

**Vietnam-China relations 1950 – 2015:
Threat, Culture-Ideology and Nationalism**

by

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Abstract

The main purpose of this thesis is to answer the question: What were the reasons for the changes in Vietnam-China relations from 1950 to 2015? In particular, the thesis identifies the factors that influenced changes in relations and how they varied through time. This study uses two major paradigms in international relations – realism and constructivism – from which hypotheses regarding the course of change of Vietnam-China relations are generated. The remainder of the study examines evidence such as writings, texts and statements pertaining to contemporary figures, governments and events, with a few statistics.

By examining the available evidence and linking them to contemporary policy outcomes, the study suggests that, Vietnam-China relations were influenced by the combinations of three factors – threat, culture-ideology, nationalism. The results imply that, changes to each factor can cause the combination, and the relations, to change course. This study is useful for historical and future policy research, such as formation of foreign and cultural policy between Vietnam and China.

Keyword: threat, nationalism, culture, ideology

I. Introduction

In this paper, I shall look into the changes in the Vietnam-China relations for the past 65 years. From 1950 to 2015, Vietnam's relations with China fluctuated between ally and enemy. In particular, Vietnam was aligned with China from the 1950 to 1975, when Vietnam successfully unified their country. Vietnam-China relations slowly deteriorated to the point of war after that, until they normalized their relations in 1991. Vietnam and China are now neither ally nor enemy.

What were the reasons for changes that happened throughout the last sixty years? Carl Thayer and Ramses Amer, for example, pointed to the resolution of the ideology-based alliance between the two countries and the triumph of nationalism over ideology (Thayer, 1994; Thayer & Amer, 1999). Brantly Womack, on the other hand, argued that Vietnam and China ultimately turned on each other as a result of the traditional asymmetric relations between China and Vietnam being under-mined first by French imperialism, then by communism and finally by each country's misperception of the other's intentions and capabilities (Womack, 2006).

Both are noteworthy but neither could fully explain the varied changes in Vietnam-China relations throughout the past sixty years. One could see an example between France and Britain, which had hundreds of years of hostility and embedded sense of rivalry up until World War II, but whose alliance endures despite the resolution of the Cold War that threatened both countries. We may also see the insufficiency in relying solely in any explanations to explain other cases of geographically close countries with asymmetric relations and long history of interactions, such as Russia and Finland/Ukraine or China and Taiwan.

The gaps in explanatory powers of the existing literature on the Vietnam-China relations prompted this study. In this study, I used the two existing theoretical paradigms in international relations (IR) – realism and constructivism – to generate testable hypotheses regarding relations between Vietnam and China. The thesis starts with a literature review of the two paradigms and the hypotheses they inform. The next section, methodology, discusses methods of analysis and measurement. The third section, results and analysis, provides and analyzes evidence for the hypotheses. The evidence consists of writings by contemporaries to give insight into features of culture and ideology, government documents and leaders' writings and statements to indicate the thoughts and predispositions, and books and articles to provide a better understanding of events

and people. There are also a few statistics in this section. I examine the evidence in two periods: the revolutionary (1950 – 1975) and modern era (1975–2015). At the end of the paper I conclude my arguments and findings, and give comments on the future of the paper.

From the analysis of results, I have found that, the reasons for changes in Vietnam-China relations were that the threat China posed Vietnam, Vietnam's cultural and ideological closeness to China and its nationalism vis-à-vis China fluctuated throughout the past sixty years across the revolutionary and modern eras. When the threat from China was low, Vietnam's culture and ideology similar to China's and nationalism directed at the West, China was seen as a brother-in-arms. When threat from China was high, the culture and ideology different from China's and nationalism aimed at China, China was seen as an enemy. The different combinations of threat, culture-ideology and nationalism were the source of the changes in Vietnam-China relations in the last sixty years.

II. Realism and Constructivism: A Literature Review

In order to generate hypotheses, I make use of realism focusing on how threat one state poses to another influences interstate relations, and constructivism focusing on how ideational factors such as cultural and ideological identity and nationalism influence interstate relations.

Realism traditionally assumes power, here best understood as hard power consisting of economic and, most importantly, military power, to be the key to the understanding of international relations (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). When a state gains too much power at the expense of other states, the others will most likely choose to balance against it by entering a coalition to oppose it rather than to align, or bandwagon, with it (Waltz, 1979). A number of scholars further argue that, weaker states will balance against or bandwagon with the most threatening power and that threat determines whether a state is friend or foe (Walt, 1990).

Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasizes the ideational factors such as norms, rules, law as well as culture, history, ideology (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012) in the understanding of international relations. Constructivist core assumption is that, the structure of associations and identities and interests of political actors are shaped by shared ideas rather than material forces or nature (Wendt, 1999). Constructivism thus stresses the role of ideas in shaping the identity and interests of states (Wendt, 1995), which in turn influences a state's choice of friend or foe.

In short, realism and constructivism provides insight into the workings of international relations. Based on the theoretical assumptions of the two paradigms, in the next subsections I will generate hypotheses regarding the direction the Vietnam-China relations would take.

1. Realism: Threat

Realism is a long-established international relations paradigm based on several "realist" assumptions of the nature of world politics. Central to realism is the concept of "international anarchy", which means that, the system of states has no super-state actor to mediate or regulate the behavior of states (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). Hence there is no constraint to states' behavior and states as primary actors must interact with ultimate aim to secure their survival (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). In such a system, each state is unitary, i.e. singular in capabilities and intentions, and rational, i.e. makes the most logical decisions and pursues self-interests (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). To guarantee its survival, each state must amass as much power as possible, in particular military power (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). This buildup of military power by each state necessitates other states doing the same, thus creating a security dilemma and increasing tensions among states (Reus-Smit & Snidal, 2008).

The realist solution to this mounting tensions resulting from states responding to each other building up militarily is distribution of power, so that no state is strong enough to dominate others (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). This is called the balance of power: when a state gains too much in power, other weaker states will fear that it will attack them and will join a coalition to counter it (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). The balance of power hence necessitates restraint from aggression since being aggressive turns one state into the target of other states (Walt, 1990). States generally favor this strategy over aligning with the rising state in order to avoid its aggression and benefit if it eventually attains hegemony (Walt, 1990). This was because aligning with the powerful state, called bandwagoning, puts weaker states under the mercy of the more powerful partner, which makes them disadvantaged when the partner abuses its power (Walt, 1990).

a. Power versus threat

As power is essential to the survival of the state, realism focuses on balance of power, the situation where no state has the most power; should a state amasses inordinate power, others will unite against it (Kegley & Wittkopf, 2005). The balance of power was a core concept of realism and was central to study of world politics (Waltz, 1979; Kaufman, Little & Wohlforth, 2007).

Some scholars, however, argue that the threat posed by another state determines whether a state will balance or bandwagon with it (Walt, 1990). In examining the alliance patterns in the Middle Eastern, Walt maintained that, Middle Eastern states ally with or against the most threatening power, not power alone (Walt, 1990; Walt, 1988). This reasoning was similar to the case between Vietnam and China from 1950 to 1975, when China was not a threat to Vietnam. If the logic of balance of power was valid, Vietnam should have balanced against China with another power, which did happen after 1975, when China became a threat.

These instances pointed to that, states balance against threat, not power (Walt, 1990). While the threat factor was featured predominantly in Walt's 1987 book, earlier scholars who approached threat through a variety of other concepts, emphasized its importance. Robert Jervis, for example, explored the perception and misperception and how state leaders perceive others' intentions and actions as threatening (Jervis, 1976).

In his 1987 book, Walt provided four conditions to ascertain the threat level a powerful state poses to other weaker states: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and offensive intentions (Walt, 1990). "Aggregate strength" is the totality of all the target state's resources (i.e. population, resources, industrial capacity, technology, military strength etc.), while offensive power refers to the state's ability to overwhelm another state' military and territory, i.e. offense vs defense (Walt, 1990). Walt argued that, the more other states view the rising state as having these qualities, the more likely they would see it as a threat to their survival (Walt, 1990).

Threat is important in understanding the reason for states' perception of others as friend or foe. The latest example of how states react to threat is the United States and Israel, a global and a regional power respectively, balancing against the weaker Iran (Bock & Henneberg, 2013). Steve Yetiv further analyzed the US' interventions in the Middle East using both the balance of threat and balance of power (Yetiv, 2006). Outside the Middle East, Petr Kratochvíl, for example, transferred the theory's main assumptions to his analysis of Russian foreign policy (Kratochvíl, 2004). Watson, examining China and Pakistan relations, argued that China and Pakistan balance against India because India is a threat to both (Watson, 2001). Pakistan did not balance against China because China did not pose a threat to Pakistan and even protects Pakistan from Indian hegemony (Watson, 2001).

In general, realism predicts that states seek power, military power in particular, to ensure their survival. They, however, would ally with or against powerful state or states that they view as the most threatening. Choosing to ally with or against, however, differs from state to state.

b. Balancing versus bandwagoning

Realism provides two strategies for states in dealing with a threatening power: to fight it together with other weak states (balancing) or align with it (bandwagoning) (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1990). The two strategies are mutually exclusive; a state may not enter into alliance opposing a power and align with that state at the same time (Walt, 1990).

Balancing is argued to be the dominant strategy since allying with equally weak states allows a state to have more influence in the alliance (Walt, 1985; Waltz, 1979). By contrast, aligning with the rising power reduces a weak state's influence and causes it to depend on the continued benevolence of the power. Choosing the weaker side is thus preferred (Waltz, 1979).

Sometimes, a power enters into alliance with a weak state to oppose another power which it perceives to be hostile (Walt, 1985). It was the dominant choice of many great powers in the past; Britain, for example, has allied with Spain during the war of Napoleon, and with France during World War I and II, which was a pattern recognized by Winston Churchill. The United States also chose to align with China in the later stage of the Cold War to enjoy a better footing both against the Soviet Union and in its own alignment with China, because the US wanted more leverage and also to avoid its ally dominating the relations (Churchill, Kissinger, cited in Walt 1985). States are also more likely to balance when it is at peace; during wartime it would be concerned with its survival and thus is very likely to defect to the winning side. The return of peacetime, however, encourages states to return to balancing against the most threatening power (Walt, 1990)

Against balancing, some states may opt for bandwagoning with the rising power. States adopt bandwagoning as a strategy to either divert the hostile power's attention elsewhere, a form of appeasement, or to side with the power, if the power appears to be victorious, so that they can share in some spoils (Walt, 1985). Examples of the second type include the Japanese and Italian alliance with Germany during World War II, as well as Italian defection during World War I. The Nazi-Soviet in 1939 illustrated both types: to divert German hostility back to other Western countries and to divide Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union (Walt, 1985).

Bandwagoning is more likely to happen under three conditions: (1) when a state is weak yet faced with a very strong state, (2) when a state is without allies that could offer assistance and (3) when the target state is believed to be appeasable (Walt, 1990). The first helps explain the formation of the spheres of influence surrounding each power, as very weak states have little choice but to align with the great power, as in the case of Finland. The second explains why states are forced to bandwagon when major allies are unavailable; Egypt's realignment from the Soviet Union to the United States was an important example. The third explains why states make decision to align with the threatening power when it appears to be appeasable. The bandwagoning between Japan and Italy and Germany was an example.

In short, realism offers two mutually exclusive directions for states to follow in dealing with a threatening power: either to balance against it by allying with other weak states, or bandwagon with it by aligning with it against other states. The two directions are not compatible; thus following on makes a state unable to take the other. With this, I am able to generate a hypothesis regarding Vietnam-China relations.

Hypothesis 1: If Vietnam is threatened by China, it will militarily align with other states against China (Realism)

This hypothesis points to that, if China poses a threat to Vietnam, it will balance against China by allying with other states. The act of balancing China was supported by several scholars (Chen & Yang, 2013; Mearsheimer, 2001; Ross, 2006; Roy, 2005; McDougall, 2012). Chen and Yang, in particular, argued that China's negative economic impact on Vietnam coupled with the threat posed from China's geographical proximity with China will result in Vietnam adopting a balancing posture against China. Mearsheimer, on the other hand, called for the United States creating a coalition of weak-to-medium-sized countries including South Korea and Vietnam to contain China. Others like Robert Ross, Denny Roy and Derek McDougall argued for various degrees of balancing.

This hypothesis postulates balancing as the outcome of realism. Because balancing and bandwagoning are mutually exclusive, I will hereby form a hypothesis only for the former.

To sum up, realism posits threat as one factor influencing the Vietnam-China relations. It points to a possible direction the relations could take: if Vietnam were threatened by China, it would join force with other states to counter China (balancing).

2. Constructivism: Culture-Ideology and Nationalism

Constructivism is one of the major theoretical paradigms of international relations. While it was a relatively new paradigm, constructivism has been a major critique of long established paradigms like realism (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). Its uniqueness lies in the fact that, constructivism provided a flexible framework of thinking about politics without specifying the fixed characteristics of politics (Finnemore & Sikkink, cited in Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). Hence, constructivism can make use of several disciplines such as political psychology and cultural anthropology (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012).

Constructivism differs from realism in that, instead of emphasizing power and threat, it emphasizes ideas such as norms, rules, law, culture, history, ideology, religion in order to understand international politics (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). The constructivist core assumption is that, ideas shape the associations and identities and interests of political actors. With that, constructivism stresses the way identity and hence interests are constructed (Reus-Smit & Snidal, 2008).

Identity is one of the central tenets of constructivism. Identity is a "relatively stable, role-specific understanding and expectation about oneself" (Wendt, 1992). While there are numerous definitions of identity (Fearon, 1999), identity can be defined as a concept by people of who they are and how they relate to others (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Wendt, 1994; Jenkins, 1996), on the basis of "race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture" (Deng, 1995, pp. 1). As such, identity informs people about their self-conception and their relations with other people.

Identity plays an important role in influencing how states view each other, which many scholars recognized (Wendt, 1995; Weldes, 1999; Finnemore, cited in Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). Such an identity is shaped by ideational factors such as culture, ideology and nationality. For example, ideational factors have led to the creation of collective identity among Western countries, as well as change in identity among Middle Eastern countries and Japan (Katzenstein, 1996). Many scholars also notice the role of culture and ideology in creating and perpetuating identities in issues such as ethnic conflict and nationalism (Horowitz 1985; Smith 1991).

To sum up constructivism emphasizes the importance of ideas in determining the identity and thus the way political actors treat one another. From the ideational factors, I identify two factors that influenced Vietnam-China relations: culture-ideology and nationalism.

a. Culture and ideology

Culture and ideology are recognized as important factors influencing behavior of people. This was well-expressed in the Max Weber's quote: "We are cultural beings endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberated attitude toward the world and to lend it significance" (Weber, 1949). Culture and ideology are important in the creation and shift of identity. For example, the failure in forming a common Asian identity that resembles the European identity could be a reason which hampered the formation of an Asian NATO (Hemmer & Katzenstein, 2002).

Several scholars have noted the role of culture and ideology in the formation of identity and how identity informed relations. For instance, in his book *Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington famously argued that in the modern world, civilizational – cultural and religious – identity will be the primary source of conflict (Huntington, 1996). Huntington postulated that, as countries and nations of the world are divided into different civilizational or cultural groups, they created blocs that replaced the Cold War alliance blocs (Huntington, 1996). With the resurgence of old civilizational values and the formation of politico-economic regions which leads to more regional-civilizational consciousness, civilization boundaries are drawn and, among those with historical animosity, civilizational conflicts are bound to happen (Huntington, 1996). Huntington provided a number of cases that merited his "civilization paradigm" including, among others, the Yugoslav wars, the competition between Russia and NATO in grabbing allies in Europe, and the rise of "bamboo network" of ethnic Chinese business connections in Asia (Huntington, 1996). In these cases, cultural and ideological factors stemming from history influenced the way nations treat their relations with those they perceive as culturally and ideologically similar or different.

Huntington's idea of civilizational relations could be echoed in other scholars' works, one of those scholars is David Kang. In his book *China Rising*, he discussed the return of China to the gravitational center of Asia as it was in the past (Kang, 2008). Kang went on to argue that, this momentum of China's return is expected and actively accommodated with by East Asian states save Japan (Kang, 2008). This, along with China's desire to engage Asia without the use of force and Asia's desire to maintain peace and prosperity, prevented a war-ridden rise of China as the hegemon of Asia (Kang, 2008). Kang used the absence of region-wide conflict in Asia as well as policies and practices of Asian states toward China as evidence for argument.

In general, culture and ideology are factors influencing relations between states. Cultural and ideological changes led to the changes in the identity of people and thus the changes in the relations between countries. Therefore, to understand how the relations between countries have changed, it is important to examine how their culture and ideology have converged or diverged. Culture and ideology, however, are not the only factors that influence state relations.

b. Nationalism

Aside from culture and ideology, nationalism was also an important factor in the changes of Vietnam-China relations. Nationalism can be defined as (1) the consciousness of belong to a nation and aspiration for its security and prosperity, (2) ideology that glorifies the national will and its realization and (3) social and political movement tied to the ideology (Smith, 1991). The nationalism is tied to a common shared history and collective memory and a mass culture (Smith, 1991; Leifer, 2000). The nationalism that is developed from these define the uniqueness of a particular nation-state, legitimizing its authority and defeating the influence of other nation-states upon it (Rozman, cited in Kang, 2008).

Several scholars have noted the importance of nationalism in the politics of postcolonial period. Accounts of nationalism in Asia identified common experiences of colonial subjugation, loss of the traditional culture and induction of Western culture and a desire to strengthen themselves and protect their national sovereignty (Romein, 1962; Chavan, 1973; Leifer, 2000). All political movements in the postcolonial era resorted to nationalism in one way or another. Altogether, nationalism represented a strong political force in Asia that had an immense impact on the politics of Asian countries (Chavan, 1973).

In short, nationalism was a factor that influenced the relations between countries. It did so by evoking the national past and took on the nation's aspiration for prosperity and security. The nationalist ideas thus had an impact on how the nation saw itself and others. Thus, in the context of postcolonial Asia, nationalism was an influential political force.

To sum up, constructivism suggested that ideational factors influenced the identity of people, thus influencing how states see themselves and each other and how they relate to each other. Among the ideational factors, I have identified culture and ideology, and nationalism, as the key factors to the changes in Vietnam-China relations. With this, I am able to generate two hypotheses on how the relations between the two countries have changed.

Hypothesis 2: If Vietnam is culturally and ideologically similar from China, it will not militarily align with other states against China (Constructivism)

This hypothesis suggests that convergence of Vietnam and China's culture and ideology will result in convergence of identity and an alliance between China and Vietnam. A number of scholars already recognized the similarities of between Vietnam and China in ideological terms due to both countries' communist ideology (Bain, 1967; Duiker, 1995). The supposed similarities between communism and the two countries' shared Confucian heritage meant that communism resonated with their traditional culture, providing cultural foundations for cooperation between Vietnam and China (Tønnesson, 1993).

Hypothesis 3: If Vietnamese nationalism is directed at China, it will militarily align with other states against China (Constructivism)

This hypothesis suggests that, anti-China nationalism in Vietnam will fuel its decision to ally with other states to counter China. This was particularly true for the post-1975 period, when Vietnam was victorious in its unification war and Western forces withdrew from Vietnam. Early on, the target of nationalism was at Western imperialism (Duiker, 1995). Nationalism was instrumental in the minds of Vietnamese leaders. After 1975, however, nationalism shifted back to China, Vietnam's traditional enemy (Womack, 2006). At that point, Vietnam-China relations slowly deteriorated to the point of confrontation. Vietnam allied with the Soviet Union in order to balance China (Chanda, 1986). At present, Vietnamese nationalism is still directed at China (Vu, 2010), and Vietnam has intensified its partnerships with many states in order to better its footing vis-à-vis China (Manyin, 2014).

To sum up, constructivism postulates that ideational factors such as culture, ideology and nationalism influenced Vietnam-China relations. First, if the culture and ideology of Vietnam and China are similar, the relations would be positive, i.e. non-confrontational. Second, if the nationalism of Vietnam is directed at China, the relations would be negative and Vietnam would ally with other countries against China.

III. Methodology and Measurements

In the previous section, I generate three hypotheses. This section describes the methods in which they are tested and identifies the way important variables – threat, culture-ideology and nationalism – are measured. After this section, the paper turns to the empirical examination and tests the hypotheses.

The sixty years from 1950 to 2015 can be divided into two periods: the revolutionary (1950 – 1975) and modern era (1975–2015). In order to test the hypotheses throughout the two periods, I use the observation method using case-study analysis. Case-study analysis is useful in examining whether events happening during each period follow the predictions inferred from the theory (Van Evera, 1997). Case study are criticized, however, because it examines only a few cases, which makes study liable to unaccounted variables that may influence the outcomes and limits the applicability of case-study results to other cases (Yin, cited in Van Evera, 1997).

Despite this, case study has two strengths that make up for its limitations: tests performed with case studies are often strong because the predictions tested are informed by only one theory and because in case study it is easier to show how tested variables result in the outcomes (Van Evera, 1997). In this respect, case study proves to be a better tool to examine the causal process than studies analyzing dozens of cases (Van Evera, 1997).

The strengths of the case-study method support its usage in my study. Next, I describe the measurements for the main variables listed above – threat, culture-ideology and nationalism:

a. Threat

Threat as a factor determining state relations primarily came from Stephen Walt's works. In his major work on the balance of threat, Stephen Walt famously argued that, states will ally with or against the most threatening power (Walt, 1985). In this assessment, he was not alone, as constructivists as well as like-minded realists flocked to its vulnerability to constructivist logic (Hopf, 1998; Jervis, 1976; Rousseau, 2007).

Walt devised that four factors – "aggregate power", geographical proximity, offensive capability and offensive intentions – as the criterion in evaluating whether a target state is more threatening (Walt, 1985). The second and fourth are self-explanatory, while the first points to the

totality of a state's resources (i.e. population, resources, industrial capacity, technology, military strength etc.) and the third to the capability of the target state to offend or, in specific words, to overwhelm another state' military and territory, i.e. offense versus defense. For the fourth factor, offensive intentions, I use China's political statements and military actions as indicators.

A state's aggregate power is measured by socio-economic and military strength indicators. The former include indicators such as population and industrial development, indicated by the industrial share of the GDP. The latter include military spending and its share of the GDP, the standing and annual manpower reaching military service age and the amount of military units and vehicles. All the indicators indicate the total amount of power a state could amass.

Offensive capability or offensive power deserves attention since it is not only related to both aggregate power and geographical proximity but also to whether it is easy to conquer or defend a territory and whether a military force's weapon arsenal is fit for offense or defense (Jervis, 1978). Recognizing that offense-defense balance is difficult to measure, I will point out whether China's military technology and arsenal have a chance to bypass Vietnam's geographical obstacles and defense ability and, conversely, whether Vietnam could mount a defense on the land and sea. I will use the conflict between the two countries in 1979 and 1988 as examples.

In general, I use the factors of aggregate power, geographical proximity, offensive capability and offensive intentions to measure the level of threat from China felt by Vietnam. The first and third factor, in particular, is indicated by the socio-economic and military indicators and the conflicts in 1979 and 1988 respectively.

b. Culture, ideology and nationalism

Culture, ideology and nationalism are non-material factors that are behind by many non-power-related explanations. Culture, ideology and nationalism shape the identity of political actors which in turn shapes the way states view each other and their relations. However, because of its non-material nature, the scholarship of identity lacks of definition and analytic framework (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston & Martin, 2001) despite its growth in recent times.

To measure culture, ideology and nationalism and how they influence identity, there are several measurements; among them are discourse analysis, content analysis and surveys (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston & McDermott, 2006). Discourse analysis is a labor-intensive method relying

on the analysis and interpretation of texts and interviews, which is useful because it allows the researchers to separate people from social situations in that makes them unable to articulate their genuine views, such as the presence of peer pressure, or when the interviewee is in danger or threatened. It also focuses on the reading of available texts written by contemporary people, hence giving a somewhat genuine idea about their thoughts and predispositions (Abdelal et al., 2006).

Content analysis, the second method, is an attempt to discern textual content without the necessity of researchers' interpretation. In other words, content are presented and interpreted as they are, word-by-word, without the researchers' lens. While not as widely used as discourse and survey analysis, the content analysis approach is useful in many ways. For example, the analysis of frequency of keywords and terms provides evidence as to the pervasive quality of a certain topic or category of topics.

The third method, surveys, is long the backbone of research into public opinion. Most social psychologists and sociologists make use of structured surveys and interviews of a large number of people to directly discern issues at hand. Surveys are very useful to determine the content and the cohesion of the identity of a group of people (Abdela et al., 2001). Asking people with straightforward questions also allows researchers to have an understanding of their opinion without being biased by the researchers' interpretations. Useful as they are, however, surveys become a problem when used to study historical topics, since interviewees are likely to be susceptible to collective memories, as well as multiple representations of those memories, or since relevant interviewees are no longer alive or unwilling to cooperate.

Of the three methods of measurement, in this paper, I will make the most use of discourse analysis. Textual data, such as the writings of contemporary people in the targeted periods are, plentifully and will offer important insights into their periods.

c. State behavior

In order to examine the changes in interstate relations, government statements and documents, as well as national records and individual statements by national leadership figures. In addition to texts and speeches pertaining to the government and leadership, press reports are also an important source of information on the state. In particular, I will use government texts and statements and press reports mostly from Vietnam, with a few from China.

IV. Results and Analysis

In the last section, I specify case-study method and variables: threat, culture-ideology and nationalism to be used in analyzing the changes in Vietnam-China relations. In this section, I will provide available evidence for pertinent variables. Evidence ranges from material data such as population, national income and number of military units, to textual data such as writings and statements of past people and past government documents. I will divide this section into two subsections in accordance with realist- and constructivist-informed hypotheses I generated above.

Hypothesis 1: If Vietnam is threatened by China, it will militarily align with other states against China (Realism)

Hypothesis 2: If Vietnam is culturally and ideologically similar from China, it will not militarily align with other states against China (Constructivism)

Hypothesis 3: If Vietnamese nationalism is directed at China, it will militarily align with other states against China (Constructivism)

In the first subsection, I will deal with threat as a potential factor influencing the China-Vietnam relations. I will then test the first hypothesis regarding the changes of the two states' relations.

1. Threat and Interstate Relations: 1950 – 2015

This section looks into the relations between China and Vietnam from the early 1950s until 2015. This period witnessed both countries gained independence and became recognized states recognized internationally. It focused on the threat posed by China to Vietnam and how that changed throughout the period. The threat from China will be examined in two periods of 1950–1975 and 1975–2015.

a. Threat from China

Aggregate power: To examine the threat posed by China, I first take aggregate power into consideration. Data for this include (1) population, (2) level of economic development and (3) military power. The third and fourth are calculated by the share of industry in the national income and by the amount of military units as well as the level of military technology. The data are taken from international databases such as World Bank and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Vietnam				China			
Year	Population (thousand)	Urban population (%)	Urban population growth (%)	Year	Population (thousand)	Urban population (%)	Urban population growth (%)
1960	34,743	14.7	3.9	1960	667,070	16.2	4.9
1965	38,341	16.4	4.2	1965	715,185	18.1	1.2
1970	42,729	18.3	4.4	1970	818,315	17.4	2.0
1975	48,030	18.8	2.9	1975	916,395	17.4	2.4
1980	53,700	19.2	2.5	1980	981,235	19.4	5.2
1985	58,868	19.6	2.3	1985	1,051,040	22.9	4.3
1990	66,016	20.3	3.7	1990	1,135,185	26.4	4.3
1995	71,995	22.2	3.4	1995	1,204,855	31.0	4.2
2000	77,630	24.4	3.7	2000	1,262,645	35.9	3.6
2005	82,392	27.3	3.4	2005	1,303,720	42.5	3.9
2015	86,932	30.4	3.2	2015	1,337,705	49.2	3.3

Table 1.1: Vietnam-China population and growth, 1960–2015. Source: *World Bank*.

Vietnam			China		
Year	Industrial share (% of GDP)	Industrial growth (annual %)	Year	Industrial share (% of GDP)	Industrial growth (annual %)
1980			1980	48.2	13.6
1985	27.4		1985	42.9	18.6
1990	22.7	2.3	1990	41.3	3.2
1995	28.8	13.6	1995	47.2	13.9
2000	34.2	10.1	2000	45.9	9.4
2005	38.1	8.4	2005	47.4	12.1
2015	38.2	7.2	2015	46.7	12.3

Table 1.2: Vietnam-China industrial share of GDP and growth, 1980–2015. Source: *World Bank*.

From Table 1.1 and 1.2, we can conclude that, China is at advantage in population and industrial development. It should be noted that, the growth of population, urban population in particular, and of industrial share in the national income adds more advantage to China, since high urban population creates a larger pool for industrial workforce, helping facilitate industrial growth that in turn speeds up economic development. More population also adds to the amount of national saving which generates capital for other economic activities. As a result, the national saving of China is reasonably higher than that in Vietnam.

As a result of economic growth which results from a higher pace of industrialization and more capital, China was able to increase its military expenditure, which has been increasing at a stable percentage of the national income. Meanwhile, Vietnam's expenditure was high but has since been decreased to a smaller but stable percentage.

Vietnam			China		
Year	Military spending (current US\$)	Share of GDP (%)	Year	Military spending (current US\$)	Share of GDP (%)
1985	395		1985	8,837	
1990	1,682	7.9	1990	19,820	2.5

1995	871		1995	23,059	1.7
2000	1,246		2000	37,040	1.9
2005	1,572	1.9	2005	71,496	2.1
2015	2,878	2.5	2015	136,467	2.1

Table 1.3: Vietnam-China military spending, 1985–2015. Source: SIPRI.

Table 1.3 compares Vietnam and China's military spending from 1985 to 2015 respectively. Largely thanks to its economic growth, China was able to keep a stable portion of its income on military expenditure. China's economic success generated a constantly increasing amount of fund for the military. The situation was the opposite in Vietnam: military spending fluctuated due to economic hardships and security threat, reaching 7.9 percent at most only to drastically drop to a level roughly similar to China's. The trend reflects a decision to reduce military investment on the Vietnam side which was comprehensible given the country's slower developing economy and lack of technology.

All socio-economic factors can be translated to military power, which is illustrated in the table below:

	Active military	Manpower fit for military service (2015 est.)	Manpower reaching military age annually (2015 est.)	No. of ground vehicles (2012)	No. of artillery pieces (2012)	No. of vessels (2012)	No. of aircrafts (2012)
Vietnam	482,000	41,503,949	1,635,084	1,270		14	189
China	2,285,000	618,588,627	19,538,534	13,938	11,257	479	2,860

Table 1.4: Vietnam-China Military manpower and vehicles. Source: CIA Factbook, IISS, Flightglobal.

It is clear that China dwarfs Vietnam militarily in sheer numerical terms. This is foreseeable given the superior amount of military spending, economic development and population. Several advantages that are not presented here include aircraft carrier and nuclear weapon which are essential for power projection and deterrence. China's military technology is also reasonably more advanced than Vietnam, allowing the former to create and produce much of its own armament while the latter has to rely on foreign suppliers for its weaponry. This became a special problem for Vietnam during its war with China in the 1970s.

Geographical proximity: Vietnam is undoubtedly close to China geographically. From the Chinese city of Nanning, closest to the Vietnam-China border, to Hanoi the land route were only roughly 400 kilometers and took seven hours; the distance is halved from the border to each city (Google Map, 2015). The air route will certainly take less time because the flying course is straight. The second quickest route is along the eastern coast.

The geographical proximity surely created a great advantage for invading armies from China. In 1979, Chinese troops made incursions into Vietnamese territory as far as 85 kilometers from Hanoi (Chen, 1983), even with staunch Vietnamese resistance that lasted for two weeks. There-fore, it is reasonable to assume that, being close to China poses a great threat to Vietnam.

Offensive capability: We understand offensive capability or offensive power as the ability to "threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost" (Walt, 1990). In other words, it is the ability to overwhelm a state's defense and conquer its territory.

Between Vietnam and China, from 1975 there were two conflicts between their militaries: a one-month-long land invasion of Vietnam in 1979 and a brief naval skirmish in 1988. While both conflicts took place a long time ago, they are still occasionally mentioned in Vietnamese press as a proof of China's hostility (VTC News, 2015). They still provide insight into China's offensive capability.

The Sino-Vietnamese of 1979 was a land invasion of Chinese ground forces into northern Vietnam. The brief conflict was a loss of life and material for both countries. For the Chinese, in particular, it exposed the weaknesses of Chinese troops, among them were backward logistics and transportation apparatus, lack of actual experience for commanding officers and the morale problem (Chen, 1983). Others were lack of intelligence and reconnaissance and outdated tactical doctrines (Zhang, 2005).

The Chinese military command quickly addressed these issues; the war with Vietnam became the primary motivation for the Chinese leadership to forward its military modernization program. China's efforts to modernize its army yielded results in the sporadic skirmishes with the Vietnamese troops along the land border. Coordination of infantry with armored and artillery unit was decisive in the battle of Vi Xuyen in which China's artillery troops inflicted horrendous casualties for the ill-equipped Vietnamese troops (Li, 2007). The improvement of Chinese fighting capability after the 1979 war showed China's improvement in offensive capability; Chinese troops were able to occupy Vietnam's border territory until the normalization of the countries' relations.

While the Vietnamese ground force outperformed their Chinese counterparts in the land war, Chinese navy inflicted heavy losses to Vietnamese naval troops in the 1988 Johnson South

Reef skirmish. This time the Chinese, with superior naval force, sunk three ships of Vietnamese navy and killed 70 sailors and marines. The skirmish showed Vietnam's naval weaknesses and resulted in the Chinese forces occupying six reefs and atolls in the following years (Koo, 2009).

The last two conflicts between Vietnam and China illustrated the offensive capability of China's military force. Even in their initial ineptitude and tactical weakness during the 1979 war, they still inflicted much casualties and material destruction to the Vietnamese. While there was no proof that they could reach Hanoi, they evidently cross the border into Vietnam with little detriments caused by terrain. The particular terrain on the Vietnamese side of the border, which consists of vertical north-to-south mountain arcs, prove no difficult for Chinese army to traverse. Though the initial invasion was upset by entrenched Vietnamese defense and complex mountain cave and tunnel network, they were eventually unsuccessful in stopping the invading force for more than half a month. This illustrates that, Vietnam, though fighting on their own soil, will have great difficulty to delay the Chinese indefinitely.

Furthermore, whatever terrain advantage the Vietnamese have at their advantage on land, they cannot muster on the sea. The lack of naval power on the Vietnamese side, illustrated by their defeat in the naval skirmish, was alarming enough. This fear of China's navy was demonstrated by Vietnam's recent serious commitment to modernize the navy (Ministry of National Defense, 2009). Since then, the Vietnamese has focused on the course of naval modernization (Ngo & Koh, 2014). Some of the high-profile purchases of weapons include a couple of Russian new submarines (Kazianis, 2013) along with land missiles (Gady, 2015), 12 new multi-role aircrafts (RIA Novosti, cited in Chen & Yang, 2013) and various other military equipment.

In all, the continuous modernization of China's military led to improvement of China's offensive capability. China's offensive capability has also drawn the attention of many scholars outside Vietnam at the time of this research (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2014; O'Rourke, 2015; Cordesman, Hess & Yarosh, 2013). Thanks to China's military spending, which is usually higher than Vietnam's, it is foreseeable that its offensive power has been on a steady increase since the past conflicts considered above.

Offensive intentions: The offensive intentions of one state towards another are the fourth indicator of threat (Walt, 1990). Over the last 50 years, it fluctuated between outright condemnation to warmth and friendship. The first extant evidence of China's warm support for Vietnam

was the recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), a mostly unrecognized government that fought for independence from the French Union (Zhai, 1993). In return, Ho Chi Minh, the leader of DRV, expressed similar warmth towards China. Already in the 1950s, he emphasized the need for Vietnam to look up to China's model of revolution and China's support (Ho, cited in Turley, 1980). China further sent military advisers to Vietnam throughout the 1950s and then towards the end of the war in 1975.

The relations between China and Vietnam soured, however, due to disputes between the two countries over several issues after 1975 (Library of Congress, 1989). The major issues were the presence of a large number of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and China's support for the anti-Vietnamese Cambodian regime. The situation intensified as Vietnam facilitated the expulsion of Chinese in Vietnam, something leaders of China took to heart (Chang, 1982). The invasion of Vietnam by China partially resulted from this humiliation, as the Chinese wanted to "teach Vietnam a lesson" (Deng, cited in Chang, 1982, p. 226). Vietnam retaliated in the publication of its own account of China's actions to Vietnam, arguing that China has always tried to subvert Vietnam's efforts to unify the country, and that it had always been a threat to Vietnam (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979).

The hostility between the two countries lasted for over ten years following this point, in which, as I pointed out in the previous part, resulted in the two conflicts on land and sea. In the early 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union put an end to Vietnam's primary support in its conflict with China (Womack, 2006). As early as the late 1988, talks between the two governments already resumed despite continued tensions. Normalization was done in the 1991, with both sides agreeing to a 16-character maxim that embodied the two countries' spirit of cooperation which both sides still occasionally allude to even today.

Despite this, China's response to Vietnam's call for alliance was lukewarm at best. The Chinese rejected Vietnam's proposal, stating they were "comrades but not allies" (Tran, 2003). China also dictated the terms of the normalization, requesting the Vietnamese to exclude the foreign minister who favored a balancing position towards China. Further demands included concession to China's request to receive back the ethnic Chinese previously expelled from Vietnam, to accept Chinese terms on territory and to pay debts (Thayer, 1994), to which the Vietnamese declined. Clearly, the results of Vietnam's normalization attempt with China were

only half successful on both sides though the talks did lead to the normalization of their relations (Thayer, 1994).

The normalization of relations with China clearly reduced the amount of threat China posed to Vietnam. Scholars have pointed to the reduction of military confrontations and hostile military buildup between the two, as well as an increase in the exchange and possibly cooperation between their militaries (Ang, 1998; Simon, 1994). The clearest evidence was the reduction of the active military manpower and of military spending from close to 1 million personnel and 8% of the GDP in the 1990s to roughly 500,000 and 3% in the 2015. Yet one could not dismiss the active and stable pace of military, especially naval and aerial arsenal, modernization schemes of Vietnam. As noted above, the white paper of Vietnam stressed the commitment to modernize the navy and air force.

One could not dismiss Vietnam's attempts to militarily cooperate with the military of major powers, either. China's military spending in a situation of tension on the South China Sea alarmed many states which have active territorial disputes with China, of which Vietnam is one such state. Many scholars believe that, military cooperation with major powers entails a strategy to boast Vietnam's military power vis-à-vis China (Le, 2013; Tran, Vieira & Ferreira-Pereira, 2013). For example, the United States' partial lift of military embargo allowed the US to sell defense equipment to Vietnam, specifically for maritime defense, a move many considered to aim particularly at China (Panda, 2014). Recently, the purchase of anti-ship aircrafts and high-technology submarines were only two high-profile activities among many Vietnamese attempts at modernization.

There were also considerations for land border security on Vietnam's side. While there was little if any escalation of troops across the border, Vietnam's distrust of China manifested itself in the decision-making of a number of infrastructure project. For instance, the Chinese plan for North–South Express Railway was rejected in favor of Japanese one (Chen & Yang, 2013). While official reasons were that the Japanese had superior railway technology, several critics point to the fear of China taking advantage of the railway design to aid a swift invasion of Vietnam (Chen & Yang, 2013). It is clear that, the fear of China's military might and offensive power fuels these developments.

To sum up, an analysis into the four factors that determines threat from China illustrated important points. China, with its large power base and geographical closeness to Vietnam, poses a considerable threat. The China's offensive capability creates concerns for Vietnam's security, evidenced by the sustained effort by Vietnam to improve its military power and to improve its military cooperation with other powers. Despite the reduction in the level of acute threat from China due to the cessation of active military confrontation, the China threat factor still ranks high in Vietnam's government policies.

My first hypothesis suggests that, threat was an important determinant of the outcome of Vietnam-China relations. My assessment of two's relations in the last sixty years showed that the threat posed by China mattered greatly in the direction of the policies towards China. In the next part, I will show that, as the Vietnam-China relations move through the period of 1950 – 2015, it has shifted from the view of China as an ally secured by ideological solidarity to that of China as a bully that necessitated Vietnam balancing against it. The fear of threat from China is the reason why Vietnam adopted a balancing strategy towards China.

b. Revolutionary Vietnam (1950–1975): Alliance with China

The period from 1950 to 1975 roughly corresponds with the latter half of Vietnam's war with France and the entirety of the war with the United States. From 1950 to 1954 witnessed the victory of the Vietnamese army over the French thanks to Chinese military advisers that helped trained Vietnamese military officers and to Chinese training of Vietnamese soldiers. The assistance of China to Vietnam during the later conflict with the US came in form of economic and technical assistance, from which Vietnam drew part of its military power and was able to sustain the war effort for two decades.

Before 1950, China was still in the turmoil of civil war and Vietnam just began its nine years of war with the French. While Vietnam self-proclaimed its independence in 1945, French forces soon returned to reassert the colonial grip. Without adequate training in fighting and in leadership, as well as lack of technology, the French soon drove Vietnamese forces out of the northern plain into the mountains. The main strategy employed from then on was a retreat to territories with better terrain to avoid enemy attack (Dang, 1960), followed a second and third phase of defense and then counter-offense on all fronts. This seems to be bear great resemblance

to the contemporary idea of "people's war" by China's military leader Mao Zedong, who emphasized a similar three-phase scheme (Mao, 1961).

After China recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in 1950, Chinese military advisers were sent to Vietnam to help command Vietnamese troops. The Vietnamese military specifically requested commanders at the battalion and regiment level to assist them in coordinating large-scale campaigns (Zhai, 1993). The arrival of Chinese advisers thus improved the command ability of Vietnamese commanders; it was evident that even the famed general Vo Nguyen Giap paid attention to the Chinese' advise. Chinese advisers also pioneered the inclusion of women in the fighting force as well as masterminded the border campaign in 1950. The Vietnamese general concluded that, the strategies and tactics that came from the Chinese advisers were "very applicable to Vietnam" (Chen, 1984, pp. 248–249).

Chinese advisers were also instrumental later on, in which the Vietnamese troops needed to assault large fortifications. After failed assaults the advisers advised a large-scale offense elsewhere to divert French forces away from the plains where they had the advantage. As the French were spread thin, they decided to confront the Vietnamese in a pitched battle in Dien Bien Phu, where they believe Vietnamese troops would not pass French defense. The Chinese counseled a complete siege of the area and slow but deliberate encroachments into the defense (Zhai, 1993). China also furnished the Vietnamese forces with artillery directly from their own arsenal, thereby helping the siege (Zhai, 1993). This led to the final victory and the subsequent liberation of the northern Vietnam.

The role of China in the war between Vietnam and France was considered another victory of China as a power after the Korean War (Zhai, 1993). Mao Zedong and other leaders admitted that the war was at China's favor as well, given that support for Vietnam came from China only. This support paved away for more future support; clearly Vietnam welcomed China's assistance and, during this time at least, China was not considered a threat. Scholars stressed the similarities between the two during this period: Guo (1992) noted the similar ideology, similar situation and long-established comradeship, while Womack (2006) noted a sense of commitment that trumped ancient animosity.

But the Vietnamese already noticed what they perceived as the treachery of the Chinese (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979). China was the main patron as well as beneficiary of the

Geneva Conference that ended the war between Vietnam and France (Chen, 1995), but to the Vietnamese eyes they were not particularly supportive of Vietnam's reunification. China's decision could be a result of its own need for a brief respite from war and building a new nation and to prevent another direct confrontation with the American as happened in the Korean War (Zhai, 1992). Hence it adopted an indifferent attitude towards the Vietnamese proposal to begin liberating South Vietnam. Thus, China provided economic aid to Vietnam and, before 1963, provided substantial military aid, which according to one source cost 320 million yuan (Li & Hao, cited in Chen, 1995).

After the escalation of war by the United States in South Vietnam, in particular the raids by the American air force into North Vietnam, China turned to a more active posture, promising even more aid and assuring the Vietnamese that they would enter war if North Vietnam was to be invaded (Chen, 1995). This coincided with a period of political turmoil as well as active international competition with the Soviet Union, in which China must show more commitment to the ideology lest it lost its support.

This came to light when the American initiated the Gulf Incident in 1964 to escalate the bombing of North Vietnam. China quickly supplied the Vietnamese with even more weapons, anti-air weaponry and engineering troops in particular. Below is a table of China's aid (in terms of anti-air military weaponry) from 1964 to 1975.

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
Artillery	1,205	4,439	3,362	3,984	7,087	3,906	2,212	7,898	9,238	9,912	6,406	4,880
Gun shells (thousands)	335	1,800	1,066	1,363	2,082	1,357	397	1,899	2,210	2,210	1,390	965
Tank	16			26	18			80	220	120	80	
Planes	18	2		70				4	14	36		20

Table 1.5: China's Military Supply to Vietnam, 1964–1975. Source: Li & Hao (cited in Chen, 1995)

The table illustrates massive support of China to Vietnam during the latter's unification war, something that China would later use to blame Vietnam for its lack of gratitude. It also illustrated how Vietnam depended on Chinese support, as well as Soviet support, throughout its war of unification. It was argued that this disproportionate dependence on China was tenuous in itself, subjecting Vietnam to China's whim (Chen, 1995). Unlike Korea, the Vietnamese were not happy, and neither were they too desperate, to tolerate the Chinese troops' presence on their soil. The presence of the Chinese turned out to be a mean to woo the Vietnamese to Chinese side in

the latter's conflict with the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Chinese was actively wooing the Vietnamese to their camp against the Soviets, to which the Vietnamese refusal were later used as an excuse to condemn them (Xin, 2009). Vietnam, up to the point, chose a "tightrope" position between the two powers, favoring none while extracting assistance from both (Hershberg, 1996).

The realization of China pressure on Vietnam to side with them in their petty rivalry with the Soviet Union, fueled by the resentment towards the Chinese troops, China's earlier role in the division of Vietnam, helped ignited the cooling of previously warm relations between the two countries. Vietnam even went as far as to evoke the memories of China's imperialism over Vietnam in the past, which the Chinese leaders took to heart (Guo, 1992). So, within the framework of ideology-based alliance, there were already cracks left and right due to the threat of China's encroachment into and manipulation of Vietnam.

Vietnam's subsequent acceptance of more Soviet aid worsened the already widening gap between China and Vietnam. China was also suspicious of Vietnam's deep involvement in other parts of former Indochina, going as far as invading Lao and establishing bases in both Lao and Cambodia (Chen, 1995). Vietnam viewed the presence of China in Lao, already firmly in Vietnam's influence, to be threat to its interests. Increasing tensions between China and the Soviet Union, the emerging turmoil in China, the perceived lack of interest of the Vietnamese all led to China seeking the possibility of a new alignment with the United States. Fearing that it would be sacrificed by China in the latter's own calculations, Vietnam instead sought negotiations with the US themselves, something that China did not desire but could not prevent.

All this cooling of relations resulted in the Chinese assistance withdrawn from Vietnam. While China's support never ceased during the remainder of the war, China made a historic move in 1972 by issuing a joint communique, known as the Shanghai Communique, with the US. Vietnam interpreted this move with disdain; even though there was no official message regarding this, later an article posited the China's move as a betrayal of Vietnam (Ha, n.d.). Though Vietnamese leaders were reassured by Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, they launched an offensive through the border of South Vietnam to test the will and intention of both the Americans and the Chinese. After the American forces withdrew from South Vietnam, North Vietnam opened new offensives into South Vietnam to facilitate the war and test the strength of their opponents. The final blow to Sino-Vietnamese relations before 1975 was the Chinese invasion of the Paracel Islands, at the

time controlled by South Vietnam, to which the Vietnamese authorities remained silent. In silence, however, some voices maintained that the islands were Vietnam's legally, and that the conflict over it would be between China and Vietnam as whole nations (Szalontai, 2009).

In general, the period from 1950 to 1975 witnessed initial warmth in the Sino-Vietnamese relations, in which China's assistance for Vietnam was indispensable in its initial war of independence. The period was followed by a less enthusiastic Chinese support for Vietnam in its second war, then by the two's disagreements over each's strategy and then by the slow decay of relations by the time China improved its relations with the US and Vietnam concluding its war in 1975. Throughout the period, China was not viewed as a threat, though the dissent with China already surfaced at the beginning of the period (Zhai, 1993). The deterioration of the two's relations, the conclusion of Vietnam's war of unification and China's disillusion with the Maoist ideology, all served to diminish the ideological solidarity between Vietnam and China and allowed the age-old hatred and rivalry to reemerge, culminating in the continuous conflict of the next period.

c. Modern Vietnam (1975–2015): Balancing against China

The previous section dealt with Vietnam-China relations from the 1950 to 1975, in which the threat posed by China was low and not immediate, albeit rising towards the end of the period. In his 1987 book, Stephen Walt concluded that, while wartime poses immediate threats to state's survival, hence incentive to bandwagon, peace time restores the incentive to balance against the state posing the most immediate threat rather than bandwagon with it (Walt, 1990). If Walt's prediction regarding a state's alliance behavior was anything revealing, a U-turn back to balance by Vietnam against China the moment the former concluded its war is a reasonable anticipation. The events from 1975 onward mostly fit into this pattern, and will be the subject of this section.

Vietnam concluded its unification war in 1975 when North Vietnam captured the capital city of South Vietnam, ending two decades of incessant fighting. While the victory brought with it hope in the leadership, two issues soon surfaced which, regrettably, led to a further erosion of Vietnam-China relations. First, there was the problem of pacifying the newly occupied southern Vietnam. This new area was previously under a different political and economic regime than northern Vietnam. Gaining control of the area would require the introduction of communism and centrally-planned, collectivized state economy from the north set down by the Vietnamese

leadership. The new Vietnamese government sought to establish a socialist state in in the former North and South Vietnam.

This brought the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam into the scene. Prior to 1975, ethnic Chinese had disproportionate control of southern economy. Not long before that they had not Vietnamese but Chinese citizenship (Tran, 1993; Chen, 1987). Earlier, ethnic Chinese had resisted southern government's naturalization program through their control over the economy (Chang, 1982). From the 1975, the occupying force needed their cooperation to stabilize the south economically. Frictions existed, however, since the ethnic Chinese resisted the new government's economic policies; their monopolizing necessities led to shortages that under-mined the stabilizing process (Chen, 1987). The Vietnamese government thus responded with harsh measures: they orchestrated raid into the ethnic Chinese community, closing down private enterprises and nationalizing their properties (Chang, 1982).

The harsh treatment of the Chinese in Vietnam must be examined in the context of rising tensions between Vietnam and China. For both countries, Vietnam's conclusion of the war put an end to a resource-crippling war. The war end also opened an entirely novel context for the two countries; unfortunately, that was when the Vietnam-China relations entered a new era heralded by an "illusion of victory", to borrow Womack's words (Womack, 2006). For China, it was the expectation that, with all its generous assistance it finally secured Vietnam's gratitude and loyalty to China in all of the latter's future dealings. For Vietnam, it was the expectation that its victory over the Americans would earn it a rightful place in China's foreign policy and China's, as well as the Soviet Union's, future aid (Womack, 2006).

The expectations of both countries' leadership, however, were sorely disappointed. The war end also brought a halt to China's great commitment for aid to Vietnam since China itself, freshly out of its own economic and political turbulence needed a reprieve. Shortly after the war, Mao Zedong made it clear that, China's assistance to Vietnam caused deprivation in China (Mao, cited in Westad, Chen, Tønnesson, Nguyen & Hershberg, 1998). This sentiment, along with the earlier China's re-alignment towards the United States during the direst hours of Vietnam's war, its encroachment to Vietnam's territory in the Paracel Islands and its repeated pressure on Vietnam to align with it against the Soviet Union were, to Vietnam's eyes, all the more evidence of China's double dealing. Although more aid were secured, Le Duan, the Vietnam's leader, left

China without orchestrating a customary return banquet, the first sign of discord between China and Vietnam (Womack, 2006). The Vietnamese hardened their view of China as a result.

Again, the ethnic Chinese bore the brunt of Vietnam's antagonism towards China. At the time, China's political changes heralded a modernization period in which it called upon overseas Chinese around the world, including those in Vietnam. For examples, modernization programs initially proposed in 1975 were launched, and the mainland Chinese press revived interest in the overseas Chinese (Beijing Review [BR] & Ta Kung Bao, cited in Chang, 1982). This undoubtedly involved the large and economically influential Chinese community in Vietnam. The ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, however, were with dubious loyalty to the Vietnamese state. Their continuous defiance of the socialist framework by the Chinese alarmed the Vietnamese leaders about a potential Chinese subversion using their compatriots living in Vietnam (Chang, 1982).

A parallel issue which was no less problematic for Vietnam was the new nuisance from Cambodia (Chanda, 1986). Cambodia was a southern neighbor of Vietnam. Both achieved their independence in 1954 from France. Due to its adjacent position to the southern portion of South Vietnam, North Vietnam used eastern Vietnam-Cambodia border as supply bases for their troops in the South Vietnam theater of war. The Vietnamese were also instrumental in the formation of the Cambodian communist force, fighting together throughout the war against France (Morris, 1999). In 1975, like the Vietnamese, the Cambodian communists won the Cambodian civil war.

Their relations soured, after the war, however. Immediately after the Vietnamese forces occupied South Vietnam, Cambodian forces attacked the Tho Chu Island, which was part of the former South Vietnam, and massacred Vietnamese civilians. The Vietnamese soon retook the island, but the conflict was only beginning. The hostility came from the sustained suspicion of Vietnam's intention to dominate Cambodia. The Cambodians then proposed a treaty of friendship, which Vietnam gladly accepted.

Cambodian alone could hardly put a dent on the military power of Vietnam – the former's repeated military defeats in the subsequent years were ample evidence. They, however, became a greater nuisance when they banded with China against Vietnam. The Cambodians, soon after the takeover of the country, established relations with China through a friendship pact. Within two years from 1975 to 1977, China supplied Cambodia with hundreds of armored vehicles, artillery pieces, trucks and tons of ammunition, to name a few (Kierman, 2014). This intensified towards

the end of the Cambodian regime; China also sent thousands of military and civilian advisers to Cambodia.

Vietnam became furious over these budding relations between China and Cambodia. In the previous conflicts, Vietnam was the center of forces of communism in mainland Southeast Asia, particularly in Indochina (Morris, 1999; Chanda, 1986; Goscha, 1995). By right, it believed, it must have predominance in the struggle in all three Indochinese countries. Cambodia, however, was adamant in its scheme for total autonomy from the Vietnamese control. This dangerous misconception of its place in the region antagonized Vietnam, evidenced by the comment of Nguyen Khac Vien, a Vietnamese politician (Nguyen, cited in Burchett, 1981). Nevertheless, after its war Vietnam needed reprieve and opted for smoldering the Cambodians in their bid for immature defiance by asking China to mediate the conflicts, which Chinese leaders promptly refused. The indifferent attitude of the Chinese leadership and the failure of negotiations with the Cambodians convinced the Vietnamese leadership that China, in its already apparent dislike for Vietnam, was using Cambodia as a counterweight against Vietnam (Chanda, 1986).

The above two issues were only the most extant issues between Vietnam and China from 1975 to 1979. It embodied the deterioration of relations between Vietnam and China from ally to enemy. The reemergence of China as a threat inevitably pushed Vietnam further to the Soviet Union, which China tried to prevent but inadvertently set in motion. Until that point, Vietnam was not the best client of the Soviet Union; Chanda mentioned an important instance in his book (Chanda, 1986). But if in China's eyes Vietnam was the "Cuba of Asia", as the Chinese leader put it (Deng, cited in Zhang, 2015), it was because China was to Vietnam the United States to Cuba (Womack, 2006). In this situation, the only reasonable cause for Vietnam was to ally with the Soviet Union to balance against China and Cambodia. This turn of event created an interesting case of neighboring states that ally among themselves to fight the most immediate threat: Vietnam and the Soviet Union versus China and Cambodia, in which Vietnam did the most fighting against the opposing countries. This fits well into the model of balancing states proposed by Walt (Walt, 1990).

The resulting war between China and Vietnam, preceded by that between Vietnam and Cambodia, was the direct result of escalation of tensions from 1975 to 1979. Vietnam increased its maltreatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, going as far as trying to expel of all Chinese in

Vietnam (New York Times, cited in Chang, 1982). China intensified its condemnation of Vietnam and facilitated its help to the Cambodian military, allowing them to harass and even intrude into Vietnam's borders. Vietnam deepened relations with the Soviet Union, signing a friendship treaty with the Soviet and allowed Soviet ships into its strategic Cam Ranh base.

China-Vietnam war of 1979 ended with the withdrawal of Chinese troops after the total destruction of Vietnam's northern borders where much industrial properties were located (Chen, 1983). And while Vietnam did not budge from its holding of Cambodia, China was successful in mobilizing Southeast Asian countries and the United States against Vietnam and continued its support for the Cambodian exiles against Vietnam. Vietnam escalated the conflict into Thailand in pursuit of hostile Cambodian holdouts; every time the Vietnamese attacked a new holdout, Chinese troops marched across the border and fought Vietnamese troops. A state of simmering, local skirmishes between the forces drained Vietnam's resources in a period of national exhaustion and, more importantly, turned Vietnam into a pariah state (Womack, 2006; Chanda, 1986).

The late 1989 and early 1990, however, witnessed a temporary shift away from balancing by Vietnam (Vuving, 2006). Vietnam resumed talks with China over normalization of relations, unilaterally announcing its intention to withdraw from Cambodia and supporting a peaceful end to the Cambodian conflict (Womack, 2006). Also, lacking the usual anti-Chinese rhetoric, Vietnam's leaders approached China with the call to defend Marxism-Leninism and the communist regime (Tran, 2003). In the word of Nguyen Van Linh, China should "raise high the banner of socialism and stick to Marxism-Leninism" (Nguyen, cited in Tran, 2003).

The behavior was understandable, given the weakened footing of Vietnam, the diminishing role of the Soviet Union as an effective ally (and the fall of communism around the world) and the strong belief of Vietnam's leadership that China could be coerced into normalization. The above conditions all fit Walt's conditions for deference, or more correctly, bandwagoning (Walt, 1990). Regarding the third condition, the leaders of Vietnam were confident that by unilaterally initiating the withdrawal, Vietnam caught China off guard by successfully signaling other Southeast Asian countries of its intentions. Southeast Asian countries promptly accepted Vietnam's proposal, which put China in a difficult position of having to accede to the proposal, lest their continued support for the anti-Vietnamese Cambodian force would be seen as an attempt against

peace. By this, the Vietnamese leadership felt assured that, they could coerce the Chinese into accepting their proposal (Womack, 2003).

The deference to China awarded Vietnam with the much needed respite from conflict and the normalization of relations between the two major remaining communist regimes in the world (Vuving, 2006). Normalization was reached in the 1991, with both sides announcing a shared 16-character maxim that embodied the two countries' spirit of cooperation. But these changes were only temporary given the cold reception of Vietnam's proposal to an ideology-based alliance by China (Tran, 2003). Vietnam was not on the path to make itself an appendage of China. It would rather see itself as a part of the coming trend in the Asia Pacific, as expanded in the writings of the leading members of the Communist Party (Dinh, 1992; Do, 1992) and the statements of Vietnamese officials (Nguyen, cited in Vuving, 2006). Interestingly, this had already been echoed in the foreign strategy of the former Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who advocated a balancing tactic between Vietnam, China and other powers inside and outside the region (Tran, 2003).

Accordingly, Vietnam normalized its relations with the United States, its former enemy, in 1995, with the lift of economic embargo against Vietnam. A second brief deference to China rewarded Vietnam with an officially established land border with China and the division of the Tonkin Gulf (Ang, 1998). A brief attempt to rekindle ideological solidarity failed utterly; after that, only a few would dare to utter such proposal. Also, Vietnam moved further to a decision to choose friends and foes based on their attitude towards Vietnam's goals instead of their ideology, which was stipulated in "Strategy of Fatherland Defense in a New Situation" (Central Committee, 2003). This came at a point in which the South China Sea was disputed between China, Vietnam and a number of other Southeast Asian states. Many scholars point to the active modernization of Vietnam's military as a result of China's aggression and that Vietnam was calling upon the assistance of other regional powers as well as extraregional powers such as the United States and the European Union countries (Le, 2013; Tran, Vieira & Ferreira-Pereira, 2013; Vuving, 2006; Chen & Yang, 2013). The high-profile purchase of new military hardware mentioned in the previous section was only the superficial part of this contemporary trend in the China policy.

d. Vietnam and China: From alliance to balancing

In this sub-section *Threat and interstate relations*, I have illustrated how threat was one of the factors that determined the changes in Vietnam-China relations. I divided the 1950–2015 period into two periods of 1950–1975 and 1975–2015. The evidence pointed to that, China was a power with low threat in the former period and one with high threat in the latter period. From 1975, Vietnam's policies toward China changed into a balancing position with Vietnam's attempt to align with many powers against China.

These findings showed that, the first hypothesis about Vietnam balancing against China due to threat from China is correct. When China posed a threat to Vietnam, it allied with the Soviet Union to counter China; it is still doing so by establishing partnerships with other powers.

2. Culture-Ideology and Nationalism in Interstate Relations: 1950 – 2015

In the previous sub-section, I have examined threat from China as a factor that influenced the Vietnam-China relations changes. The results proved that, the first hypothesis was correct. This sub-section examines the cultural and ideological dimensions between Vietnam and China from the 1950 to 2015. It also examines the rise of Vietnamese nationalism and its orientation between the West and China through the period. As with the previous sub-section, the sixty-year period is divided into two periods of 1950–1975 and 1975–2015.

a. Revolutionary Vietnam (1950–1975): Converging culture-ideology, anti-Western nationalism

The 1950–1975 was for Vietnam a revolutionary period. The defining characteristics of this period were the convergence of Vietnam and China's culture-ideology and nationalism. The former was featured by the re-introduction of China's pre-modern cultural and ideological traditions, through the catalyst of a common socialist ideology shared by both China and Vietnam. The latter was the result of the rising tides of nationalism against first the French and then the Americans whom the Vietnamese considered to represent Western imperialism. The confluence of communism and nationalism between the two countries became the foundation for the 30-year period of cooperation. Toward the end of the period, however, the cessation of Western presence in Vietnam made the target of Vietnam's nationalism shift back to China, Vietnam's traditional enemy. The reemergence of nationalist confrontation trumped the earlier ideological solidarity and paved way for the next period of simmering and at times violent rivalry.

In her 1996 book on the colonial period, Ho Tai Hue-Tam remarked that the period was the "experimental, and most individualistic, stage of the Vietnamese Revolution" (Ho, 1996, p. 258). Her analysis of the period pointed to the conclusion that, the early orientation of culture and ideology toward the West, embodied by the rebellious spirit against the traditional societal and familial order and dogmas, fueled the early stage of Vietnam's revolution. The dominant trend toward the end of the period was the rise of an authoritarian nationalist party with iron discipline and committed agenda. In his broad study of over 200 Vietnamese intellectuals and political figures of this period, Trinh (1990) also concurred that the failure of the most recent generation of nationalists, those born in 1925, fueled their desire to turn to more radical programmes to liberate the country.

The eventual tendency toward an authoritarian party of disciplined and committed revolutionaries was perhaps due to Vietnam's position in Asia. Being close to China and sharing the latter's weakened position under Western imperialism, Vietnam enjoyed China's support for its revolution. China also exerted strong influence on the revolutionary ideology of Vietnam. China was the foremost destination for Vietnamese revolutionaries aside from France itself. However, China was particular to Vietnam because of, as I mentioned above, the common anti-imperialist cause shared by the two countries. The similarities in their status meant that, whatever dominant revolutionary trend in China also touched Vietnam (Ho, 1996).

It was through China that the Leninist communism came into contact with Vietnamese revolutionaries and reached Vietnam itself (Ho, 1996). As Chinese regime established relations with the Soviet Union, further ideological flow ensued, leading to the establishment of China's and Vietnam's communist parties and, owing to their common cause and suffering, their intimate cooperation.

How did communism take hold in China and Vietnam? A number of scholars point to the certain similarities between Confucianism of pre-modern China and Vietnam with communism; the allusion to the former helped the latter in transition into a nationwide political force. Nguyen Khac Vien, a Vietnamese scholar, for example, emphasized the quasi-religious status of Confucianism and communism: both are admittedly atheistic, yet attain ideological dominance akin to a full-fledged religion (Nguyen, 1974). But the most important similarity in both ideologies were perhaps the emphasis on collective action, iron discipline and social obligations; Confucianism

further added a moral dimension not so far different from the communist orthodoxy. Nguyen concluded that, Vietnamese revolutionaries in particular, christened through seasoned activism throughout the years, concluded that a united party with strict discipline and loyalty to the revolutionary agenda was the necessary condition for revolution (Nguyen, 1974). Ho, himself a son of a Confucian official, perhaps saw in the communist ideology Confucian tenets that resonated with his own upbringing.

Alexander Woodside later echoed the Nguyen's points and expanded upon them in his own work. In his work, Woodside argued that the specific Mencian strand of Confucianism that emphasized benevolent rule flourished in Vietnam. Mencian Confucianism, which focused more on the people, thus strongly resonated with the communist message of egalitarian society for the masses (Woodside, 1989). Other scholars, like Schönberg and Marr, saw the parallel between the Confucian and communist ideology as mere temporary and opportunistic, but they nevertheless recognized that Confucianism rendered useful allusions to which communism could take hold in Vietnam, especially in the north of Vietnam where the former has been deep rooted for generations (Schönberg & Marr, cited in Tønnesson, 1993).

Whatever the degrees Confucianist influence impacted Vietnamese communism, early communist leaders, as well as many figures of the time, certainly had some Confucian education (Trinh, 1990). Ho Chi Minh, the foremost leader, had a father who was a mandarin. Ho Chi Minh mastered Chinese characters at a young age, and must have knowledge of the classics as he once taught at the prestige Duc Thanh School (Duiker, 2001). He himself mastered Chinese language in his later life, living in secret in China and directing his Communist Party from there. Mastery of the Chinese language allowed him to compose poetry in Chinese, the most popular being the *Journal in the Prison* (Han Nom Institute, 1942). He also reportedly married a Chinese woman, though their marriage could not last long.

Other leaders and Ho's lieutenants like Pham Van Dong, Dang Xuan Khu and Vo Nguyen Giap were half a generation later from Ho but all descended from families of court officials from northern and central Vietnam respectively. All enjoyed learning in the Confucian classics alongside a French education. Pham traveled to Guangzhou to meet attend Ho's political courses while Dang and Vo stayed in Vietnam. Dang adopted the pen name *Truong Chinh*, which refers to the exploits of Chinese war leader Mao Zedong. All three were featured in the leadership during and

after the revolution and, together with Ho, represented the older generation of leadership of the Communist Party.

While Vietnamese political leaders enjoyed Confucian teachings, most notable military commanders of Vietnam participated in military training provided by the Chinese and learned from Chinese advisors and from Chinese military classics. Many early military commanders of Vietnam attended Chinese Whampao academy, such as Nguyen Son, Vuong Thua Vu and Hoang Van Thai. Leaders and commanders of Vietnam produced works inspired by Chinese or pre-modern Chinese-influenced Vietnamese military doctrine (Dang, 1960; Vo, 1961; Tran, 1993). Vo Nguyen Giap, in particular, produced military strategy for the Vietnamese military throughout the Vietnam War, although he learned from the Chinese advisers sent to Vietnam during the earlier war. His strategy recalled many tenets of East Asian warfare traditions found in the Sun Tzu's *Arts of War*, as well as tactics of earlier Vietnamese dynasties such as the Tay San (Dutton et al., 2012).

The evidence above amply showed significant Chinese influence in early stage of Vietnam's revolution (1945–1955). In his Political Report to the Second National Congress, Ho Chi Minh demonstrated this sentiment in his call for active learning from the Chinese revolutionary experience and acknowledged the latter's influence on Vietnamese revolution (Ho, cited in Womack, 2006). Earlier, his attitude towards China was demonstrated in his poem, in which the first line was: *Cứu Trung Quốc thì tự cứu kỉ* ("To save China is to save oneself") (Han Nom Journal, 1991). This was understandable, given Ho's earlier advisory position to the Chinese Communist Party.

The Chinese eventually upheld their goodwill by sending assistance to Ho's forces during the war against France. Their arrival was essential to Vietnam's victory in their first war of independence (Zhai, 1993). It also opened the way for more radical Chinese influence on policies of the new Vietnamese regime. At first, the Vietnamese victory in the north allowed Ho's comrades to assume power throughout North Vietnam, while South Vietnam remained under the Western hegemony. The situation was initially calm due to the lack of threat to the new regime, but the year 1955 witnessed two further Chinese-inspired incidences: the violent land reform and Nhan Van Giai Pham (NVGP) purge. The land reform aimed at the redistribution of arable land in the countryside to poor peasants and the elimination of the landowner class.

The land reform was inspired by the earlier Chinese land redistribution program, but with the typical Chinese swiftness, arbitrariness and brutality (Bui, 2006). Truong Chinh aka Dang Xuan Khu advocated and directed the land redistribution. As a result, tens of thousands of Vietnamese landowners were wrongly executed despite having cooperated with the communists. The Chinese advisers came to Vietnam to facilitate the process; their presence emboldened the Vietnamese authorities to quicken the process (Nguyen, 2006). While the reform effectively wiped out the landowner class, it created great distress and repercussions in the society, calling for its end and for official government apologies. The government received many criticisms until today (Nguyen, 2005; Vu, 1997), forcing Ho Chi Minh to apologize to the public for the land reform; Truong Chinh was removed from his chairmanship due to the issue.

Shortly after the reform, the Communist Party initiated the NVGP purge, an attempt to curb tides of free expressions which it allowed briefly after the takeover in 1954. Its cause and course of action was extremely similar to the Hundred Flowers Campaign in China at the time in that Chinese communists cracked down on intellectuals whose expressions were earlier deemed essential to the nation (Hoang, 1959). To Huu, a conservative who oversaw the cultural affairs, knew of the complaints by dissidents. To called them traitors and initiated the purge. Numerous intellectuals were arrested, one of them gravely accused of espionage for South Vietnam and the rest sent to many reeducation camps. As in China, the purge caused turbulence; former members of the party and other dissidents condemned the purge (Hoang, 1959; Vu, 1997).

The land reform and intellectual purge silenced all criticisms in the north and set the pattern of culture and ideology for the next 20 years (Duiker, 1995). It was evident that the intellectual freedom and individualistic spirit of the previous colonial period was crushed in favor of new monolithic communist ideology endorsed by China and the Soviet Union. Truong Chinh, Ho's lieutenant and a prominent leader, criticized the earlier era and argued that, cultural and ideological debate should serve the revolution, not distract it (Dutton, Werner & Whitmore, 2012). This resonated with the traditional Chinese emphasis on orthodoxy and mobilization of intellectuals, which was featured in modern China. Clearly, the Vietnamese state of this era was under heavy Chinese influence, which led to the reemergence of traditional practices that owes to the ancient Chinese influence. Anti-Chinese sentiment, which was simmering during this period and later resurfaced, was trumped by an anti-Western sentiment and Vietnamese nationalism and/or

patriotism that permeated the Vietnamese society at the time. In this period, communism and nationalism enjoyed a resonance that was central to the revolution's success.

The confluence of communism and nationalism was not uncommon in the rhetoric of Vietnamese leaders throughout the 1950–1975 period; communist leaders use the nationalist pretext to gather more support from other non-communist factions as well as the general populace. Earlier in the 1940s, for example, communist leaders established the Viet Minh – a popular front uniting anti-imperialist forces including the noncommunist Nationalist Party, Revolutionary Party and Dai Viet Party. The communists – the majority of Viet Minh members – stressed the need to unite all patriotic and nationalist political forces to achieve independence for Vietnam (History Committee, 1977). While emphasizing their part as the leading group in the movement, the communists were willing to share power in the provisional government with other groups; many figures were noncommunist, some were anti-communism like Nguyen Hai Than while some collaborated with them like Hoang Thuc Khang, Phan An etc. The first constitution, too, was not much communist in nature (Ministry of Justice, 1946); many today still regard it as the only constitution in which the communists did not monopolize power for themselves and thus was significant for being the first and only democratic constitution of Vietnam (Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen, 2011).

Later, in the second war of unification, the Vietnamese leadership repeated this pattern, first by establishing the National Liberation Front in 1954 and second by establishing an Alliance of noncommunist forces in South Vietnam in 1968 (Fatherland Front, n.d.; Party Documents, 2002). The leadership again made it clear that the Front and Alliance must appear as attractive as possible to noncommunist and nationalist, patriotic forces, as well as the ethnic minorities and religious communities (Party Documents, 2002). The Front became the major political force in South Vietnam, which was a separate nation-state up to the end of the unification war, while the Alliance operated among the less belligerent but potentially cooperative stratum of the society. After the war, the Front and Alliance jointly administered the South as Provisional Government; after the country was fully unified, both merged to become the Fatherland Front which are still functioning in Vietnam today (Fatherland Front, n.d.).

The rhetoric and callings of Vietnamese leaders lent more credence to the union of communism and nationalism (Trinh, 1990). For example, Ho Chi Minh, the leader of Vietnam, gave

several speeches appealing to nationalism and patriotism of the populace. In 1946, on the eve of French invasion, he called upon the Vietnamese to fight with every weapon they could find and "die so that the nation lives" (Ho, 1946). In 1966, at the height of American escalation of war in Vietnam, he again appealed to the patriotic sacrifice and heroism, stressing that "nothing is more precious than independence and freedom" and insisting on the victory of the nation (Ho, 1966). This communist-nationalist duality was also apparent in the anti-imperialist, nationalist rhetoric of Mao Zedong, communist China's leader (Hu, cited in Friedman, 1994).

Nationalism was even more so articulated by the Vietnamese communists in the south. Nguyen thi Dinh, a communist commander, in her memoir *No Other Road to Take*, related the events that led to the resumption of fighting in South Vietnam against the Americans and the official founding of the National Liberation Front, in which she played a major role (Nguyen, 1976). Her story ended with a realization that, though she was small like a tree in the forest, her standing among the vast forest gave her and others the strength to "withstand the force of the strong winds and storms". She ended the story with the famous quote, "No Other Road to Take".

In general, the revolution era witnessed a return of importance of Chinese cultural and ideological practices that came with the rise of communism. In addition, the newfound nationalism that originated from the earlier period found its place in the revolution discourse and rhetoric due to the special need of Vietnam to repel Western imperial. In short, in the background of the anti-Western sentiment that permeated Vietnamese society in the 1950–1975 period, communism and nationalism found mutual resonance that justified their coexistence in the mentality of Vietnamese communist leaders.

With the end of the war, however, the Western threat was, for a time, removed from the context. The target of the rising tide of Vietnamese nationalism could then only find its target in China, Vietnam's ancient enemy. The next period of 1975–2015 also witnessed the breakup of Vietnam-China ideological solidarity, partly due to the fall of communism around the world itself. The departure of the West ultimately led to the divergence of Vietnam's culture-ideology and nationalism from China, which characterized the next period of Vietnam-China relations.

b. Modern Vietnam (1975–2015): Diverging culture-ideology, anti-Chinese nationalism

The 1950–1975 period witnessed a confluence of Vietnam and China's culture-ideology and nationalism and how that became the defining feature of Vietnam's revolutionary period.

The similarities between Vietnam and China at the time were the glue that kept them together. But, nationalism was a double-edged sword: it ultimately resulted in the reemergence of Vietnam's confrontation with China when the primary target of nationalism in the previous era, the Western imperialism, ceased to pose any direct threat. The return of Vietnam-China rivalry as a result of nationalism eventually led to the ideological alienation of the two countries as well. The most recent period, from 1975 to 2015, witnessed the dramatic shift in Vietnam-China relations from friends to foes.

It was evident that, even during the period of most intense cooperation between Vietnam and China, Vietnamese leaders did not fail to beware of China. A famous quote allegedly made by Ho Chi Minh went he considered the return of French troops in exchange for the departure of Chinese troops went as follow:

"The last time the Chinese came, they stayed a thousand years. The French are foreigners. They are weak. Colonialism is dying. The white man is finished in Asia. But if the Chinese stay now, they will never go. As for me, I prefer to sniff French shit for five years than to eat Chinese shit for the rest of my life."

(Ho, 1946, cited in Mus, 1952)

The seriousness Ho Chi Minh attributed to the looming scenario of possible Chinese occupation of Vietnam was alarming, given the fact that the United States President Roosevelt once offered Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek the opportunity to claim both Hong Kong and Indochina (Womack, 2006). Though Chiang resolutely declined the offer, the quote clearly shows the feeling of threat from China to Vietnam. This sentiment informed the Vietnamese decision to let the French return. That sentiment was echoed 30 years later but in an entirely different background and implication. When the last helicopter left the US embassy in Saigon in 1975, they could see the victorious Vietnamese army taking over the city. The only place in the city without the Vietnamese flag, however, was the US embassy. About that peculiarity the Vietnamese official answered a foreigner's question with:

"The Americans worry about Chinese expansionism and they know, historically, Vietnam has been the biggest barrier against Beijing's southward drive."

(Chanda, 2012)

This time the subjects are reversed: the last time the Westerners were welcomed in order to chase the Chinese away, this time the Chinese would soon be at Vietnam's doorsteps and Westerners are expected to return soon.

The quotes above are just two of many signals to identify Vietnam's most pressing threat; despite the difference in time the Vietnamese leadership often felt uneasy about Chinese actions in general. Even during Vietnam's first war against France, latent discontent already manifested in the remarks of Chinese commander Chen Geng about Vietnamese commander Vo Nguyen Giap: "slippery and not very upright and honest", (Chen, 1984, p. 35). The Chinese reportedly disliked the Vietnamese trying to act big and fail to self-criticize themselves, while the Vietnamese mostly likely disliked the Chinese trying to lecture them. That included resentment of some of Chinese advisers "looking down" upon the Vietnamese troops (Chen, 1984, p. 35).

Leaders of both China and Vietnam recognized the issue of Chinese chauvinism and tried to address this issue on their own. Mao, for instance, instructed his delegation to Vietnam to respect Vietnam's independence and its army and party (Mao, cited in Zhai, 1993). Earlier he did emphasize the need for unity and cooperation with the Vietnamese leadership and soldiers. For his part, Ho Chi Minh gave the head of the Chinese delegation several poems that he composed himself (Nguyen, 2012). The collaboration of the leadership of the two countries in this regard, along with the efficacy of the Chinese advisers' strategy and the success of Vietnamese troops, made sure the Vietnamese won the war.

In the second stage of Vietnam's revolution from 1955 to 1975, the friendliness and spirit of cooperation between the two leaderships and peoples were still strong. But the cracks in the hitherto well-founded Vietnam-China relations appeared and increased toward the end of the period. In his research into the five-year period 1964 to 1969, Chen Jian attributed the deterioration of Vietnam and China to their own internationalist ambitions: China in their rivalry with the Soviet Union and Vietnam in their control over Indochinese socialist neighbors (Chen, 1995). Each state saw the other as its bane for not complying with its ambitions: China wanted Vietnam to be in its camp against the Soviet Union, while Vietnam wanted China to stay away from its plans for Indochina.

The gap between Beijing and Hanoi, however, widened as Vietnam received more Soviet aid while China parted with the Soviet and turned to the United States (Chen, 1995). Vietnam,

already outraged due to China pressuring it into partitioning Vietnam, perceived this as China's betrayal (Ha & Duiker, cited in Womack, 2006). Hanoi then tried to negotiate its own war with the United States without China's participation. It was under these circumstances that Vietnam's view of China slowly hardened into hatred. Vietnam began to revoke its heroic past against the Chinese imperialism (Womack, 2006). For example, Vietnamese newspaper used historical references – no doubt about China's imperial past invasions of Vietnam, stressing the "threat from the north", which later Chinese leader Deng Xiao-ping criticized in his talk with Vietnamese leader Le Duan (Westad et al., 2000).

The simmering conflicts above were only signs of a time to come. As I mentioned before, the source of confluence of Vietnamese communism and nationalism was strong when the primary target of Vietnam's nationalism – Western imperialism – persisted. When that threat subsided, the target quickly changed to the traditional source of threat to Vietnam's security, China. The two countries lost the ground for ideologically-based alliance, which opened the door for ancient rivalries that were hitherto undermined. This was the most dangerous time for Vietnam-China relations (Womack, 2006); the events that came after 1975 were thus predictable.

The Vietnam-China alliance effectively ended with the fall of Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, in 1975; if not, it certainly declined in the next years. China reduced its aid to Vietnam, signaled by the visit of Le Duan to Beijing and his departure without holding a traditional return banquet. In 1977, Beijing notified Hanoi that China could no longer provide aid to Vietnam (BR, cited in Chang, 1982). With it, came the increasingly dire issues of unrest over ethnic Chinese population in southern Vietnam and the irritating Cambodian skirmishes with Vietnamese troops on the border. Vietnamese leadership of Vietnam became increasingly convinced that the two issues, particularly the latter, were attempts by China to subvert Vietnam from both inside and outside (Chanda, 1986). China became the culprit in all the hardships Vietnam had to suffer from 1955 onward, as the Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded on its publication in 1979 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979). The publication by Vietnam confirmed China that "mortal enemy" of Vietnam.

The stronger view of China as a threat was perhaps due to the departure of pro-Chinese leadership in favor of the pro-Soviet one in Vietnam's politics. By 1978, the older generation of communist leaders, who had some degrees of Confucian education, no longer held any signifi-

cant position of power. While a number of older figures from the colonial era enjoyed learning in Confucian classics and thus had cultural connections to China (Trinh, 1990), by then most of them either died or were no longer in power. For example, Ho Chi Minh already passed away in 1969. His colleagues and/or lieutenants, Dang Xuan Khu, Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap did not hold any position of significant power. Dang lost his chairmanship of the party in 1955 due to his role the earlier land reform, although he retained some of his minor positions and had no significant voice until shortly before his death in 1988. Pham was the Premier from 1955 to 1987, but lamented that he had no real power (Pham, cited in Menétrey-Monchau, 2006).

Vo Nguyen Giap, the renowned Vietnamese general and a close follower of Ho Chi Minh, was twice removed in the late 1960s and 1970s. The reasons included his personal reputation and influence, his alleged favor of China over the Soviet Union and his conflicts with Le Duan (Vu, 2013; Hoang, 1959; Stowe, 1995). The second time removed Vo indefinitely (Hoyos, 1987), and he was powerless until his death. All three passed away without little influence on the post-unification leadership.

In contrast, Le Duan was born into a poor peasant family and only enjoyed some French education before he left school. He never went to China to attend Ho Chi Minh's classes. His rise to power began when he was responsible for reorganizing communist units in the central and southern Vietnam, owing to his central Vietnam ancestry and his place in the party (Ooi, 2004). Le Duan, together with Le Duc Tho, was pro-Soviet against the pro-Chinese faction of Dang Xuan Khu and Vo Nguyen Giap (Nguyen & Cooper, 1983). Slowly rising to power and undermining his opponents, Le monopolized power for himself and effectively sidelined the pro-Chinese faction (Roberts, 2006), including Ho himself. Like Le Duan, his comrade Le Duc Tho also made his own career in southern Vietnam theater of war. Born in the era in which the Confucian literati no longer held significant influence, he did not enjoy Confucian education either and never travelled to China with Ho. Like Le Duan, he built his power base in Vietnamese politics by de-emphasizing the role of China in favor of that of the Soviet Union.

The fall of pro-Chinese faction must have been the catalyst for the rise of pro-Soviet faction – Le Duan's faction – and the purge of pro-Chinese faction from the Vietnamese leadership in the party congress in 1976 (Chang, 1982). It must have some influence in the increasingly hardened position of Vietnam against China toward the year 1979. Other than the return of anti-

Chinese propaganda in form of historical references to China's past domination over Vietnam, the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, the perpetual reminder of Chinese presence, came under attack. The ethnic Chinese community was brutalized, especially in the southern Vietnam, where the government raided their homes and business (Chang, 1982). In Hanoi the *Xin Yue Hua Bao*, an ethnic Chinese newspaper, were closed down, along with all Chinese-language newspaper and minority schools in both northern and southern Vietnam (Chang, 1982). The suspicion of loyalty of the ethnic Chinese to the Vietnamese state and the determination to expel all Chinese in Vietnam led to the expulsion of the ethnic Chinese, as evidenced by the Vietnamese officials' statement (New York Times, cited in Chang, 1982). The ethnic Chinese effectively became scapegoat for the Vietnam-China confrontation.

In all the shift of culture-ideology away from China and the rise of anti-Chinese nationalism, in stark contrast with the earlier period's resonance of culture-ideology and nationalism with China, became dominant in the post-1975 period. From 1979 to 1991 China and Vietnam fought a cold war, with a brief invasion of Vietnam into Cambodia, China's ally, and an equally brief invasion of China into Vietnam (Chanda, 1986; Chen, 1995). They were followed by minor skirmishes on the land border and a naval skirmish (Li, 2007; Koo, 2009).

The communist ideology, brought to Vietnam through China and being the most important bridge of China's influence on Vietnam's ideology and culture in the 1950–1975 period, also experienced great changes as nationalism trumped communism as the primary mover of Vietnam's modern politics (Vuving, 2006). At first, due to its alliance with the Soviet Union, Vietnam still maintained its communism as the guiding state ideology. This was illustrated in the Vietnam's constitution of 1980 (Ministry of Justice, 1980), asserting Marxism-Leninism as the guiding principle of development in Vietnam.

Due to the incoming collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, however, Vietnam had to consider a change in its economic and foreign policy. Modeled after the *perestroika* campaign in the Soviet Union, Vietnam's foreign policy doctrine toward the 1990s adopted a great number of Gorbachevian terms into its vocabulary (Thayer & Amer, 1999). New keywords like *cai to* ("reorganizing"), *su le thuoc lan nhau* ("interdependence"), *quoc te hoa* ("internationalization") and *trat tu quoc te* ("international order") etc. found their way into the foreign doctrinal vocabulary. The incorporation of such terms into the doctrine showed Vietnam's attempts to broaden

its ideological components from the original doctrine largely influenced by China and the Soviet Union.

Vietnam has increasingly moved toward an Asian model of development in which the economic development and cooperation and foreign policy are facilitated while sovereignty and political system are protected (Thayer & Amer, 1999). Membership in the Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN) also promoted Vietnam to accept the model of development as well as pushed it to prioritize economy over politics and cooperate with other Southeast Asian countries (Vietnam Commentary, cited in Thayer & Amer, 1999). This general favorable attitude toward multilateralism in the context of the ASEAN and the Asia Pacific was expanded in the texts of leaders of the Communist Party (Dinh, 1992; Do, 1992) and the statements of officials (Nguyen, cited in Vuving, 2006). The *Strategy for Socio-Economic Development 2001-2010* confirmed major goals including the "expanding foreign economic relations along the line of multilateralization and diversification of relations", "...proactively engage in international economic integration following a roadmap corresponding to our country's conditions", "ensuring the realization of bilateral and multilateral commitments, such as AFTA, APEC, Vietnam-US Trade Agreement, eventually admission to WTO, etc." (Government of Vietnam, 2001). As part of this strategy, in 2007, Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization, which was one of its strategic goals.

The lessening of ideological orthodoxy in the national political and economic policy was parallel with the renovations in culture and society. In this respect, the signs of changes from the traditional Confucian and socialist mindset are well-perceived. In contrast to earlier generations of Vietnamese with austere lifestyle and communitarian spirit that resulted from the earlier eras, the younger generation of Vietnamese is more self-centered, less ideologically-inclined and more receptive toward new and foreign ideas, trends and consumption (Mar & Rosen, 1998). In particular are Western ideas of free love and premarital sex which do not fit the traditional Confucian teachings but are taking hold among the younger generation (Nguyen, 2007; Ghuman, Vu, Vu & Knodel, 2006). Furthermore, the younger generations are more likely to become middle class compared to their parents and grandparents who are less well-off. Their middle class culture that is increasingly defined is very similar to the middle class everywhere else – a commitment to education, a focus on consumption and new technology and information, and an aspiration to good, high-income career paths and to personal goals (King, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2008). This stands in stark contrast to the earlier generation growing up under the socialist era.

To sum up, the 1975–2015 period witnessed the shift of Vietnam's culture-ideology and nationalism away from China. This divergence was the result of the cessation of the threat from Western imperialism in the previous era and the reemergence of the traditional source of threat – China. Whereas Vietnam's culture-ideology and nationalism, in the 1950–1975 era, were both resonant with that of China, in the 1975–2015 period, both were dissonant with China. Vietnam's culture-ideology has become more aligned with the region and the world, while its nationalism is now firmly targeted at China. Divergence from China thus became the defining characteristics of the Vietnam's policy toward China in this recent period.

c. Vietnam and China: From brother-in-arms back to traditional enemy

In the previous sections, I have illustrated how the Vietnam's cultural and ideological identity and nationalism vis-à-vis China have shifted throughout the past hundred years. Shared situation of weakness under Western imperialism this caused Vietnam to view China as "brother-in-arms" in the period from 1950 to 1975, when communism and nationalism in both countries had the same goal of opposing the West and allowed for China's influence on Vietnam's culture and ideology. The end of Western imperialism in Vietnam in 1975, however, caused Vietnam's nationalism to shift its target toward China which, in the process, greatly reduced the commonality between Vietnam and China's culture-ideology. In the end, China and Vietnam's common culture-ideology and nationalism was lost, and Vietnam shifted to back to its view of China as a traditional enemy.

The findings above also illustrated that, the second and third hypotheses about Vietnam-China relations are also correct. When Vietnam had a similar culture and ideology with China, Vietnam-China relations were warm and Vietnam did not ally with other countries against China, because China was an ally. When Vietnam's nationalism shifted its target to China, however, the latter became an enemy and Vietnam aligned with other countries against China. These conclusions showed that, culture-ideology and nationalism played an important role in its relations with China.

V. Conclusion

This research traced the fluctuations of three factors in the successive periods in history of Vietnam: the revolutionary (1950–1975) and modern era (1975–2015). The results from the

evidence confirmed all three hypotheses I generated. First, Vietnam-China relations were confrontational when China posed a threat to Vietnam; Vietnam allied with the Soviet Union to fight against China. Second, when Vietnam and China had a shared communist ideology and similar cultural practices, Vietnam did not oppose China and even considered it an ally. Third, when the Vietnamese nationalism was directed at China, Vietnam opposed China by allying with the other states. In all, all three factors were the reasons for the changes in Vietnam-China relations.

The revolutionary era witnessed the rise of communism and nationalism in Vietnam. In this era, China was not a threat; it assisted Vietnam with aid and with military advisers. Common communist ideology and cultural practices became foundation for cooperation, and Vietnamese nationalism was first directed at France and later the United States, which China also opposed. China was seen as a "brother-in-arms" to Vietnam.

The end of the Western threat, however, put an end to the period of cooperation, as the Vietnamese nationalism shifted back to its traditional target China. In the next era, China posed a considerable threat to Vietnam by its opposition to Vietnam's handling of ethnic Chinese and its support for Vietnam's opponent Cambodia. China-Vietnam relations deteriorated to the point of open war, which confirmed that China was a threat. Vietnam's common ideology and culture with China also subsided, as most of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam were driven off and China refused Vietnam's proposal for ideology-based alliance. As threat from China remained and cultural and ideological similarities diminished, Vietnam maintains its balancing posture against China.

The findings of my research differed from that of scholars such as Thayer and Womack. While Thayer pointed to the triumph of nationalism over ideology and Womack to the disruption of traditional asymmetric relations between Vietnam and China, I found that, the changes in the combination of three factors – threat, culture-ideology and nationalism – were the catalyst for the Vietnam's relations shift vis-à-vis China. In that sense, the modern period had the worst combination (high threat, culture-ideology different, anti-Chinese nationalism) while the revolutionary era had the best (low threat, culture-ideology similar, anti-Western nationalism). No factor was the most important in explaining the Vietnam-China relations.

It is also possible to conjecture that, had any factor been changed, the course of relations would have changed entirely. For instance, had Chinese communism did not take hold in China

it might have supported Vietnam's war of independence. With its large size, China might become a threat to Vietnam during its revolution; Ho Chi Minh's decision to drive off Chinese troops in favor of French troops in 1946 illustrated that possibility. Likewise, if China and Vietnam had both handled the ethnic Chinese with restraint, and had China not supported Cambodia against Vietnam and had the Vietnamese leadership been pro-Chinese, Vietnam would not have viewed China as a threat and their identity would still have been compatible even with the return of anti-Chinese nationalism. China might not necessarily wage war against an anti-Chinese nationalist Vietnam. These are possible scenarios, but they illustrate how each factor was important because changes in each factor could completely change the history of relations.

My findings also showed that, the two paradigms in IR – realism and constructivism – can provide a composite answer to changes in relations between neighboring states. The logic of realism and constructivism does not need to be isolated from each other. To realism, my findings supported the Walt's balance of threat theory, which posits that states balance against not power alone but the most threatening power. To constructivism, my findings supported the assumption that ideational factors such as culture, ideology and nationalism can influence state's relations with other states. As I stated above, the combination of threat, culture-ideology and nationalism can explain the changes in many historical cases of interstate relations.

Still, my research has one limitation. While using realism and constructivism to explain Vietnam-China relations, I neglected liberalism, another important paradigm in IR. I did this deliberately because the many tenets of liberalism – transnational institutions and regimes, economic interdependence, democratic peace – are absent in the context of Vietnam-China. Nevertheless, I expect to carry out another policy research about Vietnam's China policy in the future, which will use the logic of liberalism, the economic interdependence theory in particular.

This research provides a composite answer including threat, common culture-ideology and nationalism to the question of changes in Vietnam-China relations. I recommend my study for the use in historical policy analysis as well as future policy research. I believe this study will contribute much to such researches.

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