Russian skip from one subject to another).

2. ăn **cây táo** rào **cây xoan** (literally, eat of the apple tree, tend the melia/ cf. the Russian make use of one person's help while rendering service to another).

3. hiền như **củ khoai** (literally, kind like a sweet potato tuber/ cf. the Russian share one's last shirt with smb).

In this group, the general appellation is desemantized in part and acts as a classifier: **lá khoai**/ sweet potato leaf — **củ khoai**/ sweet potato tuber

Group four comprises PhU with pairs of plants:

1. bẻ **hành** bẻ **tỏi** (literally, break up onions, break up garlic/ cf. the Russian nit picking) — the onion-garlic pair.

2. làm cho ra **ngô** ra **khoai** (literally, to achieve corn, to achieve sweet potato/ cf. the Russian dot the i's and cross the t's) — the corn-sweet potato pair.

3. đạp vỏ **dưa** thấy vỏ **dừa** mà sợ (literally, step on watermelon skin, see coconut skin and take fright/ cf. the Russian once bitten twice shy) — the watermelon-coconut pair.

In the selected PhU the most frequently used floronym is *tree*. As parts of the *tree*, the next most often used words are *leaf*, then *root*, *stone*, and then *fruit*, *branch*, *stem*, and *skin*. The word *flower* occurs in the PhU selected here only twice. Within the PhU with plant names the most often used word is *rice* (**lúa**, **thóc**, **gạo**), then comes *bamboo* (**tre**, **trúc**, **nứa**, **măng**).

Of the more common plant pairs let us single out *melon-coconut* (**dưa-dừa**), *corn-sweet potato* (**ngô-khoai**), and *lemon-carambola* (**chanh-khế**).

Figurativeness as a Major Feature of Phraseology. One of the more important features of phraseology is figurativeness. Floronym components are recognizable, emotionally charged and stir imagination. Figurativeness (imagery) is based on superimposition of two pictures — a specific plant and its image placed in typical life situations. To correctly understand and use

phraseological units, it is necessary to see how the floronym is reinterpreted, which feature underlies the metaphor. Using the names of plants, the Vietnamese take one or another of their properties as a basis. This property evokes certain associations and is fixed in pareties as a reflection of the general extralinguistic notion.

In some idioms this feature is:

(a) color:

- đen như củ **sung** (literally, black like a nymphaea tuber/cf. the Russian as black as tar).
- đỏ như **gấc** (literally, red like momordica/cf. the Russian red as a beetroot).

(b) shape:

- khi thương **củ ấu** cũng tròn, khi ghét **bồ hòn** cũng méo (literally, when one loves, even the water plant tuber seems round, when one hates, even the soap tree seems crooked/cf. the Russian beauty is in the eye of the beholder).
- ngang như **cành bừa** (literally, as horizontal as a garcinia branch/cf. the Russian as stubborn as a mule).
- ở **bầu** thì tròn, ở ống thì dài (literally, round in a pumpkin, oblong in a tube/cf. the Russian who keep company with the wolf will learn to howl).

(c) size:

- cây **đa** cây **đề** (literally, banyan (Bengali ficus) is a holy ficus/ cf. the Russian leading light).
- bé **hạt tiêu** (literally, tiny like a pepper grain/cf. the Russian Little bodies may have great souls). In this case, two features are brought into play, the size (a tiny grain) and the taste (spicy).

(d) taste:

- đắng như ngậm **bồ hòn** (literally, bitter as the fruit of the soap tree in the mouth/cf. the Russian as bitter as wormwood).
- **chanh** chua **khế** cũng chua (literally, the lemon is sour, the carambola is sour too/cf. the Russian six of one and half a dozen of the other).
- ăn mật trả **gừng** (literally, ate honey, returned ginger/cf. the Russian ungrateful).

(e) smell

- rành rành như canh nấu **hẹ** (literally, obvious like broth with boiled ... onion/cf. the Russian clear as the daylight). This species of onion has a very pronounced smell, so broth boiled with it is difficult to confuse with anything else.

- chẳng thơm cũng thể **hoa nhài** (literally, no fragrance, but still jasmine).

(f) structure

- ăn **mít** bỏ xơ (literally, when eating a breadfruit, cast away the fibers/cf. the Russian choose the best).
- **mướp** già thì **mướp** có xơ, gái già thì gái nằm trơ một mình (literally, an old pumpkin has coarse fibers, an old maid goes to bed alone). Both the breadfruit and the pumpkin have coarse fibers that should be removed before the pulp can be eaten. This feature was what made the basis of the metaphor.

(g) hardness

- nếu nói nếu thì rêu rệu cũng hóa **mun lim** (literally, if one says if, then even splinters of the ebony tree will also turn into ebony and iron wood/cf. the Russian if ifs and ans were pots and pans).
- sào **sậy** chống bè **lim** (literally, push an ironwood raft with a reed pole/cf. the Russian might is right). Reed is brittle, while ironwood is hard and strong. The metaphor rests on these properties of the plants.

Anthropomorphic Nature of Basic Phytonymic Images in Vietnamese Phraseology. The basic phytonymic image of Vietnamese phraseology is *plant/tree* — **cây**; it is anthropomorphic and is generally associated with humans reflecting all the diversity of people's lives.

Some PhU include the phrase **cây cao** /*tall tree*. It is associated with a person holding a high post and carrying weight and authority. **Cây cao gió cả** (literally, tall tree, strong wind/cf. the Russian the taller the tree, the more it is bent by the wind). They say this of influential people when they wish to stress that great responsibility involves high risks. **Cây già** / *old tree*, that is an old person: **cây già lá úa** (literally, old tree, wilted leaf/ cf. the Russian a cracked bell can never sound well). **Cây tiền** / *money tree*, that is a rich man: **cây tiền cây thóc** (literally, money tree, rice tree cf. the Russian money bag). **Cây ngay** / *straight tree*, that is a straightforward, honest man: **cây ngay thì bóng ngay** (literally, a straight tree, a straight shadow cf. the Russian A straight tree has a straight shadow). This proverb is used when they wish to show that an honest person does not have to fear slander and threats from those who envy him.

The paremy có **cây dây** bám (literally, where there is a tree, a liana will cling /where there is a tree, lianas will surely wind round it; in a figurative form this reflects a fairly common situation when spongers invariably swarm around the boss. The proverb **cây sắp đổ còn dần thêm riu** (literally, hit with an axe a tree that will fall soon anyway/cf. the Russian kick a man

who is down); this describes an inhuman attitude to one who is in a quandary. The proverb **một cây làm chẳng nên non** (literally, one tree does not make a forest illustrates the power of a collective/cf. the Russian the voice of one man is the voice of no one). People who seek the reasons for their failure in others are advised in Vietnam, **cây gãy chẳng tại gió** (literally, it was not because of the wind that the tree snapped/cf. the Russian don't lay your own fault at somebody else's door).

A plant/tree consists of parts that are in unity or else juxtaposed. In this case floronyms help create an image of a group of people united by certain relations, which is illustrated by the proverb **cây một rễ lá một cành** given above.

The *stem* component is a symbol of ties between people, mostly members of a family: **cắt dây bầu dây bí**, **ai nỡ cắt dây chị dây em** (literally, you cut the stem of a gourd, the stem of a pumpkin, but who can cut the stem of the elder sister, the stem of the younger sister). "One can cut the stem of a pumpkin, but who is up to cutting the relationship between sisters?"

The *root* component is associated with a solid life basis. A person without roots is an orphan: **đầu không chẳng đít không rễ** (literally, the head is not fastened, the backside is rootless/cf. the Russian poor soul, whiner). But if people have their roots and stems closely entwined, they are not alone, they have lots of relations: **dây mơ rễ má** (literally, stems are entwined, roots are entwined); **ăn sâu bám rễ** (literally, go deeper, take hold with the roots/cf. the Russian take root), that is consolidate one's position. Getting rid of undesirables should be done in the same way as getting rid of weeds: **nhổ cỏ nhổ cả rễ** (literally, tear up grass, tear up roots/cf. the Russian eradicate something).

Trees have scores of leaves, so one of images created by the *leaf* component is a big collective where the strong help the weak: **lá lành đùm lá rách** (literally, a healthy leaf wraps up a torn leaf/ cf. the Russian offer support). One more image makes use of the fact that a leaf has two sides and it can turn either toward you: **lá mặt lá trái** (literally, obverse and reverse/cf. the Russian hypocrite).

The *quả/fruit* morpheme in idioms is understood as the result. If they say **cây nào quả ấy** (literally, like tree, like fruit), this is about cause-and-effect relations. **Ăn quả nhớ kẻ trồng cây** (literally, when eating a fruit remember him who planted the tree/ cf. the Russian eating fruit, remember the gardener), the most often cited proverb with the *quả* phytonym.

The *stone* component is the image of something small and/or surplus: **cán hột com không vỡ** (literally, to bite a rice grain and not to crack/ cf. the Russian You can't milk a bull into a sieve). Another word that can imply *un-*

necessary is skin: gọt **vỏ** bỏ **hột** (literally, remove the skin, throw away the stone/ cf. the Russian cast off anything unwanted).

Rau/vegetables, like **cây/tree**, is a generic word for some plants and is used in PhU on its own, or with the names of specific vegetables. This floronym is an image of ordinary things of small value: no **chê** cơm nguội, **đói** đánh cả **rau** thiu (literally, one who is full up will turn away from cold rice, one who is hungry will not reject rotten vegetables/ cf. the Russian Hunger is a stiff task-master); **bữa rau** **bữa** cháo (literally, a dish of vegetables, a dish of gruel/ cf. the Russian porridge and cabbage soup is but our native food).

The *vegetables* morpheme carries a negative connotation in some sayings: **rau** nào sâu ấy (literally, like vegetables, like insects/ cf. the Russian like father like son).

Rice is the staple of Vietnamese agriculture. Rice cultivation determines a lot in the traditional mode of life, so *rice* is among the most frequently used components in proverbs and sayings. The *rice* phytonym is denoted by such words as **lúa** /rice in the field; **mạ** / rice seedlings, **thóc** / rice in the husk, paddy; **gạo** /husked rice.

1. **thóc** **lúa** đâu, **bồ** **câu** đó (literally, where there is rice, there are pigeons/cf. the Russian a profitable undertaking will always attract people).
2. **đâm** bị **thóc**, **chọc** bị **gạo** (literally, pierce a bag of paddy rice, pierce a bag of husked rice/ cf. the Russian drive a wedge between people).
3. **gạo** đã nấu thành **cơm** (literally, rice has been boiled and it is boiled rice/ cf. the Russian the trick is done, the thing is in the bag).
4. **câm** như **thóc** (literally, dumb like paddy/ cf. the Russian close as an oyster).

The basic component expressed by the phytonym *rice* is wealth and power: **mạnh** vì **gạo**, **bạo** vì **tiền** (literally, strong because of rice, brave because of money); **thóc** **lúa** đâu, **bồ** **câu** đó (literally, where there is rice, there are pigeons); **gạo** trắng nước trong (literally, white rice, clear water)/ cf. the Russian A land flowing with milk and honey).

One more plant, bamboo, plays a major role in the life of the Vietnamese and, naturally, was incorporated in PhU. In proverbs and sayings one can come across such floronyms as **tre**/bamboo, **trúc** /giant bamboo, **nứa** / Neohouzeaua dullooa ... (a species of bamboo), **măng** /bamboo shoot. The peculiarities of bamboo growth determine its nationally specific connotations. A young bamboo shoot is still soft and pliant and so is used as an image of children or weak people: **măng** không uốn, uốn **tre** sao được (literally, the shoot was not bent, so how can a bamboo plant be bent?) This proverb, and also the saying **tre** non dễ uốn (literally, young bamboo is easy to bend)

mean that a child should be instructed from an early age, when it still obeys its parents.

Bamboo grows in clusters, so the image can be used as a reflection of the concept *collective*: *cả bè đê cây nứa* (literally, the entire bamboo raft weighs down each bamboo trunk/cf. the Russian A large collective suppresses an individual).

The **tre-măng** pair is an image of development, generation replacement: **tre già măng mọc** (literally, an old bamboo produces young shoots/cf. the Russian a young generation replaces the old one).

The bamboo trunk has hard sections that should be avoided when cutting it down. This experience found expression in the proverb **chém tre không dè đầu mắt** (literally, to cut bamboo ignoring the joints of its sections/cf. the Russian speak straight from the shoulder, leap before looking), while the phrase **chém tre** /*cut bamboo* is used metaphorically as advice to speak and act considerately without harming others.

Linguo-Regional Studies as Part of PhU Interpretation. Floronym components also fix in the popular consciousness the customs that are no longer present in modern life or are about to disappear. PhU with similar components can be correctly interpreted if one fully considers the linguistic local geography information. What can the word *betel*/ **trầu** relate? Betel as such is a liana-type plant whose leaves are used to wrap bits of areca palm nuts and lime. When mixed with saliva, the juice of this chewing stuff turns scarlet. In the past, betel was chewed primarily for reasons of hygiene (in the absence of toothpaste betel chewing helped keep clean the inside of the mouth and protect the teeth). A piece of betel could also serve a time unit. There is a phrase *roughly in the time needed to chew up a piece of betel*, which means that the Vietnamese knew perfectly well how long it took to do that. The custom of betel chewing is dying out. But the betel itself is still present in contemporary Vietnamese life. S.E. Glazunova says that during match-making all relations and fellow villagers are given pieces of betel with areca palm fruit. Apart from match-making (weddings), betel is also a symbol of respect; it is presented to officials and bosses; and as an apology (request for forgiveness). Also it is used at all traditional ceremonies of the ancestral cult. Besides, a piece of betel as a gift also signified a confession of tender feelings, so formerly a girl offered betel would tactfully say to the giver, “Thưa rằng bác mẹ tôi răn — Làm thân con gái chớ ăn trầu người” (*Mother instructed me that it is wrong to eat an offering of betel when meeting a stranger*. One might say that the role of betel is similar to that of the Russian *хлеб-соль bread and salt* [Glazunova 2009: 25].

The Vietnamese youth has lost the habit of chewing betel as something not very seemly. However, in popular sayings the phytonym *betel* is not uncommon. *Ai ăn trầu thì nẩy đỏ môi* literally means that he who is chewing betel has red lips. This paremy contains the cause-and-effect concept. A roughly analogous proverb in Russian is *на воре шапка горит* (If the cap fits, wear it). In order to understand and correctly use the proverb *miếng trầu là đầu câu chuyện* (literally, a piece of betel, the start of a conversation) one should bear in mind that there was in Vietnam a custom of chewing betel before embarking on a conversation to create an atmosphere of sincerity and friendliness.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Vietnamese language has its own way of interpreting reality, that is, it has a method of conceptualizing reality and, therefore, possesses its own picture of the world. And so to be adequately understood a foreigner speaking Vietnamese has to organize the content of their utterance in accordance with that picture. A study of the native speakers' picture of the world should aim at helping understand the historical, political, cultural reality, and also the peculiarities of speech usage, additional semantic loads of language and speech units. It follows from this that it is necessary to study phraseology rich in words ensuring connection between extralinguistic reality and notions that have different semantic capacity in different languages.

The current stage in the development of phraseological culturology of the Vietnamese language is characterized by the need for Russian linguists to continue working on the subject.

This research helped obtain the following scientifically significant and methodologically confirmed results.

- A linguo-culturological description of Vietnamese phraseological units with floronyms was made.
- The specific features of similar phraseological units as signs of the language and culture were revealed.
- Stemming from the research results I managed to show that the metaphoric basis of a phraseological unit is a major component of its semantic structure.

The results of exploring floronyms occurring in proverbs and sayings of the Vietnamese people can be used when compiling bilingual and explanatory dictionaries and glossaries, when translating fiction, and also in teaching the Vietnamese language.

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Tatiana FILIMONOVA

**On the Public, Educational,
and Charity Activity of the Self-Strength
Literary Group: The League of Light¹**

“There are no squat, dark, and damp
hovels in French villages.” (Nhat Linh,
Travelling West.)

(*Đi Tây 1935*)

Introduction

Over the last few years interest in pre-1945 Vietnamese literature has been on the up both in and outside Vietnam. The pattern also includes so prominent a phenomenon in Vietnamese literary life as the Self-Strength Literary Group (*Tự lực văn đoàn*), which is in the focus of attention both in Vietnam itself and in other countries. For example, on July 7, 2013, there was a major conference held in the USA under the title *On the Newspapers Mores, Today, and the Self-Strength Literary Group (Triển lãm và Hội thảo về báo Phong hóa, Ngày nay và Tự lực văn đoàn)*.

As is known, the Group functioned in Hanoi roughly from 1933 to the early 1940s, since the issue of the time of its existence is still open. The inspirer and organizer of the Group was the prominent writer, political and public figure Nhat Linh (Nguyen Tuong Tam 1906—1963) who bought the newspaper *Mores (Phong hóa)* in 1932 and united around it several young

¹ The paper was first published as Tatiana Filimonova “Debating social, educational and charitable activities of the literary group “Tự lực văn đoàn””, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 462—479.

prose writers, poets, and artists who had been born and bred in colonial Vietnam and had received a new colonial education. The Group whose exact composition is still not clear included, apart from Nhat Linh, prose writers Khai Hung (Tran Khanh Giu 1896—1947), Hoang Dao (Nguyen Tuong Long 1907—1948), Thach Lam (Nguyen Tuong Lan 1910—1942), poets and prose writers The Lu (Nguyen Thu Le 1907—1989), and Xuan Dieu (Ngô Xuan Dieu 1917—1985), and satirist poet Tu Mo (Ho Trong Hieu 1900—1976).

The Group issued two newspapers, first *Mores* (1932—1936), and then *Today* (*Ngày nay* 1935—1940); it had its own publishing house Our Time (*Đời nay*) and its literary prize awarded once every two years for the best works of prose, poetry, and drama (1935, 1937, 1939).

On top of literary work and journalism proper, the Group members also engaged in all kinds of educational and charity activity, popularized new bourgeois democratic ideas, advanced knowledge in various areas of science and technology, encouraged physical culture and sports movements in the country, new Europeanized fashions and hair styles.

As in the case of literary activity, being advocates of modernizing society after a European fashion, convinced fighters for the “new” and against the “old,” for a better life for the people, the Group members did not confine themselves to mere wishes and declarations, but, seeking to aid as best they could the modernization of the countryside and fighting poverty and ignorance, set up in 1936 the Hovel Elimination Society (*Hội bài trừ những nhà “hang tối”*) or, more concisely, the League of Light (*Hội Ánh sáng*).

While the Group’s literary activity was covered in this country in the thesis by S.N. Toporishchev [*The Writers’ Work* 1986], its public, educational, and charity work has never been examined previously. In Vietnam, this work has to some extent been described, e.g., in the book by Khuc Ha Linh [*Nguyễn Tường Tam* 2010], and in the Vietnamese community abroad it was mentioned in the paper by Do Qui Toan [The Houses of Light Movement 2013].

Research procedure. This article is an attempt at filling the blank in domestic Vietnam studies, on the basis of quality analysis of the press, and show, at least in a general way, the public, educational, and charity activity of the Self-Strength Group in a specific area.

Research materials. The source of my research was the 1936—1940 numbers of the newspaper *Today* (*Ngày nay*) that the Group issued from 1935 to 1940. The publication highlighted fairly extensively both the process of League creation and its multifarious activity.

The main part of research

The notice about the establishment of the League of Light whose motto was Society-Humanism-Reforms appeared in Sunday issue 38 of *Today*, on December 13, 1936, and took up three pages. It opened with the words that briefly summarized the goal of the organization, “Within the framework of setting up the League for Elimination of Dark Hovels, the society temporarily named the League of Light is called upon to provide poor people all over the country with well-lighted, clean, handsome houses instead of the dark and squalid mouse holes unworthy of human habitation” [*Ngày nay* 1936-38: 537].

It follows from this that the main objective of the organization was primarily to campaign for improved housing conditions of ordinary Vietnamese. The article speaks of the matter thus, “The housing problem in this country is indeed sad, not to say ... literally dirty¹. In Western countries, the living quarters for the people are well-lighted, and have high ceilings and fireplaces where a cozy fire is flickering away on a cold winter night. But ours are low, dark, and damp. Houses here are little better than a pile of dirt mixed with straw and rubble ... and all who happen to pass by cannot but shudder with horror at the stench emanating from them.

This deplorable state can continue indefinitely, unless we find a way to fight against it.... Our people are poor and besides, their ideas of living are wrong, they do not pay enough attention to the material side <...> So if people are poor, we should help them, if they are unaware of that, we should explain things to them, we should act and bring them a new life instead of the horrid and dark old one” [*Ngày nay* 1936-38: 537].

In the paper the League organizers announced that they intended to open branches across the country, in Hanoi, Hue, Saigon, in various provinces and even counties (*huyện*), and offered a specific program of action for discussion to the public concerned. They, therefore, planned to devise new designs of houses and whole modern districts for workers and villages for peasants, and also work toward actually building them; to look for money so that these houses could be given to the needy for free or rented for a minimal sum, make sure that the accommodations built were kept in good condition, help homeless victims of fire, cooperate with individuals willing to build housing for the poor, render support to those rural settlements, both big and small, that wanted to improve the living conditions of the villagers, fight exorbitant rents, and even build rest holiday centers for children from

¹ Here it is a pun bilt on the like-sounding Vietnamese words *sad* and *dirty*, namely *buồn* and *bùn*.

poor families, and much else. Besides, the organizers planned to launch a massive campaign to publicize their activity through public lectures, by publishing brochures and leaflets with new architectural projects, etc.

In order to do all that the League intended to attract experts in jurisprudence, architecture, art, medicine, and named some of those who had consented to work for free; it wanted to set up a League fund by collecting donations, holding lotteries, fairs, etc., and to study similar practices in other countries of Europe and America, and in Japan.

In conclusion, the organizers expressed hope that the League that would eventually grow into a movement would promote progress of the Annamese people and publicly significant constructive acts, which is what Vietnamese society lacked so sorely.

Since that publication, virtually every issue of the newspaper carried materials on the League and its activity. Already the next, 39th, issue of the newspaper for 1936 contained an article entitled *On Inexpensive Homes for the Poor and Workers* on behalf of the League. It is there that the round vignette appeared for the first time, to subsequently accompany similar publications; in the bottom section there was a fist hitting a rotten bamboo dwelling under a straw roof, against the background showing a solid tall house lit up by dawn sunrays.

The newspapers invited its readers to judge designs of new houses, and also to discuss the issue, send in photographs and drawings of both dingy huts and new handsome homes to be published on its pages, suggest new architectural ideas, etc.

The first response to the Group's initiative was an article by a deputy, one Pham Ta, published in Issue 40 of December 27, 1936, who praised the Group members for taking up a most sensitive problem, offered to take active part in the common cause, and even to build a test house up to improved standards. He also called upon writers, poets, and musicians to go to villages and propagate the League ideas there, as well as collecting money and books for the countryfolk. Besides, he proposed not just designing standard houses, but also naming their cost there and then.

The discussion was taken up by readers from all over the country, from the north to the south. Among them were both prominent figures and common people. Suggestions came in fast and furious, concerning campaign organizing, its leadership, and strictly architectural issues. For example, Issue 43 of January 10, 1937, carried an article by a Haiphong author who proposed setting up a village with new architecture in every county (*phủ*) where people could be taken on tours to appreciate the new way of life. The same man suggested perpetuating the memory of the biggest donors to the

cause with a memorial plaque. In Issue 49 of March 7, 1937, one interested author suggested that the League's leading body should consist of 12 persons including those who headed League branches on the ground, the accountant, cashier, controller..., and that they all should receive monthly payment from the League fund to entice them to do honest work.

The initiative of the Self-Strength Group to improve the housing conditions of the urban and rural poor before long became a broad movement uniting several thousand people, and culminated in building several Houses of Light and whole Villages of Light with a complete system of life support — houses with modern conveniences like WC and baths (naturally, up to the standards of the time,) settlements with the necessary infrastructure in the form of roads and wells, and also surgeries, schools, etc. At the same time, the movement went beyond the limits of these concrete projects and incorporated a host of measures aimed at simply rendering assistance to the needy, e.g., handing out money, rice, etc. to the victims of floods, and suchlike.

The campaign enjoyed a hearty support among all population strata, chiefly in the north of the country, from entrepreneurs to workers and peasants, but first and foremost it was addressed to the new colonial intellectuals, teachers, doctors, lawyers, architects, journalists, actors, students, etc. Obviously, the work of the League could not be done without permission from the colonial authorities with whom the League cooperated. That was clearly due to the fact, among others, that in 1936—1938 France was governed by the Popular Front. In issue 71 of August 8, 1937, the newspaper published a letter in support of the League from a group of workers in Vinh. The owner of a certain G.M.R. company promised to give 10 percent of his daily profits to the victims of floods in Bac Ninh. And a Hong Kong variety group called May Blossom handed over to the League the takings from its performance in Hanoi's Great Theater. Among the enthusiastic participants in the League activity were members of the Vietnam scout movement set up in the country back in 1930, Buddhists, and many others. Even Vietnamese residing outside the country sent money to the League, for example, the Vietnamese community in Cambodia, and also Vietnamese students in France.

The *Today* newspaper placed on its pages advertisements of various sports events, e.g., football matches or wrestling fights with appeals for donations of money for the needy or contributions to the League to be later spent on the poor. It is a known fact that a football match at the Mangin Stadium brought in 208 dongs, quite a handsome sum by the standards of the time, and a sports club organized volleyball and basketball games giving half of the takings to the charity fund of the League.

To publicize the League and its work at that initial stage poems and songs were composed. The authors of the lyrics of a popular song at the time to the music of a well-known French song were Tran Dui Hung, one of the scout movement leaders, and a member of the Self-Strength Group and active participant in the League of Light, poet The Lu. The refrain of the song published in issue 73 of August 22, 1937, of *Today* that consisted of three verses repeatedly used the word *light*, the key word for the League. For example,

*Brothers and sisters! Can't you see
How much suffering there is in life?
How many of our people
Have lived in wretched poverty for so long?
Crowding under a blue sky
In dark corners in straw huts....*

Refrain:

*Come on, bring **light** to your fellow countrymen
There where it is dark.
Come on, bring **light** to illuminate
The dark life of so many people.*

[Ngày nay 1937-73: 665.]

Welcoming the work of the League, Hang Phuong (1908—1983), a lady poet and wife of the prominent literary critic and translator Vu Ngoc Phan (1902—1987), published in issue 106 of the newspaper of 1938 a poem entitled *Invitation to the League of Light* that ran as follows.

*Oh how long have our villages been sinking in the dark
How much suffering have our village folks endured
How hard it was to get some food
And how dingy were their dwellings
The hovels were cramped, the beds rickety
The water in the pond, stale and muddy*

.....
*But now it is somewhat easier
The sun is gradually rising over the countryside
The people are well and live in harmony
Though poor, they are much easier at heart
And all of that has been the work of the League of Light
So, like-thinking people,
Join the League to bolster up its ranks.*

[Ngày nay 1938-106: 19]

In the evening of August 16, 1937, Hanoi's Great Theater hosted a presentation of the League of Light that attracted lots of people, not just Hanoi dwellers, but also people from Hue, Ha Nam, and Thai Binh. The theater building itself accommodated nearly 2,000 people, and almost as many gathered in the nearby streets to listen to the broadcast of the ceremony via loudspeakers. The organizing committee, assisted by scouts and other volunteers who took active part in the event preparation, distributed over 2,000 leaflets with apologies for the inconvenience. As Khai Hung wrote in his report published in issue 73 of *Today*, the organizers appealed to "strong" men sitting in the hall for giving up their seats to "weak" women who were standing. A young woman outside the theater shouted that they did not need that, and the crowd greeted her words with an ovation. Those in the street hung on every word of the speakers inside the theater, occasionally interrupting their addresses with applause. The general enthusiasm was such that even the workers who had prepared the theater and the stage for the event refused to take money for their work in favor of the League and volunteered to join the latter promising to bring other workers with them.

On September 5, 1937, likewise in the building of the Hanoi Great Theater, there occurred the first gathering of participants in the as yet officially unregistered movement, and issue 75 of *Today* carried an account of the event. At the meeting, one of speakers was journalist Pham Van Binh, secretary of the provisional committee of the League, who made a program speech. He clearly outlined four main lines in the work of the League.

- Doing away with the squalid housing that could not provide proper standards of sanitation and hygiene;
- stimulating construction of clean and handsome accommodation attracting funds from various sources for the purpose;
- mounting vigorous publicity campaigns to advertise new high-quality housing, attract the attention of the public, women in particular, to issues of sanitation and hygiene, in order to make life neat, clean and up to modern standards;
- using every means to help poor families living in slums.

The same speaker said that the League's first job would be construction of a model village not far from Hanoi with the houses there to be let to workers, and addressed to the government a request for a free plot of land to be allotted to this end.

One of the first practical results of the League's activity was handing out as charity three tons of rice to the local victims of floods in the Lang Tai county (*huyen*) on Sunday, October 3, 1937, on agreement with the French resident of the Bac Ninh Province, Haelewyn. In his report Pham Van Binh

described how four groups of League members spent two hours handing out rice in four villages. Each of the 2.450 villagers got a kilo of rice. The hand-outs continued till half past nine. On behalf of the affected villagers Haelewyn, governor Nguyen Ba Tiep and *huyen* head Nghiem Xuan Khai thanked the League members for having come to the site of the tragedy, undaunted by hardship, to help the needy.

Similar activity was appreciated by the colonial authorities; Governor General Yves Chatel in his decree of October 14, 1937, gave official permission for the establishment of the League, which was reported in issue 82 of *Today*. And ever since then the League was entitled to collect dues from its members. Already in issue 83 of the newspaper it was stated that several thousand (!) people in Hanoi applied for membership. People in remote provinces remitted dues by mail. The amount of money thus gathered proved sufficient for starting to build the Village of Light straight away. The newspaper pointed out, "The power of the League is in its numbers. There are indeed lots of people desirous of becoming its members. The dues to be paid by one member are merely one dong to 20 hao a year, a pittance in fact. But the money gathered thanks to the numerous members will amount to a substantial sum. And there will be a lot of Villages of Light. At present, one can register as a League member at Number 55, Hang Bun Street, but eventually it will be possible to do this in other parts of the city as well" [Ngày nay 1937-83: 903].

Under the approved League Regulations published in the same issue of the paper, there were various forms of participation and member categories. Sponsors were to donate to the League at least 100 dong. Those who gave money for a certain purpose, no less than 50 dong. For a more or less solvent upper section of permanent members the dues were set at one dong a year, and the age qualification was a minimum of 21 years. The smallest annual due was 20 hao, that is one fifth of the dong, and applied to members from among workers, peasants, and students.

The last two categories of participants, should they pay dues continuously for fifteen years, or give a single amount equivalent to 10 years of due payments, were exempt from further payments and entered the category of "lifetime members." The latter fact speaks of long-term plans of the League leaders extending over many years.

Apart from donations, the League itself tried hard to earn money for implementing its goals; it organized circus and theater performances, movie shows, lotteries and fairs with ticket sales. And the next issues of the newspaper kept publishing detailed reports of the results of the undertakings specifying all expenditures and takings.

For example, the The Lu theater company now performed a stage adaptation of the novel *Resolute Rupture* by Nhat Linh, now staged the play *Money* by playwright Vi Huyen Dac (1899—1976), then little known, and did that not just in Hanoi, but also in Haiphong.

The League more than once held the Tombola merchandise lottery (*Tombola* in French means precisely that). In the lottery of May 14, 1939, the main prize was a three-room house with a courtyard and a garden, as well as a kitchen and a toilet. Among other prizes there were a car, two bicycles, paintings by two famous artists, a suite of furniture, a writing desk, ten watches and five fountain pens. The tickets could be used by those willing to take part in the lottery or donated to the League, and the names of the givers were published in *Today* with gratitude.

Issue 152 of the *Today* newspaper of March 11, 1939, carried a report several pages long of a two-day Fair of Light held by the League where among the active participants were both its leaders and their family members. The charity event took place on the shore of Western Lake and attracted crowds of people, some of them French. The person responsible for the design of the site was the outstanding artist To Ngoc Van (1906—1954), then a mere beginner. There were numerous pavilions selling all sorts of things, a restaurant, and a shooting gallery. The organizers held a canoe contest, a game of *Con* (a rag ball decorated with multicolored ribbons), and a dance floor for tango and other fashionable European dances.

With the consent and participation of the colonial authorities, the League also organized the so-called Days of Light. The first such day was celebrated in Hanoi on December 12, 1937, which was reported in issue 89 of the newspaper. To hold Day of Light, the League leadership formed initially three committees, each with a chairman, secretary, and members: an organizing committee, a special committee, and a propaganda committee.

The committees comprised many prominent persons, women included. Frequently the latter were the wives of their husbands, e.g., writers Nhat Linh, Khai Hung, Hoang Dao, renowned artists Nguyen Gia Tri (1908—1993) and Nguyen Cat Tuong (1912—1946). The Day of Light organizing committee was one hundred percent female, its head being Ms. Trinh Thi Thuc Oanh, supervisor of all of Hanoi's schools for girls. Letters were sent to all public and private schools of the city with requests for letting schoolgirls take part in the preparation and conduct of Day of Light.

In issue 90, the newspaper reported the results of Day of Light. That day League members in Hanoi, the so-called Commissars of Light and Fairies of Light, jointly with scouts, split into smaller groups to tour shops, firms, and other places calling on people to join the League and donate

money for charity. The result was an eminently successful event. Day of Light brought 2.352 new members to the League (thus the Hanoi section alone numbered nearly 4.000 persons), while the amount of money gathered reached 1.221 dong. The same issue published the welcoming letter to the League by Governor General Jules Brevier where he confirmed his consent to become its honorary chairman.

Issue 99 of *Today* of February 27, 1938, informed its readers that the first Village of Light was beginning to be built in Phuc Xa on the League money, to which end the colonial authorities had allotted six plots of land where 30 Houses of Light were to be constructed, plus two model Houses of Light to be built in the Province of Kien An for homeless victims of fires.

Issue 130 of the newspaper of October 1, 1938, wrote about the results of a draw ceremony held by the League during which would-be tenants of the new houses were named. And League members apologized through the newspaper to those who were not in luck that time, since the contenders were too many, while the houses were too few.

One can get a good idea of the kind of routine work done by the League from issue 148 of *Today* of February 4, 1939. Page 18 is totally taken up with its activity. First and foremost, it presents a plan of work for the years 1939—1940 approved on January 6, 1939, at the session of the League council. The plan covers various lines of activity — practical work, publicity, and fund formation. The latter includes a detailed financial account of the revenues and expenditures, since August 1937, when the League had just started its activity, even before the official permission from Governor General that is before October 14, 1937.

The section on the League's practical work outlines the following specific points.

- arrange the Life of Light in the Village of Light of M-me Jules Brevie;
- build a second Village of Light in Voi Phuc;
- devise new designs of Houses of Light;
- organize everywhere education and enlightenment work.

To carry out task number one, of arranging civilized life in one concrete village, it is planned to take up housing construction for peasants, build a reading hall, a kindergarten, dig a well, lay a straight road to the village. In the area of medicine and hygiene it is planned to hold daily talks on matters of hygiene, examine patients and distribute medicines, and also set up groups of instructors on hygiene who would make a round of the houses every day and advise the inhabitants. In the area of education and enlightenment it is intended to control how people observe rules of sanitation and hygiene, and also, thanks to the Quoc Ngu Dissemination Society set up in

Hanoi in 1938, give classes for all age groups in order to teach them to read and write, organize collective cultural events — tourist outings, lectures, various festivities, fetes.... There is a special mention of organizing children's festivals.

And all of that so as to gradually encourage peasants to create guard squads, firefighting service, cooperatives, etc., once they had grasped the advantage of collective work, because the “Main objective of the League is to teach people in villages to organize their life on their own and manage the life of the Village of Light” [Ngày nay 1939—148: 18].

As far as task number two goes, i.e. the building of a second Village of Light in Voi Phuc, the plan says that it will be constructed on a plot of 30.000 sq. m. and the project will cost no more than 20.000 dong. The village will be up to all the Village of Light standards — it will have 300 houses with a market street, and will include dwellings for the peasants, a school, a surgery with a maternity ward, and also workshops.

To implement task number three, the committee for architecture will produce additional designs of houses for workers and peasants, and those who will undertake to use these designs will be rewarded with prizes to stimulate interest in new architecture.

The fourth task is to be implemented not only in Villages of Light, but throughout the country, wherever there are prerequisites for this, readiness for cooperation on the part of the authorities, and the willing public.... The League is, therefore, prepared to help all those who wish to build new houses, and introduce elements of the new Life of Light.

The publicity section suggests the following:

- carry out propaganda in periodicals, both French and Vietnamese, issue publicity literature, put up posters and photographs, establish relations with similar organizations abroad;
- set up a specialized library that would contain literature related to the League activity, and explore the way of life of the country people and workers in order to work out the most efficacious programs of the Life of Light;
- organize publication of a magazine to popularize knowledge about the new way of life. While awaiting permission to this effect, issue cheap brochures for general use;
- set up groups of instructors and fighters of Light;
- search for old villages to implement there the Life of Light program.

The section on the League fund formation proposes holding yet another Day of Light, sending everywhere agitators to recruit new members, holding a Tombola lottery and a fair in Hanoi, applying for material aid to the colonial authorities and the Hanoi local government, organizing monthly movie

shows and performances, launching a ceremonial opening of the Village of Light of M-me Jules Brevie, and buying tickets of the Indochina lottery.

Apropos of the latter point, the same page carries a notice about the decision of the League leadership to allocate money from the League fund every time the Indochina lottery is held to purchase one ticket, and in the event of winning, to send all the takings to the Fund for Village of Light Construction. The leadership also invites all those willing to send in their tickets as charity. The numbers of the tickets bought by the leaders and donated by private persons are to be printed in the newspaper.

The financial account made by Hoang Dao, chief cashier of the Hanoi branch of the League, describes in detail the sources and amounts of money revenues for 1937 and 1938 — donations, membership dues, profit from organizing sports and cultural events, interest on bank deposits, and also expenditures — cash incentives for staff, money spent on organizing festivities, on buying a car, on building the Village of Light in Phuc Xa, on aid to local branches in Haiphong and elsewhere.

Conclusion

As one can see, the League had great plans, but, alas, for a variety of reasons, not all of them could be realized. Like the Self-Strength Literary Group on whose initiative and with whose participation the League of Light had been set up, it must have survived roughly until 1940. With the breakout of the Second World War, and especially under Japanese occupation, its activity petered out. However, even the few years of its existence allowed the League to prove that its organizers were singularly mature in human and in civil terms, as were all the Light movement participants who represented merely the first or second generation of the new Vietnamese colonial intellectuals concerned with the well-being of the entire people, of the whole country.

The awareness of responsibility to Vietnamese society felt by the Self-Strength Group members and those who rallied around them is evidenced by the words of Nhat Linh on January 13, 1938, during a speech in Haiphong's Great Theater on the occasion of opening a League branch in that city. According to the *Today* newspaper of January 16, 1938, having described the goals and activity of the League ultimately aimed at transforming the entire Vietnamese society, making it a Society of Light, he thus concluded his speech, "We should not think that what we plan to do will be something like alms for the poor. We, the people lucky enough to live in pros-

perity and get education, the people who know and understand, should realize that to remain indifferent to them is a big injustice, and worse, a crime. So from now on, we should exert all our energy to rectify the situation, redeem our guilt before the dispossessed in our society” [Ngày nay 1938—94: 7]. Which the Group members tried to do to the best of their ability.

It may be worth adding that from the perspective of the League of Light activity described above of especial interest are such works by the writers of the Self-Strength Literary Group as the novel *The Family* (*Gia Đình* 1937) by Khai Hung, and the novel *The Radiant Way* (*Con đường sáng* 1940) by Hoang Dao, which are essentially an artistic illustration to the ideas of the League and merit a separate study.

The report was prepared in the spring of 2014.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to my now deceased dear friend K.M. Alikanov (real name Nguyễn Minh Cần 1928—2016) for helping me to establish contact with Mr. Phạm Phú Minh resident in the United States, and to Mr. Phạm Phú Minh for helping me get access to the electronic version of the newspaper *Today*, and also acquaint myself with the article by Do Quy Toan.

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Olesya TRUNOVA

**Criticism of Competitive Examinations System
in Ngo Tat To's Novel *The Tent
and the Bamboo Bed*¹**

Introduction

The novel by the Vietnamese writer Ngo Tat To *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* (*Lều chõng*) was first published in the newspaper *Times* (*Thời vụ*) in 1939, and two years later it was printed as a separate publication. The title of the book immediately revealed its subject to Vietnamese readers, inasmuch as for many centuries the tent and the bamboo bed invariably accompanied Confucian scholars going to pass competitive exams, which were held *al fresco* on a fenced-off plot of land or simply in a field.

Relevance of the topic. It is hard to overestimate the significance of the institution of competitive examinations in traditional Vietnam, which existed for eight-and-a-half centuries. In that country, just as in neighboring China, these exams served as a means of selecting officials for government service. Since the aspirants had to know and understand, first and foremost, Confucian teaching and certain ideological dogmas, the institution of competitive examinations and its inseparable educational system forming a definite world outlook and psychology of people, was the main pillar of Confucianism. The abolition of this institution at the beginning of the 20th century marked the end of an entire epoch in the country's history and withdrawal from the Confucian past, which was accompanied with a change of ethical values and orientations.

Ngo Tat To (1894—1954) knew only too well of the competitive exams system. He came from a poor family of Confucian scholars, received a tra-

¹ The paper was first published as Olesya Trunova “Criticism of Competitive Examinations System in Ngo Tat To's Novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*”, in *The Vietnam Studies*, issue 5 (Moscow: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2015), pp. 480—496.

ditional education and took part twice in interprovincial examinations, that is, first-grade exams, in 1912 and 1915. After the abolition of the competitive exams system Ngo Tat To, like many other representatives of Vietnamese intellectuals of the first half of the 20th century, began to orient himself to European culture and literature and tried his hand in journalism, having changed, as it is often said in Vietnamese editions, brush to pen. In the late 1930s-early 1940s, he wrote his most popular works, such as the novel *When the Light Is Out*, essays *Rural Affairs* written in the critical realism style, and the historical novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*.

Turning to the subject of competitive exams, the last of which took place in 1918, was somewhat unexpected in 1939, which was said by the author himself in his foreword to the novel¹. Returning to a long-forgotten subject, the writer was striving to better understand the historical past of his country, for competitive examinations, whose symbol was the tent and the bamboo bed, had for many centuries determined the destiny of Vietnam, supplying it with government officials who had sat in the imperial palace and were a pillar of the state. “For Vietnam, the tent and the bamboo bed seemed to have been the creators of a multitude of both useful and good-for-nothing people,” Ngo Tat To wrote. “It was they who had made Vietnam a civilized country, but it was also they who had brought the country to freakish things happening for a long time that cause laughter and tears, horror and confusion” [Ngô Tất Tố 2012: 5]. In these words, one can understand the writer's view that it was competitive examinations that had brought the country to the brink of disaster and the loss of independence. Thus, at the very beginning, in the foreword, the author openly expresses his ambiguous attitude to this institution of traditional Vietnam.

In this connection, the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* is interesting, because, on the one hand, it is a story told by a witness about the system of competitive exams in the last years of its existence, and on the other, it shows the assessment of this traditional institution in Vietnamese contemporary literature.

In Russia, the criticism of the competitive exams system in the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* was noted by N. Nikulin in an introduction to his translation of the novel². However, having devoted his article to the biography of Ngo Tat To, the researcher confined himself to a brief review of

¹ Ngo Tat To wrote: “Today, on hearing the words 'tent' and 'bamboo bed' many people will be surprised, because these things left our daily life thirty years ago by now” [Ngô Tất Tố 2012: 5].

² [Nikulin 1982: 7–12].

the main ideological trend of the novel. In the Vietnamese language, this criticism is analysed in several pages of the chapter devoted to the writer's work in the textbook *Vietnamese Literature (1940—1945)* written by the Vietnamese literary critic Phan Cu De¹.

The main part of research

The task of this work is to show as fully as possible the author's attitude to the institution of competitive exams and the Confucian heritage of the past in the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*, as well as to describe the methods with which the author criticized the examination system of traditional Vietnam.

Research methodology. To tackle this task, we resorted to description and literary analysis of various aspects and levels of this novel.

Research materials. The text of the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* in Vietnamese² and its translation into Russian³. All quotations are taken from the Russian edition of the novel.

Research procedure. In the course of the work the following points have been analyzed:

- author's descriptions of separate episodes in which comic and bitter notes can be traced;
- images of students and Confucian scholars appearing on the pages of the novel;
- descriptions of the main character's interior life and self-consciousness, his statements and behavior;
- separate statements of secondary personages expressing the author's position;
- the title and objective world of the novel;
- its plot and composition.

The Tent and the Bamboo Bed is a novel about an extremely talented young scholar named Van Hac. All people around predict him great success at the forthcoming exams, but Van Hac fails at interprovincial examinations three times before finally receiving the degree of *cử nhân*⁴. The hero goes to

¹ [Phan Cự Đệ 2010: 392—395].

² [Ngô Tất Tố 2012].

³ [Ngô Tất Tố 1982].

⁴ The highest degree awarded at interprovincial examinations, which, in contrast to the second degree, *tú tài*, allowed aspirants to take part in the examinations of the next, second grade in the capital.

the capital, takes part in second-grade exams there, and emerges with flying colors. After the last, third-grade exam, “the competition at the imperial palace,” Van Hac is arrested for wrongly used characters, but three days later he is released and returns home.

The action of the novel is not clearly determined chronologically and takes place during the Nguyen dynasty rule, somewhere between 1831 (the 12th year of Emperor Minh Mang’s stay in power) and 1884 (the occupation of the country by France)¹. The competitive exams system described by the author indeed causes both laughter and tears.

Ngo Tat To laughs at the absurdities and vices of the examination system of traditional Vietnam, as well as the hopelessly obsolete phenomena, as viewed from his time. Irony permeates the novel’s pages, when a person who has won the highest degree of *tiến sĩ*² appears. Describing his attire: black boots with points curved upward, long blue skirt, blue robe, and cap with earflaps decorated with silver-embroidered flowers, the author says he looks like a toy paper *tiến sĩ* sold on full moon nights of the eighth month. Ngo Tat To compares the opening ceremony of interprovincial examinations with the proceedings on the stage of the classical Vietnamese theater *tuồng*, and he says that the chief examiner with a rod, tall hat with earflaps and a plate on the chest with the drawing of a peacock looks like a personage of a street theater *chèo*, only without a long beard.

The novel mocks the excessive ceremonial procedure of competitive examinations. The thanksgiving ceremony, during which the new laureates of interprovincial examinations express gratitude first to the Emperor for the degree bestowed on them, for caps and robes, as well as for an invitation to a gala reception, and then their tutors and examiners, becomes haphazard and meaningless at the end. “At long last, the ranks of the participants in this tiresome ritual have lost their order, those present began to move from one place to another, and continuing to bow, they ceased to understand whom they thank and what for” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 191].

We also seem to hear the author’s laughter in an episode when guards examine the luggage of students before letting them pass through the gates of the examination grounds. In the luggage of one of them they find a hoo-kah for smoking opium. “I cannot do anything without it,” admitted the aspirant [Ngo Tat To 1982: 83]. Another one brings a dustpan with him and, confused, explains to the guards that he needs it for cleaning purposes be-

¹ [Phan Cự Đê 2010: 392].

² The highest degree of all awarded at the examinations of the final, third grade held in the imperial palace.

cause he is “tummy-sick.” In a jar of water of still another applicant the guards find a waxed paper filled with small written characters for which “he is given it in the neck” and tied tightly. Examining the belongings of another scholar, “a middle-aged man with shifty eyes,” the guards notice a plug on his bed leg under which they discover two *Study aids for writers*. This “male-factor” is also tied for subsequent delivery to the court.

Another comical image appearing in the pages of the novel is that of student Tran Duc Chinh, an “offspring” of a noble family, who not knowing the examination rules and “being at loggerheads” with characters wishes to pass the exams only because of his social position. “If a representative of a good family, when he is over thirty does not take exams, it is considered a shame on the respected relatives” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 130]. An ignoramus, he likes to pretend important and self-confident, as if he were “well versed in examination matters.” Duc Chinh passes on to the third tour of interprovincial exams only because he pays a good sum of money to those aspirants who are willing to write a composition for him. “To think only of this dope, who is spoken of as a person who scored success in two tours,” grieves a friend of the main character [Ngo Tat To 1982: 131].

One more ignorant scholar is described in a story told Van Hac by his father-in-law while drinking tea. The knowledge of that scholar named Mi was so poor that he failed even at screening tests. But the diviner told him that this very year Mi would definitely score success at exams. Thanks to the efforts of his brother who had the *tiến sĩ* degree, he was allowed to take part in the interprovincial examinations. Mi passes on from one tour to another thanks to a very old man who each time emerges in his tent and writes compositions instead of him. As a result, Mi receives the honorable degree of *cử nhân*. And when he goes to find his benefactor, he learns that the old man was an ancestor of one ancient noble family. Further on, Mi who scored success by supernatural means, but not due to his knowledge, “took a bad path” and lost the dignity and honor of a learned scholar. The *cử nhân* had an affair with the wife of the commander of the rural guards, and when the deceived husband caught the couple red-handed, he stripped both of them, tied to the bamboo bed and ordered his subordinates to carry them along the streets for all people to see their shame.

No matter how fantastic the story about the help of supernatural forces at the exams might be, it contains the bitter truth about the fact that the degrees were not always given to the most worthy persons.

Superstitions inherent in students cause an ironic smile of the main character and the author himself, too. Van Hac on seeing clouds of smoke from the neighboring tent at the examination field thinks it's a fire and

jumps out of his tent, but it turns out that his neighbor is simply burning the ritual money. “Apparently, he feared that a haunted soul of someone of his ancestors could pursue him and he decided to propitiate it beforehand,” the hero thinks [Ngo Tat To 1982: 85]. Although he himself, being obedient to his wife and relatives, prays to ancestors and performs the necessary rites and rituals before examinations, his attitude to them is skeptical: “...there is no use in these rites and rituals; you may observe or ignore them, it doesn't matter, you'll fail all the same. No, the souls of ancestors do not help me. Why pray to them?” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 74].

The main character is quite close to the author. Ngo Tat To often attaches to him his own ironic or critical remarks. But it appears that there is more bitterness than irony in the novel.

Attending lessons at the school of his friend Khac Man and hearing how young students retell what they have learnt with great difficulty, Van Hac thinks: “What wrong have these youngsters done for which they are punished by making them cram the words they don't understand. How can an eight- or ten-year-old child know the meaning of the word 'chaos', for example?” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 34].

The weak point of the traditional educational system was that it did not teach to think, but only contributed to the development of memory. Any creative effort and independent thinking were denounced. All aspects of examination compositions, even assessments of some or other historical figures were strictly regimented: “...ancient personages should only be valued positively, and people of later epochs — negatively” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 140]. The main character is criticized by his tutor for his habit of “going against generally accepted rules,” and for the phrases in his works which “stubbornly reject all and sundry rules and regulations. And in examination works ... there can be no heavier mistake than this” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 58].

Van Hac is concerned with the fate of his Motherland, and therefore his bitterness is caused by the fact that answering the examination questions about modern time, which, as one would think, should deal with important events going on in the native land, the aspirants had only to repeat what they had crammed in childhood.

Ngo Tat To also emphasizes excessive strictness of examination rules and disparity between offence and punishment. After the end of each tour of exams two boards appeared on the gates to the examination field: a big board of honor with the names of aspirants allowed to pass on to the next tour, and a small “board of shame.” On it the names of those were listed who “had written too little,” which was considered as a sign of disrespect for the examiners. This lot also awaited those unlucky students who had missed

even one line in a character and those who had made more than ten additions, inserts, gaps, and corrections. For these “one may land in prison,” — Van Hac explains to his friend. “Because someone may think that you did them on purpose in order to give a sign to a certain examiner” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 145].

Apart from that, the names of those who had used the banned characters or even the forbidden combination of characters appeared on the board of shame. According to a decree of the emperors of the Nguyen dynasty, it was forbidden to use the characters denoting the names of the emperors and members of their families, as well as combinations meaning the names of palaces and tombs in the capital and its environs. A partial ban was imposed on the names of grandmothers, mothers, and distant ancestors of emperors: such characters could be used, but they had to be changed.

There was also the “rule of special reverence”: all words with a negative meaning, such as “wicked,” “dark,” “beat,” “kill,” could not be used before the characters meaning the monarch (“emperor,” “ruler,” “governor,” “sovereign”) even if a student wrote a composition about “dissolute” Chinese rulers.

In answers to questions about modernity the words denoting the emperor, words describing his virtues and all other words should be written on three different lines. Whoever has not placed a certain word on the corresponding line, or missed it was charged with disrespect for the emperor. “They beat up heavily for this,” the main character says [Ngo Tat To 1982: 145].

The author imparts his attitude to the examination rules to the owner of the inn where Van Hac and his friends stayed during the interprovincial examinations. “Heavens! Why should these difficulties be introduced? Not to use hundreds of banned characters alone is already a very difficult task” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 164]. And further on: “What luck that from very young years I was too stupid to study and had to abandon school and start work. If I had studied a bit better and decided to score success as an official I would have violated the rules and received punishment all my life!” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 165].

Special emphasis is made on physical hardships through which the aspirants have to pass. The symbols of these hardships are the tent and the bamboo bed, which are in the title of the novel.

Thousands of aspirants who have come to pass the competitive examinations have similar luggage: the bamboo bed and the frame for the tent on one side, a cover of palm leaves and rolled tent canvas or a cane mat on the other side, a pumpkin flask, a round bamboo case for a paper roll, and a

coffret or casket on the neck. "All these things," Ngo Tat To writes, "big and small, long and short, were a heavy burden for the fragile shoulders and necks of students. By God's will, the future learned men, before stepping on the road of honor and glory had to work as carriers" [Ngo Tat To 1982: 81].

It was only sons of noble families who were allowed to use the services of porters on the examination field.

Few people succeeded to reach the last, fourth tour of interprovincial exams and, therefore, the tents and bamboo beds were brought to the examination field in the evening of the preceding day. And although the shoulders of the participants in the last tour were free from luggage, "they still carried on their necks a case for a paper roll, a pumpkin flask with water, and a coffret or a casket, which painfully hit on their chest and stomach when they walked" [Ngo Tat To 1982: 168].

The main character Van Hac passes exams not by his own free will. He does it in order to please his ambitious wife and justify the hopes of his relatives and "uphold family honor." Although he does not dare openly protest against competitive examinations, he throws away all his belongings, except his casket and the case with the paper roll, on the examination field twice after another tour of the exams, which can be considered a hidden form of protest. Van Hac does not want to be in the role of a carrier. "What the devil should I carry all this junk on myself!" he exclaims [Ngo Tat To 1982: 117].

The students' hardships reach their peak during the second tour of the interprovincial exams. In the first tour, they suffered only from cold, but in the second tour, on top of that it began to rain. Ngo Tat To writes that "students from poor families suffered the most. Their shirts and trousers of light fabric could not protect them from piercing cold. Their hands were numb and many scholars could not hold even the light tent frames. People looked like drowned men, with blue faces and grey lips" [Ngo Tat To 1982: 112].

By midday, water began to drip into the tents and under the bamboo beds and the field turned into a bog. "How could this happen?" the author asks. And he answers: "The point is that the place assigned for the examination field a couple of months ago was a paddy field" [Ngo Tat To 1982: 113].

Van Hac, although he was protected from shower by the tent was wet through and chilled as if he stayed in the open. He needed to get a stamp of the midday, for which he had to go out of the tent and stay in the queue in the rain and icy wind; thinking about it the main character falls unto despair, a thought of giving up the whole thing and "become free for the rest of his days" crosses his mind. "Such exams as these today are nothing but humiliation," he thinks. "Even if you get important titles and posts, they are not worth this torture" [Ngo Tat To 1982: 114]. Van Hac wants to tear to

pieces the examination copybook, but stops, remembering that a student who does not give in his copybook will be placed under arrest, and if he returns the copybook with only a few lines, he will be put on the “shame list” and covered with infamy for the rest of his life.

Leaving the tent the main character sees people, who “look like refugees rather than applicants for high titles.” The examination field resembles “a market destroyed by a typhoon.” “It turns out that many tents were overturned by the wind and blown away, and quite a few students, having succumbed to cold and rain and unable to think and concentrate under the impact of the elements were forced to present their empty copybooks” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 115].

But even these trials could not be compared to what was in store for students going to the capital to pass the exams of the second grade. It takes forty days for Van Hac and his friend Doc Cung to get from their native village to the capital city of Hue. They have to cut through the road in the thick jungle with axes and knives, climb over steep cliffs, cross fast-flowing streams, clamber up the stiff slopes, slip down on the knees, and spend nights in trees to protect themselves from cougars, tigers, and snakes. On the way, Van Hac became sick running high temperature. Later he said to his friend: “I thought at the time: to become the emperor himself was not worth of such torture, to say nothing of receiving the degree *tiến sĩ*” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 197].

However, the strictest sentence to the system of competitive examinations Ngo Tat To passes when he describes tragedies which the desire to achieve success in examinations brings to various people.

The writer notes that there are very old men among the participants in examinations. The story of one such person is told in greater detail.

One cloudy morning, on the way to the second tour of the interprovincial examinations, Van Hac and his friends noticed a grey-haired old man, who slipped and fell on the road under the weight of the things he was carrying — a tent, a bamboo bed, and a coffret. “He won't be able to reach the field in such a foul weather,” Van Hac and his friends reasoned. “And if he does, what's the use? Will he be able to write anything? He's half alive” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 110]. They want to take the old man to the nearest house and make him lie down and rest, but he begs them to help him reach the examination field: he has tried to pass the exams six times but each time failed in the very first tour. Now, he was allowed to go over to the second tour at long last. He would agree even to die on the field. Further on in the book, we learn that the old man indeed died in his tent.

Another old man did not hand his copybook to the examiner on time. The old man begged him to take his work, but the man already locked and

sealed his coffret with copybooks. He pitied the old man, but could not help him. “Woe is me!” — weeps the old man. — “It’s the tenth time that I pass the exams. I have sold my house and land for this, and tried my luck for the last time. Now, what’s the use of it.... I’m late!” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 92].

Once, while talking with his brothers and his friend Doc Cung, Van Hac tells them a story about an unhappy student who was famous for his wit and education, but despite his talent was unable to receive the highest degree at the interprovincial exams. The reason for this was the formal nature of the examination rules and the underrated marks given by the examiners. Officials at preliminary assessment gave him good marks, but at the second assessment, they were invariably lowered. As a result, based on the total number of good marks the able student was seventh on the list, having outstripped many of those who gained the highest award, but inasmuch as for admittance to the final tour it was necessary to have at least one good mark put by an official of the second assessment, the lad received only the degree *tú tài*. At the same time his fellow countryman whom he helped in the three first tours was the last *cử nhân* on the list. Such failure had an adverse effect on the entire life of a young lad, he plunged into debauchery, “drank days and nights”, played *tổ tôm*¹ for four months, and then began to spit blood and died.

The main character of the novel Van Hac is unable to score success at the exams for a long time for similar reasons. “The point is that at the imperial court it was decided that although Van Hac was worthy enough to head the list of laureates, he was still too young and his compositions had strong traces of mannerism and haughtiness and, therefore, if he is given a degree he may begin to think too much of himself. This is why the imperial court, wishing to rear the young talent and not let it perish decided to regard Van Hac as one who failed at the exams, in order to give more time for his talent to develop and mature. It will be allowed to award a degree to him at the next examinations” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 179–180].

Having failed at the exams three times Van Hac, a very talented man, has turned from a self-confident and cheerful young lad into a person haunted by doubts and anxiety. “Previously, after each examination tour he went out of the gates fully confident of success, but now he doubted, suffered torments and was not sure that he would be allowed to enter the next tour... Feeling lonely and grim he remembered his examination compositions and praises he received and said to himself: ‘No. I cannot fail again.’ But this confidence vanished quickly, and the feeling of anxiety did not

¹ Vietnamese card game.

leave him either in daytime, or at night.... In short, the lad felt like a bird, which having suffered from the bow and arrows more than once, begins to fear any curved branch” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 181].

The hero becomes disappointed in the justice and objectivity of the system of competitive examinations. “Some time ago he thought that if you study hard, if you are talented, you are sure to receive a deserved award. But after failure at the last exam, he realized that neither persistence nor talent were a guarantee of success, and he began to believe in predestination” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 181].

Now that passing exams has become an ordinary thing for him, he feels ashamed of receiving tokens of respect from his relatives who, according to tradition, gather at his house every time before the beginning of the regular competitive exams. And he loses the taste for entertainment: during his first examinations, while awaiting their result he spent time at brothels and “drank much to the sound of music and songs by beautiful girls”, but after three failures he flatly refuses to turn to debauchery with his friends.

But if some are broken by competitive exams, others are deprived of human dignity.

A friend of the main character, a rather advanced in years teacher of a primary school named Khac Man turns into a miserable person faced by failure at the exams. During the first tour of the interprovincial examinations, when the sound of drums gave the sign to present compositions, he begs his friend who is sitting nearby to help him finish his composition: “Help me, or I’ll commit suicide, I swear! What shall I live for if I fail!” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 91].

When Khac Man does not see his name on the board of honor showing the examinations results and thinks he has failed, he turns from a wagger into an acerbated person. He responds to his friends’ banter with undisguised rudeness and goes to the bank of the river with such a gloomy face that they begin to fear he’s indeed going to commit suicide. Luckily, all ends well: his friends convince him that he has not failed at all, but simply has not noticed his name, though it was written in big letters. “You’re such a miserable man,” Van Hac says to him, “to be friends with you is a disgrace.” But Khac Man does not care a damn what his friends think of him. “Scold me as much as you wish,” he answers rejoicing at his success, “it doesn’t touch me” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 106]. Although at the examination, in which the incident described above happened, Khac Man does not score success, in several years’ time he receives the degree of *tú tài*, and he is on the bottom of the list of the laureates. “This is, perhaps, the most suitable place for him,” Doc Cung says, “he’s the last, yet *tú tài*.” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 189]. For such

an ignorant person as Khac Man this proved to be a big chance, as he entered the following tours only thanks to the help of his friends.

After each tour of exams drunken failed aspirants roam the streets shouting that their compositions are superb, and they themselves are decent people, but the examiners are ignorant. They look for somebody to displace their anger on to. Some of them even sob violently in public.

Ngo Tat To also shows that competitive exams can bring students to the brink of sanity. The novel describes how one of the participants in the inter-provincial exams, having learned of his success, “suddenly began to beat with his fists the hat tied by a cord to his chest, then jumped like a sparrow and shouted: ‘Who got the pig’s head? It’s me, me, me!’” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 189]. Soon this fresh *cử nhân* comes to his senses. “Evidently, this aspirant has failed many times, and that’s why has gone mad from joy,” one of the students says [Ngo Tat To 1982: 190].

Van Hac himself at the very end of the novel does not seem quite sane. After three failures at interprovincial examinations he finally headed the list of laureates and received the degree *cử nhân*. At the examinations in the capital the hero also becomes the first laureate. Other aspirants look at him “with fear and admiration” and predict the first place at the exams of the final degree at the imperial palace. He himself is convinced of victory beforehand. It seems that the coveted high degree *tiến sĩ* of which his wife has been dreaming is already in his pocket. But after the final exams he is arrested. Having returned home, he tells his relatives about his failure “with a satisfied smile”. “With a happy, smiling face” he says that he used four characters incorrectly, for which he was even deprived of the title of the first laureate. Apparently, having decided never to pass examinations again, he feels free and happy at long last. But from the point of view of the orthodox Confucians, his decision is utterly insane.

The idea that success at the competitive examinations is not worthy of ardently striving for it becomes ever stronger because the novel describes the fate of one student who received the high degree *tiến sĩ*, and also because of the compositional structure of the novel. It begins with a discussion in a village of the news about their fellow villager Tran Dan Long who became *tiến sĩ* and ends with the news that the imperial court ordered Long to stand at the head of the army, and when he was defeated he was downgraded to a simple soldier of the vanguard. Thus, the entire many-year-long thorny path traversed by Tran Dan Long in order to reach success at examinations and become government official was a flop. His lot was terrible. Van Hac pities his fellow student: “A young lad who has recently scored success at examinations, who has fagged over canonic books and has never heard a single

rifle shot, is appointed high-ranking military commander and is ordered to defeat pirates. And here's the result....” [Ngo Tat To 1982: 208].

Four lines from the epic poem *The Tale of Kieu* by Nguyen Du¹ cited in the novel become the keynote of the whole work:

“Do I have to give my sword to the imperial power?
Isn't there another choice?
Do I have to become a fleshy wig
To bow my head low dressed in fig?”²

For the sake of justice, it should be noted that there are ideal images of Confucian scholars in the novel. For example, it is the tutor of Van Hac, the second laureate from Tien Kieu³, a man of high moral standards who cited Confucius and enjoyed great respect of everybody. He was a talented teacher and his school was famous in the district. In the year of Van Hac's success at the examinations, of the 25 aspirants who received the degree *cử nhân*, seven were his pupils. It was he who matched Van Hac and, by doing so, he not only took care of his future, but also helped his bride, who was so anxious to become the wife of *tiến sĩ* that even fell ill.

Another ideal image of Confucian scholar is that of the supervisor of educational work in Hanoi province, who is described as a “man of great book wisdom.” “A respectable grey-haired old man” appears on the book pages in a scene when a crowd of students is about to destroy the house of a merchant who has offended one of them. The old man is asked to calm down the mob. He finds out the ring-leader of the conflict, and pronounces his verdict to each participant. Those guilty of disorder are ordered to give their apology and to come next morning to the Confucian temple of literature for an expiatory prayer and punishment (ten drubs). “The supervisor of education settled the argument wisely,” Van Hac and his brothers exclaim after hearing this story [Ngo Tat To 1982: 179].

In this way Ngo Tat To criticizes the system of competitive examinations, yet, he does not reject Confucian values.

Results of the research. As we see, Ngo Tat To laughs and grieves at absurdities and vices of the examination system of traditional Vietnam in his novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*. Along with the educational system the institution of competitive examinations closely connected with it contri-

¹ Nguyen Du (1765–1820) — a celebrated Vietnamese poet who is most known for writing *The Tale of Kieu*.

² Cited from: [Ngo Tat To 1982: 42].

³ A commune in Bac Quang district, Ha Giang province, Vietnam.

buted only to the development of memory, but not the development of thinking. Moreover, it stemmed any creative effort and independence of thought. The examination system was nonobjective and imperfect, inasmuch as, on the one hand, it allowed unworthy aspirants to receive degrees, and on the other, the brightest students could fail due to the fact that examiners lowered their marks on purpose in the belief that early failures would help budding talents “develop and mature.” The system of competitive examinations with its excessively strict and complicated rules and severe punishment for even the smallest violations committed by inadvertence, with all the heavy physical burdens and privations, which accompanied participation in exams, humiliated the human dignity of aspirants and crippled future destinies of many scholars, who devoted their entire life to receiving degrees and official posts, but failed to achieve success.

Practically all elements: the title of the novel, its plot and composition, images of students, author's descriptions of certain episodes, inner evolution of the main character, and straightforward critical remarks that the author puts in the mouth of the main character and secondary personages are aimed at criticizing the competitive examinations system described in the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*.

Passing his sentence on the system of competitive examinations born by Confucian teaching and indissolubly linked with it, Ngo Tat To, nevertheless, does not fully break with the past; he recreates the images of ideal Confucian scholars, thus bolstering up Confucian values.

Analysis of results. The irreconcilable attitude of Ngo Tat To to the system of competitive examinations can be explained not only by his patriotic feelings, which are expressed in the foreword to the novel, but also by his personal experience in the early years of his life. As we have mentioned, the writer came from a hereditary family of Confucian scholars. His grandfather had passed interprovincial exams seven times, but had received only the second degree *tú tài*, which did not open the way to the exams of the next grade and upper posts. The writer's father had passed exams six times, but was unable to achieve success and worked as a rural teacher all his life. Ngo Tat To was the last Confucian scholar in his family. In an interview to the newspaper *The Bee (Con ong)* given in 1939 he noted that even in his school years he felt no excitement over the exams, yet, he had to pass them [Phan Cự Đệ 2010: 389]. At preliminary local exams in Bac Ninh, his native province, Ngo Tat To took first place, but in interprovincial exams, which he had passed twice, he did not receive a degree. Undoubtedly, personal failure, as well as those of his father and grandfather had an impact on his attitude to the institution of the competitive examinations. On the other hand, the lot

of the writer's father and grandfather had been shared by many Confucian students. By statistical data, on average, of 70—80 thousand men taking part in interprovincial examinations only about 15 received the highest degree *tiến sĩ* at the exams of the final, third grade¹. This fact shows that the novel by Ngo Tat To reflected general sentiments current in the country by the end of the epoch of traditionalism.

As for the idealization by the writer of the images of Confucian scholars, it can also be explained by his Confucian past and the spiritual heritage of his family.

It should be noted that the novel by Ngo Tat To, in which examinations were the object of criticism, was followed by novels by Chu Thien² describing the competitive examinations system as the highest expression of state wisdom in the feudal epoch³. In the view of N. Nikulin, the ideological aspect of his works was connected with an attempt to find support in the heritage of national culture and history during a difficult historical period of the country [Nikulin 2006: 55]. At the end of the 1930s—beginning of the 1940s, the problem of Confucianism was, therefore, lively discussed in Vietnamese literature.

Conclusion

In the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* Ngo Tat To shows the inefficient and fallacious character of the institution of the competitive examinations in traditional Vietnam. Created as a means of selecting the most talented people in the country for service to the Emperor, these exams not only created loopholes for promoting mediocre and cunning people, but quite often nipped in the bud the talents of the most decent and capable persons and broke their lives. The formal nature of the examination rules and subjectivity of examiners gave birth to heartaches among aspirants, and heavy burdens and privations connected with the competitive exams caused physical torture.

The means of criticism of the examination system in the novel are many and varied. They concern both the content and the composition of the novel.

¹ Hữu Ngọc, Lady Borton (2003). *Thi cử nho giao* [Royal Exams]. Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers.

² Chu Thien (1913—1992) — Vietnamese writer, author of historical novels, as well as literary critic and researcher of Vietnamese literature.

³ We mean the novels *Writing Brush and China Inkpot* (Bút nghiên) and *Confucian Scholar* (Nhà nho) published in 1942 and 1943 respectively.

However, the author does not break fully with the past. Having created the images of ideal Confucian scholars brought up by the very same system, which the author criticizes, he seems at the same time to say that we have something to learn from the past.

The reason and sources of such harsh criticism of the institution of the competitive examinations in the novel and, at the same time, the author's ambiguous attitude to the Confucian heritage of his country lie in the origin of Ngo Tat To and his early years of life.

Along with the critical assessment of the examination system in traditional Vietnam at the beginning of the 1940s, there was a directly opposite point of view expressed in works by Chu Thien.

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ABSTRACTS

PART ONE

RUSSIA/USSR-VIETNAM RELATIONS: CURRENT TRENDS AND HISTORY

Evgeny Kobelev

Russia-Vietnam Relations: Reality and Prospects

The **subject is topical** as Russia's relations with Vietnam, a dynamically developing country in East Asia and one of the three major strategic partners of Russia in the region, along with China and India, are extremely important. In this context, research into the said issue is of great scientific and practical interest.

Research materials. There are numerous theoretical and popular science publications, both by Russian and by Vietnamese political analysts and historians.

Research procedure. The research was made by means of collecting and grouping information about historical facts, ways and trends in the development of Russia and Vietnam relations both in the past and, especially, nowadays.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was first of all official Russian-Vietnamese documents, agreements, treaties, joint declarations and communiqués, speeches by RF and SRV leaders.

The theoretical basis of the research was the principal provisions of the Concept of the Russian Federation Foreign Policy approved on February 12, 2013, and also the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the RF and the SRV (2001) and the Joint Declaration of Strengthening Relations of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the RF and the SRV (2012).

Result analysis. Russia-Vietnam relations have been developing in a positive trend, and are mutually beneficial, above all in the political sphere and in the area of military-technological cooperation. At the same time, trade and economic relations have been low-key, especially as compared with Vietnam's burgeoning relations with China and the United States. Moreover, during the last few years, relations between Russia and Vietnam have been increasingly adversely affected by the tense situation in the South China Sea (SCS).

Conclusion. At the start of the second decade of the 21st century a new, fairly productive and stable model of relations between Russia and Vietnam took shape. Relying as they are on mutual understanding and scrupulous consideration of each

other's national interests, the relations of comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries on the whole display good positive dynamics. Their further intensification is today a major task of Russian foreign policy aimed at ensuring peace and security and consolidating Russia's position in SEA and the APR. This attitude cannot be affected by the immediate political situation. It is fundamental and long-term, and will doubtless determine the nature, vectors, scale, and algorithm of Russia-Vietnam relations in the foreseeable perspective.

Keywords: *Russia, Vietnam, the Declaration on strategic partnership, economic and military-technical cooperation, ASEAN and security in Southeast Asia.*

Elena Nikulina

Russia-Vietnam Cultural Cooperation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Introduction. The paper is based on speeches by Russian and Vietnamese scholars and culture figures at the Round Table dedicated to Russian-Vietnamese cultural cooperation that was held in Moscow as part of Vietnam Culture Days in Russia, in June 2014. The paper gives a concise description of Russian-Vietnamese ties in the area of literature, theater, cinema, and arts in the 1950—1980s and nowadays.

The subject is topical as until the 1990s Russian literature, theater, and cinema were well known and loved in Vietnam. Hundreds of books were translated, dozens of plays by Russian classics and Soviet playwrights were staged, the best Soviet movies were shown. Vietnamese creative intellectuals were trained at Soviet universities. A 15-volume set of the best Vietnamese prose, poetry, and drama pieces was published in Russia in Russian; Vietnamese plays and movies were shown. But with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and weakening of belateral relations the dissemination of the Russian language and the influence of Russian culture diminished considerably. Vietnam is experiencing the expansion of US and West European culture, as well as of that in more advanced East Asian countries.

A sociopolitical factor makes this research topical too. The new ideological struggle under way at present is between the corrupt West with the United States at the head and the world of traditionalism, which Russia wants to spearhead. In these circumstances, the influence of Russian culture on its Vietnamese counterpart would be most important.

Research procedure. The research was done in the form of information gathering and analysis at Russian and Vietnamese publishing houses, theaters, museums, film studios, and mass media.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by Russian and foreign historians on the culture issues. The author used a complex research method.

Research materials. The research relies on information from Russian and Vietnamese publishing houses, theaters, Mosfilm film studio, the State Museum of Oriental Art, and the Fine Arts Museum in Ho Chi Minh City.

Conclusions. Vietnamese culture figures and leaders advocate greater influence of Russian culture in Vietnam and of Vietnamese culture in Russia, expansion of cultural exchanges, and more Vietnamese students at Russian art schools. To counter the blanket expansion of Western, above all American, culture it is necessary to have serious support from the state, public organizations and business structures can also play a considerable role there.

Keywords: *Russia, Vietnam, culture, cooperation.*

Anatoly Sokolov

The First Soviet-Vietnamese Contacts: 1947—1950 (As Chronicled in USSR Foreign Ministry Documents)

This paper based on materials from Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation examines in detail the history of the Soviet-Vietnamese contacts in 1947—1950 in Switzerland and Thailand. The Soviet mission and the Vietnam News Agency information Bureau became a species of channel through which communication was maintained and information was an exchange and information between Moscow and DRV government.

What make this research **topical** is both sociopolitical and strictly scientific factors. The current invigoration of Russia and Vietnam relations encourages interest in the history of bilateral relations. Discovering and thoroughly examining the regularities in the development of Russian-Vietnamese relations is conducive to a more profound understanding of contemporary processes and forecasting of their further development.

Research procedure. The research was done in the form of document gathering and analysis at the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation (Moscow), where the documents were collated and supplemented with data from other sources.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by Russian and foreign historians on issues of international relations, and methodological recommendations of archivists. To carry out the tasks set, the author used both general theoretical and specialized methods of cognition: comparative historical, problem-chronological, and others.

Research materials. The research relies entirely on documents from Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AFPRF). They reflect the events of 1947—1950 related to the first Soviet-Vietnamese contacts that took place in Switzerland and Thailand.

Conclusions. The Soviet mission in Thailand, active and consistent activity of its officials in 1948—1950 made substantial contribution to the establishment of relations between the USSR and the DRV.

Started in June 1950 the Korean war radically changed the situation in Asia and in the world. The ongoing confrontation between the Soviet allies — North Korea

and China — and the West led by the US, showed to Moscow the importance of the war in Indochina, which has now become part of the struggle against US imperialism and its satellites. In such circumstances, intensified Soviet-Vietnam ties, which are becoming more tangible forms of cooperation in various spheres — first of all in the ideology and military realms. And after Ho Chi Minh visit to Moscow in 1952, the Soviet Union has made a final choice, identifying Vietnam as an ally in the world confrontation between the two systems — socialism and capitalism.

Keywords: *Vietnam, Thailand, the Soviet Union, international relations, Soviet-Vietnam ties Vietnam News Agency, international cooperation.*

PART TWO

POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIETNAM AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

Vladimir Kolotov

Analysis of Domestic Political and International Situations before and after the 12th Congress of the Communist party of Vietnam

In 2015, political life in Vietnam was keynoted by the preparations for the 12th Congress of the CPV, which took place on January 20—28, 2016. The congress elected a new leadership of Vietnam, which would be responsible for the country's destiny in the near future. In this context, it seems **topical** to analyze the domestic political situation, as well as the international situation on the eve of and after the CPV congress and determine the main trends of changes in them, as well as the new threats to the country's security.

The theoretical basis of the research was provided by well-known approaches and technologies of impact on public opinion elaborated by authoritative specialists in the field of information wars.

Research methodology consists of a consecutive examination of the following subjects: 1) Alignment of forces in Vietnam's leadership on the eve of and during the congress; 2) Specific features of the domestic political and economic situations in Vietnam: public protests and the activity of the U.S. Ambassador; 3) American cybertechnologies and new threats to security. In examining the domestic political situation before and after the congress special attention is devoted to a detailed analysis of the alignment of forces in the Politburo of the CC CPV. The author examines the most effective PR-actions of the U.S. Embassy. In conclusion, this article dwells on certain little-known results of investigations of experts in the field of security and information technologies, which are used in the assessment of the new risks of using modern cybertechnologies for private collection of information and

remote suppression of the latest weapons systems created with the use of big integrated networks.

Research materials. The investigation has been carried out on the basis of the latest publications by authoritative experts in the sphere of foreign and domestic policies of Vietnam, official voting results on trust to Vietnam's supreme leaders, material of the country's mass media about the activity of the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Ted Osius, as well as the article by the former Ambassador of Vietnam Lê Văn Bằng to the U.S.A. Materials of the former CIA employee Edward Snowden and the Russian expert in the field of defense Yuri Krutov are used for the first time in analyzing the new threats to Vietnam in the sphere of information technologies and the development of military-technological cooperation with the United States and its allies.

Conclusions. Both before and after the congress, U.S. influence in Vietnam continued to grow. Despite the complex and tragic past, as well as the existing political problems in the sphere of human rights and freedom of conscience, Vietnamese-American relations are now dynamically developing.

Under growing geopolitical tension in the region, Vietnam has stepped up military and technological cooperation with traditional (Russia) and new (Israel, the EU, the U.S.A.) partners on security.

Territorial disputes between East Asian countries poison the political atmosphere in the region, causing mistrust between neighboring countries and an unprecedented arms race, and also contribute to the drawing of big nonregional states in geopolitical games and local contradictions in their interests.

Despite the serious nature of threats and challenges facing Vietnam, it should be remembered that Hanoi is well able to protect its interests, which certain influential adversaries have had a chance to see for themselves. At present, Vietnam is developing confidently and stably, however, dynamic changes in the information space and in high political circles, as well as new threats and challenges to security from outside and within the country require a definite reaction on the part of the authorities, which is evolved and endorsed at CPV congresses. Due to the high efficiency of management, Vietnam has good chances to overcome successfully the main political and economic problems facing it from outside and inside, as the case has been more than once in that country's history during the past decades.

Keywords: *XII congress of the CPV, Politburo of the CPV Central Committee, territorial disputes, digital sovereignty, political technologies, security.*

Grigory Lokshin

Crisis Aggravating in 2014 in the South China Sea

The situation evolving in the South China Sea over the last few years has been increasingly in the focus of attention of the world community. Contradictions between China and ASEAN littoral states received a tremendous boost in the spring

and summer of 2014 after China put into operation a large oil rig in Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands. An all-round analysis of the subsequent events, causes, and motives of the parties' behavior and the ensuing consequences is, therefore, nothing if not **topical**. The first section of the paper concentrates on the growing geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of the region with its maritime communications and resources, notes the persisting risk of contradictions building up in the area and degenerating into a dangerous hotbed of international tension. The next section looks at the events of the spring 2014 proper, following the visit of US President Barack Obama to the countries of East Asia and the putting up of the Chinese rig that occurred shortly afterward in Vietnam's EEZ. After that the paper analyzes actions by the Vietnamese leadership in conditions of mounting tension in relations with China. The next section shows the response of the world community to China's doings, especially of the United States, Japan, and ASEAN countries. The position of Russia is analyzed separately, as it evoked an ambiguous reaction in the public opinion in Vietnam and other ASEAN countries. The two final sections focus on crisis settlement and its consequences.

Research materials. Analysis of the crisis development mostly relied on official sources, including statements by several governments, Foreign Ministry spokespersons of relevant countries, and reports by information agencies of China, Vietnam, Japan, and the US.

Research procedure includes the use of analytical materials published in the media by various foreign experts. At the same time, the author offered his own assessment of actions by various participants in the crisis.

Research methodology. The South China Sea events are viewed in the light of the mounting standoff between China and the US in the region. Their dispute there is related not only to energy resources, strategic outposts and waterways. In equal or possibly greater measure that was a continuation of the line of historical requital adopted at the 18th Congress of the PRC Communist party, of fulfilling the "Chinese dream" to shake off the burden and painful memories of the past and restore the country's erstwhile grandeur.

The theoretical basis. The author made an objective analysis of the actual events, their cause-and-effect ties and consequences. The paper highlights the exposed elements of mutual reserve both in China and Vietnam in the course of the conflict flaring up between the two.

Conclusion. Unfortunately, there are still no optimistic signs of all parties to the SCS conflict displaying readiness to accept the reality and consider new initiatives for dispute settlement. China masterfully combines the smile diplomacy backed by trade agreements, loans, and investment projects with a purposeful military strategy. It, therefore, successfully uses economic levers and diplomatic approaches to foil any attempts by SEA countries at working out a united position. It will take a lot more time before China and ASEAN countries manage to agree on the most general provisions of the Parties' Conduct Code (COC).

Vietnam's policies in the China-Vietnam-US triangle have been unchanged. They consist in unrelenting independent sovereign foreign policy while keeping international relations multivector and diversified. This takes preservation and furthering of the relations with its two most important partners, China and the United States.

Ultimately, it has become obvious that the Vietnamese leadership displayed self-restraint in the crisis and did not fall for any provocations. Vietnam continued maneuvering to settle disputes in the SCS at bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Simultaneously, it is furthering cooperation with the states in the region and with all other countries interested in preserving peace in the SCS and able to help Vietnam in solving this problem.

Keywords: *South China Sea, ASEAN, HD 981 rig, visit of President B. Obama, crisis, allies, protest.*

PART THREE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAM

Vladimir Mazyrin

Vietnamese economy on the rise: core trends of recent years (2013—2017)

The research sums up the results of Vietnam's economic development in 2013—2017 through highlighting its positive trends and unsolved problems. *Section one* characterizes the general growth dynamic and economic structure, examines the situation in the three sectors of production and services. *Section two* analyzes the monetary and finance system, in particular such aspects as fighting inflation, state budget execution, monetary and investment policies, and the public debt. *Section three* focuses on external economic relations, including foreign direct investment in Vietnam and its foreign trade. The conclusion is that the Vietnamese economy is embarking on the upward trajectory in the period under examination while its dependence on more advanced countries to increase, and the local business positions and competitiveness get weaker.

The topicality of the research having interest both to Russia and to all researchers tends to know how Vietnam has stopped the recession of its economy and effects of the global financial crisis and brought new rise closer. Add to this that the results of the last few years in Vietnamese economy are very sparingly described in Russian research literature, especially with regard to 2015—2017. While some events and facts have been covered, the trends and development prospects are yet to be revealed.

Research procedure. The research was made by means of gathering and grouping data about the economic development rates and ways in Vietnam, chiefly by comparing the 2013–2014 and 2016–2017 indices. The information from various sources was supplemented by own computations. Quality conclusions then made rest on statistics, generalizations, and analysis of the material gathered.

Research methodology. The theoretically and methodologically the research is based on analysis of economic growth in backward countries. The author used general theory and specialized methods of cognition — qualitative and quantitative ones. Conceptually, by discovering the characteristics of Vietnam's economic growth, he tries to find the extent and peculiarities of its current model functioning.

Research materials. The research is chiefly based on recent statistical materials from state departments, on Vietnamese and foreign researchers' titles related to local economy growth. These are data from the General Statistics Office and Governmental bodies of Vietnam. Materials of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, and of international institutions, like the World Bank are used too. It was also explored the surveys by Vietnam Institute of Economic Policy Research (VEPR) and Western publications, including materials of US Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). We also resorted to individual and collective works by Russian researchers.

The theoretical basis of the research is popular concepts that explain the need of market reforms in emerging market. First, these are the theories of economic growth stages and catching-up development that condition their success on market reforms and integration in global economy. The theory of international trade liberalization recovers the engines of external economic activity. A different regularity, the scale effect theory explains economic efficiency improving as the scale of production and market increases.

Results Analysis. Analysis of the situation in Vietnamese economy in 2013–2017 reveals its obvious achievements, proving that it is on the rise. The SRV remains one of the fastest growing and promising emerging markets in the world. The country managed to overcome recession and other aftereffects of the global financial crisis largely thanks to the state fulfilling its role of market regulator.

Conclusions and Recommendations. The growth of Vietnamese economy is increasingly dependent on the FDI sector output, especially major transnationals, while the domestic manufacturing sector is withering as the country integrates ever deeper into the global economy.

To ensure long-term development prospects Vietnam has to review growth sources, master the new innovative growth model more quickly and improve the competitiveness of its economy. This cannot be achieved without intensifying the production process, improving the qualitative characteristics of labor, the business environment, and state regulation.

Keywords: *Vietnam, economic structure, recovery and rise, sectors of production and services, monetary and financial system, inflation, state budget, exchange rate, currency reserves, public debt, foreign direct investment, foreign trade.*

Evgenia Aksenova

The formation of the legal field for foreign companies' activities in Vietnam

The article examines the extent to which the legal system of Vietnam meets the new reality of rapid liberalization of the economy and the expansion of regional and international integration. The regulatory and legal regime of foreign companies' activities is also among the topics of this work, as well as the attractiveness of the investment climate and the effectiveness of the implementation of legislative documents in Vietnam — which is analyzed on the basis of international ratings. The investment strategy of the Vietnamese government and the way it is consolidated in key documents of national development are examined in correlation with the modern requirements. A discussion regarding the justification of the implementation of the policy of reliance on external resources and the further liberalization of foreign companies in Vietnam is presented in the article. The latest changes in the country's investment policy are looked at in terms of both liberalization of activities and tightening of the reporting system of foreign companies. The article also shows the key aspects of the new laws on investment, enterprise, real estate and related regulatory documents.

The subject is topical because rapid liberalization of Vietnam's economy as well as the processes of regional and international integration have forced Vietnam to face the question of whether the modern legal framework contributes to the effective investment development, mutually beneficial cooperation with foreign investors — or it just creates risks for national interests and national business.

Research procedure. The study was conducted through comparison of international ratings data to assess the implementation of the legal framework for a decade. On the basis of regulatory documents, recent developments in legislation relating to the activities of foreign companies in Vietnam are analyzed, and these changes evaluated. We have identified and compared the polar assessments in the expert community of Vietnam's strategy for investment liberalization.

Research methodology. The author of this article used such general scientific methods as analytical and synthetic methods, as well as comparative, deductive, inductive and system-structural methods. In the framework of economic theory, the author preferred the institutional method, relying on a systematic approach.

The theoretical basis of the research. The theoretical basis of the study is founded on the works of economists in the field of capital flow and theories of foreign direct investment, in particular, the theory of internationalization and FDI, the eclectic paradigm; as well as studies on the impact of FDI on the economic development of the host country. In addition, the author relies on the concept of assessing the investment climate on the basis of methods proposed by international organizations, including the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and others.

Conclusion. Based on the work done, the author concludes that the legal framework of Vietnam has been significantly modernized over the past 10 years and now it is close to global standards. Taking into account the need to stabilize the inflow of

foreign capital after a number of crisis years, the country's leadership took legislative measures, both for further liberalization of the laws concerning foreign companies in Vietnam, and for more stringent regulation of their activity. Because of the speed of change, this process is not going without problems and the key problem remains the real implementation of the updated legislation.

Keywords: *FDI, Vietnam, investment climate.*

S. Ryazantsev, A. Lukyanets, R. Manshin

Demographic and Socioeconomic Consequences of Global Warming and Climate Changes in Vietnam

The research addresses climate change issues and the implications of these changes for Vietnam. The relevance of the topic, the materials used in the research, the hypothesis and methodology of the study are shown. The main forms of manifestation of climate change have been identified, as well as risks and threats to Vietnam's economy and society. Possible trends in the development of climate change and their consequences in the context of the provinces of Vietnam are presented. In conclusion, the necessity of carrying out more active joint actions on the part of the world community is justified.

The subject is topical is due to large-scale climate changes occurring on the planet and their impact on socio-economic and demographic processes in the countries most affected by climate change. Vietnam, as one of the five countries most affected by climate change, already fully feels all sorts of negative consequences. The topic is important both from the point of view of theory and practice, since climate change is massive, and the forms of manifestation of consequences are not universal, but are manifested specifically depending on the territory and density of the population.

Research materials. For the world scientific community, the topic is by no means new, but the level of theoretical and practical scientific data is not at the proper level. In Russia, the issues of risks and threats to demographic processes from climate change are practically not developed and are extremely superficial. The investigation relies on large sets of World Bank statistics, organizations from UN structures, as well as on the results of a sociological survey of the Vietnamese population and experts who are scientists and representatives of Vietnamese authorities.

Research procedure. The research was conducted by analyzing and comparing official statistics, aggregated and grouped data, sociological survey in the provinces of Vietnam, conducted in 2014. The main source of statistics was information from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, as well as the World Bank experts' reports. The main hypothesis of the investigation was consequentially proved.

Research methodology. The main methodological technique of research was the principle of complexity. On this basis, an assessment of the biogeophysical effects of climate risks and threats on socio-economic and demographic processes

was used, both in individual households and at the provincial level. To identify the main risks and threats faced by households geographically located in the areas most at risk, a sociological survey method was used. The main socio-economic and demographic risks and threats of the consequences of climate change were identified.

Research hypothesis. In short- and medium-term prospect, climate changes will exert an ever-growing negative influence on the demographic, economic, and social processes in Vietnam, touching on the life of the growing number of people.

Analysis of results. The research revealed that even within the framework of one country the consequences of climate change in geographical aspect (provinces) will be heterogeneous. The territories subjected to the biggest threats are located in the low-land areas of Vietnam, primarily the provinces of the Mekong and the Red River deltas. On the basis of scenario forecasts on flooding of territories, possible negative demographic processes were predicted, which were mainly the flows of forced migrants.

The research also revealed that at the present stage, without taking additional measures, no country can fully exclude the threat of unfavorable socio-economic and demographic situation from the impact of the consequences caused by climate change.

Conclusion. The research concludes that the problem of climate change is quite real, massive, and the consequences of it are differentiated. Therefore, it's very difficult to construct accurate forecast scenarios for consequences provision. This ultimately reduces the effectiveness of measures taken at the state level, worsens the socio-economic situation of countries, creates additional challenges and possibilities for the development of unfavorable demographic processes.

Keywords: *Vietnam, global warming, the effects of climate change, demographic processes, economic risks.*

Anton Tsvetov

New Social Forces in Modern Vietnam: Group Interests and Participation in Politics

The article examines three social forces of modern Vietnam, which are becoming politically self-aware: bureaucrats, private small and medium-sized business owners, and the urban middle class. Each of them to a certain extent owes their emergence to market reforms, has expectations from the political course of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), and hopes to take part in the formulation and negotiation of that course.

The topicality of the research is provided by the growing importance of reforming the Communist Party of Vietnam policies as well as of the Vietnamese society transformation in recent years.

Research materials. It is based on the latest data of sociological studies carried out by international scholars, as well as their Vietnamese counterparts.

Research procedure consisted in gathering, grouping, and analysis of information on different societal groups of Vietnamese populations. Three groups were singled out: bureaucrats/government officials (executive), especially of the socioeconomic bloc, in both central and provincial bodies; private businessmen, especially of middle and small size; urban middle class. Each of these groups is treated with a brief portrayal and we then proceed to assess their influence on the further political development of Vietnam.

Research methodology. To address these issues we used dialectics, general theoretical and special methods of research: historical, logical-intuitive, systemic-structural, content-analytical, and event analyses.

Analysis of results. Due to limited opportunities of free association and the closed nature of the political process, the interests of these groups are not broadly expressed in public. These groups are also new to contemporary Vietnamese political life so their interests have not yet been duly ascertained.

The completion of the self-identification of each of these groups is inevitable. In the course of this process, we will witness a desire for the implementation of these requirements in practical activity, and this drive is becoming more visible. One of the steps in this direction would be broader representation of business in the party ranks. Such steps may not mean ideological changes or weakened monopoly on power of the CPV, on the contrary, they would be a natural step toward its preservation.

Conclusion. Renovation reforms as well as the global trends of early 21st century have engendered a reconfiguration of social relations in Vietnam, particularly in the form of growing influence of certain societal groups. Three particular groups — bureaucrats, private small and medium-sized businessmen, and the urban middle class — are becoming politically self-aware and are forming expectations from the political course of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), and hope to take part in the formulation and negotiation of that course. The mechanisms of incorporating political preferences of these groups into the governing system of the state remain a key challenge to be addressed.

Keywords: *interest groups, middle class, doi moi, Communist Party of Vietnam.*

PART FOUR HISTORY

Oksana Novakova

Independent Vietnam: Democracy Vs. Tradition, 1945—1946 and the 21st Century

The research intention was to comprehend the origins of major changes in the sociopolitical and cultural life of Vietnamese society that occurred since 1945 in the wake of the victorious August Revolution and are still under way in the early 21st

century. Section one falls back on analysis of new source-studying Vietnamese materials. Section two relies on the comparative method to analyze major 1945 documents that laid the foundation of Vietnamese statehood in the independent development period. Section three views the history of Vietnam under the new course announced in 1986, as the policy of renovation. The Conclusion generalizes the research results;

The subject under examination gets increasingly **topical** as the renovation policy evolves in time. However, it is still a long way to having the subject exhausted; the degree to which it has been explored, for all the numerous papers, including by Western scholars, is rather modest. As for Russia's Vietnam studies, there is still a good deal of room for research.

Research procedure. The main thing was to look for and collect new documents dating back to the 1945–1946 period and comprehend their significance in light of the 21st century trends in domestic science, and also supplement data from various sources. At the same time, the author examined theoretical prerequisites, experience and motive forces of the 1945 Revolution, and compared those with modern political guidelines of Vietnamese leadership.

The main idea of the research was to achieve some specification of several conclusions existing in domestic Vietnam studies as to the evolution of Vietnam's way in recent history, especially in the part referring to the 21st century period.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological background of the research was taken from foreign and domestic Orientalists writings on the renovation policy and, up to a point, on the period of the 1945 August Revolution. To achieve the research objectives and solve the assigned problems, the author used both general theory and specialized cognition methods — analysis and synthesis, logic, analogy and comparison, systems and structural analysis.

In terms of the conceptual approach, I sought to highlight the characteristics and evolution of Vietnam's historical development model in the second half of the 20th century. This is important theoretically and practically, because similar processes are unfolding in other countries of the region.

Research materials. The research was largely based on archival materials from Vietnam brought into circulation for the first time, namely the Viet Minh Front Program, Declaration of Independence of the DRV, the 1946 Constitution, and also the Theses on Vietnamese Culture [*Viet Minh Front Program 1983*: 812–823].

For describing the complicated political situation in Vietnam, it was helpful the profile of the prominent politician Tran Trong Kim whose work and activity have so far been largely neglected by Vietnamese historians. Theoretical work by the famous political leader of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew.

This research relied on major works by Vietnamese authors who covered the issue, and also writings by their West European counterparts. This remark refers especially to the works by Russian authors, which were used in the second section of the paper.

The theoretical basis of the research is concepts of the world history science, based on the thesis of progress as time that is understood as a spiral motion where

each round is the next step towards the historical progress. Potential deviations are viewed as a particular case. The paper also relies on provisions of the theory of modernization and preservation of the national identity.

Conclusion. The paper shows the ideological and political innovations by the Vietnamese leadership conditioned by the challenges of the 21st century, and also by the increasing role of the image of charismatic leader Ho Chi Minh, until his sacralization both at the national cult level and in Vietnamese Buddhism.

Keywords: *renovation policy, national traditions, national identity, August Revolution, the DRV Constitution.*

Maxim Syunnerberg, Evgenia Marchenko
**Symbolic heroines of the two resistance wars
of independent Vietnam (1945—1975)**

The paper presents a case study on the contribution of the Vietnamese women into the two Resistance wars in the XX century. Their various motivations for joining the revolutionary path as well as the forms of participation are categorized. We also outline the state-wide programs launched during the war to involve women into the liberation struggle, such as “Three Readinesses” and “Five Determinations”.

Particular attention was given to the women who, for some reasons, became the symbolic figures of their time, and to how the Vietnamese state demonstrates its attitude to them. The research revealed the crucial role of women in the national liberation process through their activity in almost every aspect of social and political struggle.

The topicality of women's participation in wars is clear from a glance at the Vietnamese history, which counts several millenia and repeatedly features involvement into landmark world wars. XXth century is not the exception with its pivotal for Vietnam Resistance wars against France and the USA. The proverb “When enemy comes to their house, even women become soldiers” (Vietnamese: *Giặc đến nhà — đàn bà cũng đánh*) is a very fine example of thereof.

Research materials. The research bases mainly on the Vietnamese and Western problematic publications that analyze women's participation in Vanguard Youth teams and some particular papers focused at biography and description of the historical personalia. In Russia, so far there hasn't been any special works on any aspect of Vietnamese women activism in particular.

Research methodology. Research in the state-launched program movements in the DRV in 1960s helped understand the place for women in those movements and the role assigned to them. Scientific literature and press allowed to revive the biographical details. It should be noted that memoirs are quite useful when it is needed to get an insight into the life of a particular historical character.

Highlights:

- *Revolutionary movement appealed to women as an opportunity to cast off their traditionally low social status, which became women's strongest driver to engage in the revolutionary and, therefore, liberation struggle.*

- *During both Resistance wars women did not enjoy any special privileges and participated in the common cause on an equal footing with men.*

- *At least 6 categories of women participating in the wars can be outlined.*

- *The phenomenon of wartime and especially post-war sacralization of women heroines who became famous for their struggle against the invaders is inherent in the Vietnamese culture and is embedded in tradition of worshipping the spirits of defendants of the nation.*

Conclusions. The wide popularity of female historical figures shows three important things: first, this subject is now in demand in the Vietnamese society; second, the authorities managed to build an integrated approach to nation's ideological education; and third, women's organizations are keeping vigorous activity, especially the Vietnam Women's Union.

Vietnamese women, who in peace times are the support for men, and often the main labour force in farming and trade, in wartime become not only a reliable back-up force, but also a tip of the spear to fight the invaders.

Keywords: *Women in the Vietnam Resistance wars, Nguyen Thi Dinh, Nguyen Thi Binh, Vo Thi Sau, Vo Thi Thang, Vanguard Youth, revolutionaries, glorification of history, self-sacrifice.*

Alexey Polyakov

The Problem of the Confucianism Initial Expansion in Dai Viet

The issue examined in this paper is **topical** because it relates to a political and spiritual choice of direction in development of Vietnamese society in Dai Viet during the rule of the first long-term national independent dynasty of the First Later Ly (1009—1127).

Research materials. Most scholars are unanimous in recognizing that Confucianism started to dominate in the political and ideological life of Dai Viet during the period of the Tran dynasty (1226—1400). During the rule of the Later Le dynasty (1428—1789) it reached the highest point in its development becoming the state ideology and pushing Buddhism into the background. As for the rule of both Ly dynasties, all Vietnamese and foreign experts admit an ultimate domination of Buddhism.

Thus, there emerges a problem. Why, given so total an unanimity as to the time of the beginning of disseminating Confucianism in Dai Viet and the dominance of Buddhism during the rule of the Ly dynasties, all Vietnamese and foreign researchers in their works accept as an indisputable matter of course the idea that several Confucian establishments were created at the end of the 11th century, the Temple of Con-

fucius (Vãm miếu), the Sons of the Fatherland School (Quốc tử giám), and the Academy (Hàn lâm viện).

Research procedure. An obvious contradiction is stated and it became the reason of deep studies. Having researched this issue it was figure out that the first reference to these Confucianism institutions was found in Full collections of historical notes of Daiviet written by Vietnamese historical researcher of 15th century Ngo Shi Lien. None of the historical sources written prior to this study contained any note on them. Chronicles of Ngo Shi Lien proved to be such an authoritative source of information that all further historical sources also refer to them as a matter of course.

The religious and philosophical situation in the country in the 11th century is described in the article, which provides an analysis of early and late Vietnamese sources.

Conclusions. A preliminary proposition has been put forward by the Author and it states that Ngo Shi Lien's reference to those Confucianism institutions is fiction. He could have related these events to an earlier period of time than it actually was, and therefore proved that Vietnam had always been a civilized country according to the Confucianism doctrine. This article provides other irrefutable facts proving the above mentioned preliminary proposition. Author doubts on the fact of real period of establishment of other Confucianism institutions. It was concluded that these circumstances prove that Confucianism expansion in Vietnam has started much later.

Keywords: *Confucianism, Buddhism, Van Mieu, Sons of Homeland School, Academy, chronicles.*

PART FIVE CULTURE

Nina Grigoreva

The Muong Ritual Narratives: from “Superstitions” to Intangible Cultural Heritage

The article analyzes the specific features as well as historical and cultural significance of the ritual narratives of the Muong people (one of the Northern Vietnam's ethnic minorities) in both global and local contexts, traces the changing perception of these narratives in the DRV-SRV and also considers some problems related to heritagisation process.

The subject is topical due to the fact that in 2015 ritual narratives of the Muong people were given the status of Vietnam's national cultural heritage. This cultural phenomenon remains practically unknown and unexplored in the international scholarship.

Research materials. The research is based on the published texts of narratives collected and recorded in various provinces of Northern Vietnam, field materials

gathered during the 2015–2016 expeditions, as well as secondary sources on the research subject.

Research methodology is based on content and comparative analysis of the narratives, related rituals and their interpretation in Vietnam within the specified period.

The theoretical basis of the research is built on the concept of differentiation between the Viet and the Muong suggested by Taylor; understanding of cultural heritage policies in postcolonial countries; conceptual approaches of Russian and international scholars to understanding oral and oral-derived traditional epics.

Conclusion. It was revealed that ritual narratives represent an essential part of the Muong traditional culture; they are performed during the more important rites of the life and calendar cycles. Several more significant narratives that are performed during the funeral rite form a mythoepic cycle entitled *The Birth of the Earth and Water*.

Keywords: *Viet Nam, Muong, Ritual Narratives, Epics, Cultural Heritage.*

Vadim Larin

Symbolism in Vietnam: Hypotheses of Formation

The subject is topical because Vietnamese symbolism has not been studied so far not only in Russian, but also in national historical science and philosophy.

Research materials. A general introduction to the world of Vietnamese symbols was the work of art historians of the Russian State Museum of Oriental Art “The Magic World of Patterns” and “Encyclopedia of Eastern Symbolism” by K.A. Williams. The development of the concept of the article is facilitated by an appeal to the works of M.P. Hall and E.P. Blavatsky. An assessment of the interaction between the cultures of China and Vietnam is based on the conclusions of E.O. Berzin and D.V. Deopik.

Research methodology. Within the framework of the theoretical approach, a comparative-historical, retrospective and logical research methods are used. The author views symbolism as a cultural and historical tradition of the life in Vietnam, which has had a certain impact on state building, the policy of modernization and international integration.

Research procedure. This material refers to monodisciplinary — historical, refining studies. An attempt was made to build a modern model of Vietnamese symbolism, considering the natural factors that contributed to its formation. Among them are the natural environment and the centuries-old national experience of collective economic activity, struggle and creative creation, honoring the spirit of ancestors. The influence of the Chinese and European traditions of symbolism is considered too.

The theoretical basis. The main phenomena of Vietnamese symbolism are covered. At the same time, it is hypothesized that the Vietnamese myth of Lac Long Quan and Au Co has Vietnamese roots, and is not generated by the second Chinese

myth about the ancestors of people. Another hypothesis concerns the model of the Vietnamese state, which owes its birth to the nature of mountains and seas. The third hypothesis relates to the role of the Chinese letter in the migration of the viets to the territory bounded by the modern Vietnamese-Chinese border. The European understanding of symbolism, in which many processes act as communication, allowed us to talk about the integration of Buddhism and Marxism in the form of honoring Ho Chi Minh.

Conclusion. The general picture of Vietnamese symbolism in its historical development is revealed. It is concluded that today it manifests itself in the form of modernism, and this position responds to the Confucian postulate of the “golden age”, i.e. about the ideal past. It is noted that the phenomenon under study is cross-cutting in nature, present in religion, politics, culture and art, and other areas of public life. The study of its manifestations — both folk traditions and mysteries, and state symbolism — complements the existing directions in the Russian Federation of Vietnamese studies.

Keywords: *Symbolism, state, Dongshon culture, Buddhism, Christianity, Marxism.*

Alexandr Sokolovsky

Working with Vietnamese Students at the Far Eastern Federal University

This paper looks at the history of studying Southeast Asia (SEA) countries, their culture and languages at the Institute of Oriental Studies — School of Regional and International Studies of the Far Eastern Federal University, and also at the practice of introducing foreign students taking a course at Russia's largest university in the Far East to Russian culture. It explains why the numbers of students from Southeast Asia coming to Vladivostok to obtain an academic degree continue to grow.

One hundred and seventeen years ago, the geopolitical situation in the Far East dictated the need to set up an institute in Vladivostok whose purpose would be the training of finely educated specialists intimately familiar with the region and such of its languages as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian. The engine was to ensure that Russia's international relations with its neighbors developed apace. And one must say that the Institute of Oriental Studies was eminently up to the task.

Conclusion. Ethnocultural work is no random thing at the FEFU; it continues on a regular basis in order to enhance the degree of awareness, mutual understanding and friendship between Russian and foreign students. It aims at promoting integration of the FEFU into the educational environment of the APR and ASEAN, which consists in providing permanent sites for student contacts and joint youth projects.

Keywords: *Far Eastern Federal University, Vietnamese, Russian, Institute of Oriental Studies — School of Regional and International Studies, Vietnamese Cultural Center, Southeast Asia, ASEAN countries.*

PART SIX PHILOLOGY

Valentina Andreeva

Certain Issues of Compiling the New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary

The topicality of the dictionary lies in the fact no one of Vietnamese-foreign language dictionary could fully meet the requirements of today's users for a number of reasons. There was lack of contemporary economic, legal, and computer terms, an integral system of part-of-speech, branch, frequency, stylistic, and etymological labels.

The theoretical basis. The authors resolved to create a bilingual dictionary that would reflect the fundamental trends in modern lexicography, in particular the trend toward polyfunctionality of dictionary editions, an integral philological and cultural description of the word. The authors were to solve several theoretical and practical problems to do with the makeup of both the macrostructure (word list) and the microstructure (dictionary entry) of the dictionary.

When selecting the language material to make up the word list the dictionary authors were guided by the field principle and tried to incorporate the entire mass of words in general use that constitute the nucleus of the lexical system of modern literary Vietnamese, as well as a portion of peripheral vocabulary treated in the dictionary less comprehensively and in less detail. While developing the microstructure (dictionary entry) criteria for discovering the part-of-speech nature of units were developed, methods of distinguishing between word meanings and finding the sequence (principles) of placing the meanings of the word were worked out, and uniform lexicographic shaping for each type of entry was created.

Research methodology. The methods used ranged from comparative-typological and comparative-contrastive to field structuring, contrastive semantic analysis, descriptive, component analysis, linguistic interviewing and informant questioning.

The Dictionary was compiled by a team of authors from the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Research procedure. Taking part in entry writing were both Russian and Vietnamese compilers. The work was done in pairs, by Russian and Vietnamese authors each of whom built an entry of their own with materials to be later exchanged for mutual initial semantic and stylistic editing of the Vietnamese section and Russian equivalents and translations of illustration material.

Results. The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary has come out, an extensive academic dictionary, the fullest of the existing Vietnamese-foreign language dictionaries, that includes nearly all the words of the contemporary Vietnamese language and incorporates some features of such dictionary types as encyclopedic, explanatory, linguistic-cultural, etymological and terminological. The dic-

tionary is intended for both Russian-speaking and Vietnamese users. The edition uses a bilingual approach considering the problems encountered by both groups of users.

Conclusion. The New Comprehensive Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary in two volumes (nearly 80.000 entries) was compiled on the basis of jointly elaborated theoretical principles of presenting the vocabulary of typologically different Vietnamese and Russian. The Dictionary is characterized by a full and profound description of the Vietnamese language vocabulary, systemic information provision based on contrastive analysis and consistent comparison between the lexico-semantic and grammatical systems of the two languages.

Keywords: *Vietnamese language, Russian language, lexicography, lexicology.*

Elena Tyumeneva

On Floronyms in Vietnamese Phraseology

The reason for taking up this subject was the desire to comprehend the national and cultural specific features of the linguistic consciousness of Vietnamese speakers, which finds expression in the form of concepts, notions, and words not to be found in the Russian linguo-cultural community.

The subject is **topical** because it is necessary to reveal the specific features of phraseological units as signs of the language and culture, which is particularly important now that relations between Russia and Vietnam are on the up. The geography of teaching Vietnamese is expanding; considerable numbers of fiction pieces are translated; new bilingual and explanatory dictionaries are compiled. Yet the subject is clearly underexplored by Russian scholars. There is a lot of work ahead to study and analyse Vietnamese and Russian paremies.

Research procedure. As research objects the proverbs and sayings with floronymic components were taken. The paremies were translated by the morpheme, and the phytonymic components within them were analyzed.

The goal of the research was to reveal connection between the phytonymic vocabulary and the conceptual picture of the world in Vietnamese. The author singled out and examined four groups of paremies with floronymic components and defined the features underlying the metaphoric reinterpretation of plant names. In this connection, the anthropophytic nature of basic phytonymic images in Vietnamese phraseology were shown.

Research methodology. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was works by Russian and Vietnamese scholars on phraseology from the angle of culturology and linguo-regional studies. The chief working method was that of definition analysis, comparative, etymological, and linguo-regional studies.

The author tried to discover regularities in interpreting the outer world, forming cultural and ethnic stereotypes, and creating a conceptual picture of reality. This is important in practical terms, as these regularities must be taken into account when

studying not only the Vietnamese language, but also other languages of the Far East and Southeast Asia.

Research materials. The research is largely built on data from bilingual and explanatory phraseological dictionaries. The sources of selection were the *New Greater Vietnamese-Russian Dictionary*, the *Vietnamese-Russian Dictionaries*, the two-volume *Dictionary of Proverbs, Sayings, and Doggerel of Vietnam*, the *Explanatory Dictionary of Vietnamese Phraseology*. This research also incorporates views of Russian and Vietnamese authors who touched upon the subject.

The theoretical basis of the research is contemporary theoretical works which develop the ideas of ties between the language, thinking, and reality, as well as relationships between language and culture and shaping of linguo-culturologic knowledge.

Conclusion. This research helped obtain the following scientifically significant and methodologically confirmed results.

- A linguo-culturological description of Vietnamese phraseological units with floronyms was made.
- The specific features of similar phraseological units as signs of the language and culture were revealed.
- Stemming from the research results I managed to show that the metaphoric basis of a phraseological unit is a major component of its semantic structure.

Keywords: *Vietnamese language, floronyms, conceptual picture of the world, flora phraseological units.*

Tatiana Filimonova

On the Public, Educational, and Charity Activity of the Self-Strength Literary Group: The League of Light

Topicality. The issue has never been covered in Russian scientific literature before, so the point of this paper is to fill the blank and present this side of the Group's diverse work.

Over the last few years' interest in pre-1945 Vietnamese literature has been on the up both in and outside Vietnam. The pattern also includes so prominent a phenomenon in Vietnamese literary life as the Self-Strength Literary Group (*Tự lực văn đoàn*), which is in the focus of attention both in Vietnam itself and in other countries.

Research procedure. This article is an attempt at filling the blank in domestic Vietnam studies on the basis of quality analysis of the press, and show, at least in a general way, the public, educational, and charity activity of the Self-Strength Group in a specific area. Analysis of the newspaper materials helped understand the goals, scale, and methods of the League's work.

Research materials. The source of the research was the 1936—1940 numbers of the newspaper *Today* (*Ngày nay*) that the Group issued from 1935 to 1940. The pub-

lication highlighted extensively both the process of League creation and its multifarious activity. While the Group's literary activity was covered in this country, its public, educational, and charity work has never been examined previously. In Vietnam, this work has to some extent been described, e.g., in the book by Khuc Ha Linh, and in the Vietnamese community abroad it was mentioned in the paper by Do Qui Toan.

Conclusion. Although the League survived for just a few years, and failed to implement all its intentions for various reasons, its activity proved an answer to public demands of its time, and it showed the excellent human and civil maturity of its organizers and participants. The Light movement participants who represented merely the first or second generation of the new Vietnamese colonial intellectuals concerned with the well-being of the entire people, of the whole country.

Keywords: *The Self-Strength Literary Group (Tự lực văn đoàn); The League of Light (Hội Ánh sáng), the newspaper Today (Ngày nay).*

Olesya Trunova

Criticism of Competitive Examinations System in Ngo Tat To's Novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*

The research of the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed (Lều chõng)* is **topical** because, on the one hand, it is a story told by a witness about the system of competitive exams in the last years of its existence, and on the other, it shows the assessment of this traditional institution in Vietnamese contemporary literature.

Research methodology. The task of this work is to show as fully as possible the author's attitude to the institution of competitive exams and the Confucian heritage of the past in the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed*, as well as to describe the methods with which the author criticized the examination system of traditional Vietnam.

To tackle this task, we resorted to description and literary analysis of various aspects and levels of this novel.

Research materials. The text of the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* in Vietnamese and its translation into Russian. All quotations are taken from the Russian edition of the novel.

Research procedure. In the course of the work the following points have been analyzed: author's descriptions of separate episodes in which comic and bitter notes can be traced; images of students and Confucian scholars appearing on the pages of the novel; descriptions of the hero's interior life and self-consciousness, his statements and behavior; separate statements of secondary personages expressing the author's position; the title and objective world of the novel; its plot and composition.

Conclusions. In the novel *The Tent and the Bamboo Bed* Ngo Tat To shows the inefficient and fallacious character of the institution of the competitive examinations in traditional Vietnam. Created as a means of selecting the most talented people in

the country for service to the Emperor, these exams not only created loopholes for promoting mediocre and cunning people, but quite often nipped in the bud the talents of the most decent and capable persons and broke their lives. The formal nature of the examination rules and subjectivity of examiners gave birth to heartaches among aspirants, and heavy burdens and privations connected with the competitive exams caused physical torture. Practically all elements of the novel are aimed at criticizing the competitive examinations system.

However, the author does not break fully with the past. Having created the images of ideal Confucian scholars brought up by the very same system, which the author criticizes, he seems at the same time to say that we have something to learn from the past.

Keywords: *Confucian court examination system, imperial examinations, Confucian scholars, Confucian education system, Ngo Tat To, The Tent and the Bamboo Bed.*

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Valentina Andreeva**, researcher, Institute of Linguistics, the Russian Academy of Sciences.
2. **Evgenia Aksenova**, master in Oriental and African studies and Ph.D. student, Institute of Asian and African studies of Moscow Lomonosov State University.
3. **Tatiana Filimonova**, *Ph.D. (Philology)*, Associate Professor at the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow Lomonosov State University.
4. **Nina Grigoreva**, *Ph.D. (Hist.)*, Associate Professor at National Research University “Higher School of Economics”, St. Petersburg.
5. **Evgeny Kobleev**, *Ph.D. (Hist.)*, Leading Research Associate at the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
6. **Vladimir Kolotov**, *Prof., D.Sc. (Hist.)*, Member of the Russian National Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), Head of the Far East History Department Faculty of Asian and African Studies St. Petersburg State University, Director of Ho Chi Minh Institute.
7. **Vadim Larin**, researcher at the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.
8. **Grigory Lokshin**, *Ph.D. (Hist.)*, Leading Research Associate at the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
9. **Artem Lukyanets**, *Ph.D. (Econ.)*, Leading Research Associate at the Center for Social Demography, the Institute for Socio-Political Research, Russian Academy of Sciences.
10. **Roman Manshin**, *Ph.D. (Econ.)*, Leading Research Associate at the Center for Social Demography, the Institute for Socio-Political Studies of RAS.

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11. **Evgenia Marchenko**, Master in Political Science at the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow Lomonosov State University, expert of VietsovPetro JSC.
 12. **Vladimir Mazyrin**, *D.Sc. (Econ.)*, Head of the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Professor at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Moscow Lomonosov State University.
 13. **Elena Nikulina**, chief editor, “Russia Today” International Information Agency.
 14. **Oksana Novakova**, *Ph.D. (Hist.)*, Associate Professor at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Moscow Lomonosov State University, Director of the Center for Modern Southeast Asia and Pacific Studies.
 15. **Alexey Polyakov**, *Ph.D. (Hist.)*, independent researcher.
 16. **Sergei Ryazantsev**, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, *D.Sc. (Econ.)*, Head of the Center for Social Demography and Economic Sociology at the Institute of Social and Political Studies, the Russian Academy of Sciences and Professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) and the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.
 17. **Anatoly Sokolov**, *Ph.D. (Philology)*, Leading Research Associate at the Institute of Oriental Studies, the Russian Academy of Sciences.
 18. **Alexander Sokolovsky**, *Ph.D. (Philology)*, Professor, Head of the Subject Group for the Philology of East and Southeast Asian Countries, the Far Eastern Federal University (Vladivostok), and Director of the Center of the Vietnamese Culture (FEFU).
 19. **Anton Tsvetov**, master, expert of the Center for Strategic Research.
 20. **Elena Tyumeneva**, *Ph.D. (Hist.)*, Acting Professor at the Higher Foreign Language Courses of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.
 21. **Olesya Trunova**, *Ph.D. student*, Institute of Asian and African Studies, Moscow Lomonosov State University.

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