



EXPERIENCE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM IN LEADING VIETNAM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION IN THE 1975 – 1991 PERIOD

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Abstract:

The cooperation as well as the great help of the Soviet Union made an important contribution to the victory of the Vietnamese revolution in the history of the struggle for national liberation as well as in the construction of socialism. Promoting Vietnam's relations with socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union in the 1975-1991 period, has become an important policy in the foreign policy of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The experience of the communist party of Vietnam in leading Vietnam's relationship with the Soviet Union in the 1975 – 1991 period is a "guideline" to orient foreign policy in the period of renovation and integration, which needs to be applied and promoted more effectively in the current period.

Keywords: experience, relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, 1975 - 1991

1. Introduction

In 1975, the Vietnamese people's war of resistance against the US for national salvation won, and the independent and unified Vietnam entered a new stage of development with challenges and opportunities. In such conditions, Vietnam advocated maintaining and expanding the relationship with the Soviet Union, considering solidarity and comprehensive cooperation with the Soviet Union as "a principle, a strategy" and "a cornerstone" in its foreign affair policy. The Soviet Union's support and assistance in many ways during the 1975-1991 period contributed to the recovery and healing of war wounds as well as the process of building the country both materially and spiritually. In particular, with valuable lessons learned in the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union in this period, in order to create a drastic change, bringing Vietnam's relations with other countries in the world into depth and being more effective are very practical, urgent and long-term strategic issues.

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When the country was unified and entered the process of peaceful construction, carefully analyzing the domestic and international historical circumstances as well as the development trends of the times, the Party set out specific foreign affairs tasks in the new period: *“Make every effort to take advantage of favorable international conditions to quickly heal the wounds of war and build the material and technical foundations of socialism in our country”*ⁱⁱ.

2. It is necessary to actively grasp the practical situation of the country, the world and the region and renew foreign thinking in the relationship with the Soviet Union

Within the framework of that flexible foreign policy, the traditionally good relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union continued to be consolidated and comprehensively developed. The Party proactively put forward the policy of further solidifying relations with the Soviet Union in the new historical conditions on the basis of the cooperation achievements of the relationship in the past.

Entering the early 80s (20th century), the international and regional situation continued to have complicated developments. Due to the impact of the “Vietnam syndrome”, the US showed some signs of “conciliation” but still implemented the policy of encirclement and embargo against Vietnam. During this period, the relationship between Vietnam and China seriously deteriorated. In February 1979, China launched the war against Vietnam.

Besides thoroughly analyzing the historical context at the present time, being sharp in grasping the complicated developments of international relations, and at the same time, on the basis of traditional relations, the Party and State of Vietnam continued to uphold the policy of maintaining comprehensive cooperative relations with the Soviet Union and socialist countries. When the relationship between Vietnam and China has become seriously “frozen”, the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union is considered the mainstay of the foreign policy of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The Communist Party of Vietnam has actively strengthened its comprehensive friendly cooperation with the Soviet Union. The 5th National Congress of Deputies (1982) affirmed: *“close attachment and comprehensive cooperation with the Soviet Union is a principle, a strategy, and at the same time a revolutionary sentiment”*ⁱⁱⁱ. Stemming from the interests of Vietnam and the Soviet Union, the Party advocated *“to further develop stronger combat solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union”*^{iv}. The Communist Party of Vietnam considered the attachment and comprehensive cooperation with the Soviet Union as *“a guarantee for the victory of our people’s defense of the Fatherland*

ⁱⁱ The Communist Party of Vietnam (1976), *Documents of the 4th National Congress of Deputies*, Truth National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.80

ⁱⁱⁱ The Communist Party of Vietnam (1982), *Documents of the 5th National Congress of Deputies*, Truth National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.144

^{iv} The Communist Party of Vietnam (1982), *Documents of the 5th National Congress of Deputies*, Truth National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.145

and socialist construction, as well as for the consolidation of national independence and the position of socialism on the Indochinese peninsula”^v.

However, the cooperation with the Soviet Union in the early 1980s was different because the Soviet and Eastern European economies showed signs of crisis and stagnation. The cooperation process has changed from the form of “non-refundable aid” to a “win-win” bilateral cooperation mechanism.

As the crisis of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe became ever more severe, leading to the collapse of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, foreign thinking continued to change in a sensitive way to meet the requirements and tasks of the Vietnamese revolution. The Party's foreign affairs activities have gradually shifted from the policy of considering “the relationship with the Soviet Union as a cornerstone” to the policy of “*diversifying and multilateralizing foreign affairs activities*”^{vi}. This is the solid foundation and premise for the Communist Party of Vietnam's foreign affairs to achieve greater achievements in the new period. At the same time, it is also a valuable lesson of Vietnam's experience in planning and implementing foreign activities in the next historical periods.

3. National interests are the top-priority matters

In foreign affairs, national interests are the basic and top goals, an immutable principle when planning the Party and State's foreign policy.

Ensuring national interests in the 1975-1991 period was implemented on the basis of resolutely ensuring national interests, independence and self-reliance of the country. At the same time, stemming from the requirements and tasks of the country and the trend of the times, the issue of ensuring national interests, maintaining independence and self-reliance is always a great orientation, expressed in the goals, guiding ideology and foreign policy motto of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Ensuring national interests in the 1975-1991 period means building solid material and technical foundations of the economy, firmly defending national sovereignty and building a sustainably developed country. Independence and freedom of the Fatherland, security and development are the supreme interests of the nation. In particular, the national interests and the maintenance of independence and self-reliance have always had a reciprocal relationship with each other. Only with independence and self-control can one fully protect the national interests, avoid external influences and pressures and avoid becoming a card in the hands of others. Since then, the Party has put forward an important policy for the Soviet Union to preserve and develop the friendship between the two countries, making the most of the Soviet Union's support for the Vietnamese revolution. This is a correct policy, stemming from the very principle of putting the

^v The Communist Party of Vietnam (1982), *Documents of the 5th National Congress of Deputies*, Truth National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.145

^{vi} Vu Quang Vinh (2001), *Communist Party of Vietnam leads foreign affairs in the 1986 – 2000 period*, Thanh Nien Publishing House, Hanoi, p.79

interests of the nation first in relations with other countries. Therefore, it can be affirmed that, in the 1975-1991 period, the Party and Government of Vietnam succeeded in correctly identifying the national interests, putting those interests first and having the right guideline on foreign policy to achieve that goal.

That experience is still valid to this day, the 8th Congress of the Party (January 1, 2021) emphasized: *“To ensure the highest interests of the nation, on the basis of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, equality and mutual benefit”*^{vii}. National interest is both a goal and a basic principle in Vietnam's foreign affairs today. It has been and will continue to be the guideline for foreign affair policy.

Maintaining independence and self-reliance requires Vietnam to have a long-term, medium-term and short-term development strategy and foreign affair policy, and a foreign policy in line with the trend, the world situation and the requirements of the country for each period.

4. Independence and self-reliance in relations with the Soviet Union are maintained

Maintaining independence and self-reliance is both a way and an immutable principle for Vietnam to best protect its national interests. It is also an important experience in any period of the history of Vietnam.

The victory in the spring of 1975 cannot be separated from the great support and help of the Soviet Union, China and socialist countries. The Vietnamese people always attach great importance to preserving the traditional friendly neighborly relationship with other countries. But since 1976, the relationship between Vietnam and China has become seriously fractured and often there have been tensions leading to conflicts, the culmination of which was in February 1979, China attacked the northern border of Vietnam.

While the relationship with China became unstable, the Communist Party of Vietnam planned and set forth an independent and self-reliant foreign policy, including foreign policy with the Soviet Union - a great power, also a country with an important image in the world. The Party has set forth the policy of consolidating and strengthening the comprehensive cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union in order to enlist the consensus and support of the Soviet Union in the work of protecting and preserving the peace and building and developing the country [after the war.

Despite aiming to consolidate, promote and strengthen the comprehensive cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union, the Party and the State of Vietnam also expressed their own views. On the one hand, Vietnam always upheld the special relationship and the valuable assistance of the Soviet Union in its official statements. On the other hand, Vietnam also voiced an affirmative statement about the right to independence and self-reliance and the determination to maintain the independence and self-reliance of the nation.

^{vii} The Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th National Congress of Deputies*, Truth National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.110

Since the late 80s of the twentieth century, the world situation has continued to undergo rapid, complex and comprehensive changes. The socialist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was in a state of serious and profound crisis that led to the collapse of socialism in many Eastern European countries and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. World politics and international relations have undergone fundamental changes.

Faced with that situation, the 8th Conference of the Central Committee of the Party (VI term) in March 1990 issued Resolution 08A on *“the situation of socialist countries and the destruction of imperialism country and the urgent task of our Party”*. The resolution defined the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in the new context, and also identified urgent tasks in the field of foreign affairs, which was *“to continue to expand foreign relations following the motto of adding friends, reducing enemies, maintaining peace for the sake of national construction and defense”*. The resolution also thoroughly grasped the need to *“uphold the spirit of independence, self-reliance and international solidarity in accordance with the new situation; overcome the idea of dependence, diversify international relations, gradually push back the policy of encirclement and embargo against our country”*.

It can be said that, during this period, the independence and self-reliance in foreign relations of Vietnam in general and towards the Soviet Union, in particular, were clearly and deeply expressed. In general, that correct foreign affair policy has strengthened the Vietnam-Soviet relationship, ensuring that the relationship is always maintained despite difficult times and being dominated by complex objective and subjective conditions. This is also a valuable lesson in the Party's foreign affairs for future diplomatic periods.

5. Well aware of the relationship between home and foreign affairs

Both home and foreign affairs policies serve the goals and interests of the nation and the ruling class. Home and foreign affairs policies have a dialectical relationship with each other. Home affair policy is the basis of foreign affair policy, ensuring the implementation of foreign affair policy. Foreign affair policy is a continuation of home affair policy and serves home affair policy.

Strengthening the country's potential and synergy is a decisive internal factor, creating a solid basis for foreign affairs activities. According to President Ho Chi Minh: *“Strength is the gong, diplomacy is the voice. If the gong is strong, the sound will be loud.”* International help is a huge and indispensable factor in the victory of the Vietnamese revolution. However, independence, self-reliance and strengthening international solidarity and international cooperation are the two unifying sides of the Party's consistent strategic line.

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had a profound impact on Vietnam. For many years, the Soviet Union played an important role politically, ideologically, economically, culturally and militarily. One question now is can Vietnam stand firm and continue to go up when the Soviet Union collapses? Will the goal of

national independence and socialism continue to be maintained in the context of the absence of the socialist system?

The new international context which no longer has the support, assistance or non-refundable aid of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as before requires the efforts of the entire Party and people to build and develop the country. In 1989, the Soviet Union ended its aid to Vietnam, but it was also the year Vietnam produced enough food for itself and exported it. Inflation fell from triple digits in 1986-1988 (774%), to double digits in 1990 (67%). The political regime is stable.

Overcoming the challenge caused by the disintegration of the socialist system, the renovation in Vietnam has effectively taken advantage of external factors and the strength of the times in new conditions. With subjective efforts, making the most of internal resources, and being proactive and positive, Vietnam can completely overcome challenges and turn challenges into a driving force for development. That is both a lesson and a strategic issue of the Vietnamese revolution.

6. Conclusion

The strengthening of consolidation and comprehensive development of Vietnam - Soviet Union relationship in a particularly transitional historical period has left many valuable lessons for Vietnam in building, consolidating and developing cooperative relations with countries with the same ideology and political regime in the current situation. The achievements achieved between the two countries in the process of consolidating and enhancing cooperation relations not only affirm and prove the traditional friendship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, but also lay a solid foundation for the establishment and strengthening of the cooperation relationship between Vietnam and the Russian Federation in the future.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Nguyen Thi Phuc is working at University of Labour & Social Affairs, Vietnam. She is currently conducting research on Vietnam's relationship with the Soviet Union in the 1975 – 1991 period.

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