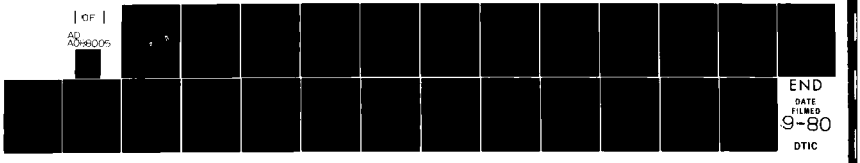
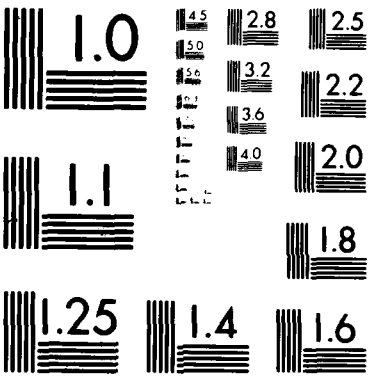
AD-A088 005 ARMY WAR COLL STRATEGIC STUDIES INST CARLISLE BARRACKS PA F/G 5/4
THE USSR AND VIETNAM.(U)
MAY 80 D PIKE

UNCLASSIFIED NL





STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

7 MAY 1980

ACN 80018

THE USSR AND VIETNAM

STRATEGIC ISSUES RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

THE USSR AND VIETNAM

by

Douglas Pike

7 May 1980

DISCLAIMER

The views, opinions, and/or findings contained in this memorandum are those of the author and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy or decision, unless so designated by other official documentation.

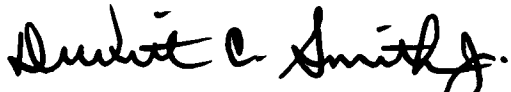
Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Pat Bonneau.

FOREWORD

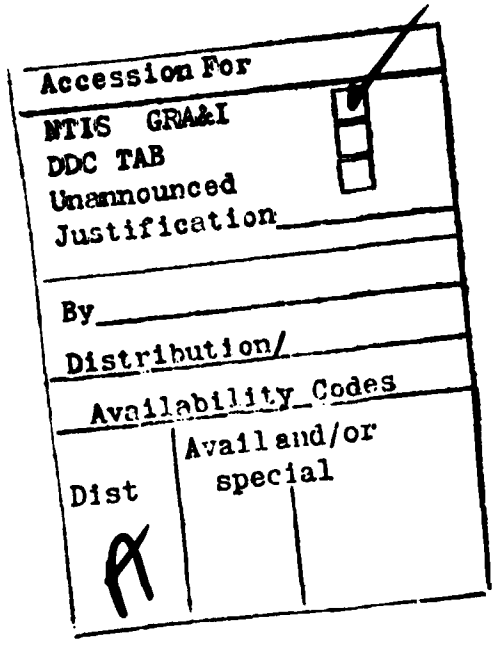
This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium on "The Soviet Union in the Third World: Success and Failure," which was hosted by the Strategic Studies Institute in the Fall of 1979. During the Symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy. This memorandum considers one of these issues.

The Strategic Issues Research Memoranda program of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, provides a means for timely dissemination of analytical papers which are not constrained by format or conformity with institutional policy. These memoranda are prepared on subjects of current importance in areas related to the authors' professional work.

This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



DeWITT C. SMITH, JR.
Major General, USA
Commandant



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

MR. DOUGLAS PIKE is a US Foreign Service Information Officer who has served most of his adult life in Asia. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, American University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For the past 18 years he has been professionally concerned with the Communist movements in Indochina, serving in posts in Saigon, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Taipei. He was a member of the State Department Policy Planning Council 1974-77 and currently is on detail to the International Security Agency at the Pentagon. Mr. Pike is the author of *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (1964), *War, Peace and the Vietcong* (1970), and *History of Vietnamese Communism* (1978). Currently he is working on a book on the present leadership in Hanoi.

THE USSR AND VIETNAM

The USSR in Asia is seen by the Vietnamese as a *status-quo* power and as a European nation. Moscow has had weak party-to-party relations in Asia and its influence at the government-to-government level has been less than elsewhere in the world. It has not been thought to have much interest in leftist regimes, because their advent to power would serve China more than the USSR. For the same reason, its historical experience has been that it gains little from regional conflicts. Because of these factors, the USSR perenially has been at a strategic and tactical disadvantage in Asia. Vietnam represents a recent and—at least for the moment—striking exception to this experience.

Several other characteristics mark the USSR in Asia and Vietnam:

- USSR efforts to control events and influence decisions in the countries and within the Communist parties of Asia continually are thwarted or ruined by the local spirit of nationalism. A major test of this thesis will come in future Vietnamese-Soviet relations.
- The central thrust of the Soviet Union into Vietnam as into all of Asia always was (and remains today) essentially ideological. Its

major concern in influencing policy and behavior was and probably will remain China. China's challenge is a mix of ideology and geopolitics, now more of the latter.

- USSR objectives in Vietnam are chiefly the desire to influence if not dominate, both ideologically and geopolitically, countries bordering on China—part of its broader anti-Chinese objective—and to lessen Chinese influence over all Asian Communist parties and countries, including Japan and the ASEAN nations.
- The USSR's basic technique in Vietnam (as in Asia) is to search for soft spot opportunities and then exploit them. The rule has been: push when softness develops and keep pushing until resistance hardens.
- However, almost every major move by the USSR in Vietnam in the past 50 years has been not an action but a reaction. Rather than pursuing a clearly defined predetermined course, the USSR chiefly has moved according to unfolding events. Nor has it been particularly skillful in dealing with Vietnam (or with Asia) but rather has often been ham-handed, its own worst enemy. This has tended to reduce its activity and limit its success. It also has meant being victimized by opportunism and adventurism.
- The USSR's reactive approach to events in Vietnam and Asia has consistently resulted in a considerable Soviet investment yielding only modest Soviet return. Nothing seems to work very well for the USSR in Asia, and despite considerable input and energy over the years it has surprisingly little to show for its efforts. Vietnam at the moment is the promising exception to this historical experience and that probably is the reason why it counts for so much in current Moscow thinking.

Communist Vietnam is now a major force in Asia. It has one of the largest and most effective military forces anywhere in the world. The long-range goal of the party and the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam probably is creation of a Federation of Indochina, composed of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In the shorter run, the next decade or so, it will seek to shape these three countries into a loosely structured, confederated arrangement—one in which there is mutual advantage to all three and in which Vietnam is the first among equals. Gradually, the Vietnamese would hope, this structure would become institutionalized and eventually would come full federation. To achieve this goal, the Vietnamese must overcome two major forces, historical fear and dislike by the non-Vietnamese involved and opposition from China

and other nations. Vietnam and the USSR appear to be in harmony on the federation idea even though it is probable that ultimately Hanoi would seek to reduce to a minimum all foreign presence in Indochina, including Soviet presence.

SOVIET-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS

There never has been much warmth or empathy between Vietnamese and Soviet Communists, not even in the earliest years. Ho Chi Minh saw utility in a Moscow connection in terms of local influence but considered Soviet communism, save for some valuable organizational techniques, as irrelevant and even counterproductive for his use in Indochina. Early Vietnamese Communist theoreticians found the Soviet brand of communism of little use in solving Vietnam's problems, although its emotive content was regarded as valuable icon. Lenin scarcely thought about Indochina, and Stalin's continental mentality kept him from ever developing much interest. The Vietnamese Communists plunged into their revolution (the Viet Minh War) with the expectation of considerable Communist world support. They discovered that the USSR was willing to sacrifice what for them were life and death interests for only marginal advantage to Moscow. This left among the ruling Vietnamese Communists—most of whom are still in power—a lasting heritage of bitterness and distrust.

During the Vietnam War the USSR, as a leader of the international Communist movement, represented one of the three major sources of support for the Vietnamese Communist cause (the other two being true believers in Indochina and pacifistic and anti-American forces scattered around the world.) USSR support, material and psychological, made it possible for the Vietnamese Communists to persevere until victory—something they could not otherwise have done. USSR policy towards the war was an equal mixture of pragmatic international politics and judicious commitment. Soviet behavior was highly opportunistic, wary of confrontation and entrapment, conservative in taking risks, and continually plagued by ideological dilemmas. It is now clear that throughout the war USSR behavior was characterized by much less of a sense of certitude than was apparent at the time. The USSR managed to support the war fully—indeed the USSR made it possible for the war to continue—without this devolving into a

confrontation with the United States. This was an almost ideal arrangement: the USSR funded a war against the United States yet remained only an adversary, not an enemy.

Never was a political settlement (in the sense of a truly shared power arrangement) acceptable to the Vietnamese Communists. Thus a true political settlement based on compromise never was actually possible. This was because of the nature of the basic Vietnamese Communist objective—unification of Vietnam under a Hanoi banner. Some objectives are given to negotiated compromise. For instance, the objective of political power, theoretically at least, can be divided and shared. Others are not so given. Because unification happens to be an indivisible objective, like death and pregnancy, it is not given to degrees. While a negotiated end to the war in which Hanoi would forego unification might have been forced on it by sheer military weight, it never would have accepted this outcome willingly. Probably the USSR recognized the impossibility of getting the Vietnamese Communists to accept an ending to the war short of unification. At times it attempted to pressure Hanoi into a political settlement because such was regarded as being in Soviet interests. But these attempts failed.

The Sino-Soviet dispute has long conditioned relations between Moscow and Hanoi. During the war and later the Vietnamese believed, correctly, that Vietnam's importance in the calculations of either Peking or Moscow was largely perceived in terms of what the other was up to. Therefore, reasoned the Vietnamese, both Moscow and Peking supported the Vietnamese cause for the wrong reasons. Influenced by the convolutions of the dispute, the respective positions of the USSR and China on various Vietnam War issues were often reversed, in some cases several times. Throughout the war the Vietnamese Communists were able to exploit the Sino-Soviet dispute to their advantage, something no one else was able to do so well.

Soviet aid for Vietnam was generous from the earliest days, first economic (circa 1960), later military and economic (after 1965). The USSR obfuscated its aid program with clouds of rationalizing rhetoric, extensive use of psychological warfare, and a good deal of dissembling. Somehow most Americans never understood that the USSR made the war possible, allowed it to continue, and could have stopped it at any time. Particularly after the advent of the Vietnamese Communist strategy of high-technology big-unit

warfare, continued combat would have been impossible without a continuous flow of Soviet war materiel. Despite this total Vietnamese dependence, the USSR did not enjoy much influence on Vietnamese war policy—this because of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Thus, the USSR could have halted the war, but it never could direct it. This may or may not be considered a Soviet policy failure.

There is less appreciation by the Vietnamese for Soviet aid than might be supposed. Rather the focus of the Vietnamese attitude is what was not given (anti-ship rockets, for instance), its general paucity, and the motives of the USSR (anti-Chinese rather than pro-Vietnamese). Soviet leaders are aware of this attitude and tend to regard the Vietnamese as ingrates.

The USSR and Vietnam today are intimately linked, by circumstance more than design, at least from the Vietnamese view. The relationship rests on an extraordinary Vietnamese dependence (both military and economic) and on Soviet opportunism at work as the USSR seeks to fill a political and diplomatic vacuum in Indochina. There is in the association an implied or potential blackmail by the USSR. At the moment, some 20 percent (possibly as much as 30 percent) of the rice eaten in Vietnam must be supplied by the USSR, the alternative to which is rice riots. There are no arms factories in Vietnam. Hence, all war materiel must be supplied from the outside, chiefly by the USSR. Without this military aid, the Vietnamese would be virtually helpless against China. The point has been reached, for the moment, where anything the USSR asks for, the Vietnamese will grant. If there is restraint in this it will be on the part of Moscow. Probably the USSR will not be unreasonable in its demands. It means to pull Vietnam into the Soviet orbit as deeply and as quickly as possible. It hopes first to lock the Vietnamese in economically, then strategically. There can and probably will be pressure in this, but not outright coercion. The USSR certainly must be aware that a close long-term relationship must rest on voluntary action by the Vietnamese, with Hanoi pursuing what it perceives as its own best interests.

Vietnam is obliged to go along with all this because—at the moment—it has no alternative. Its relationship with Moscow is held by steel bands of necessity. However, the arrangement is not a durable one. There are many natural centrifugal forces at work that press Vietnam away from the Soviet center. But the present

relationship will continue until Vietnam is in better economic condition and able to feed itself, and until the threat of China subsides.

A PARADOX

A great paradox operates at the subliminal level of Soviet-Vietnamese relations. If ever there were two alien cultures, they are Vietnamese and Russian. Yet the personalities thrown up by each culture have similar dark sides. Both are marked by devious mentality, the result in both cases of a conspiratorial and brutalizing history. Both have paranoid tendencies, manifested by unremitting suspicion of strangers and a general inability to trust. Both exhibit the phenomenon of the tortured soul, abundantly illustrated by a literature of despair. Both also have the ability to throw up an exclusive sort of flaming creative genius, in art and music.[1] But these qualities of similarity, by their very nature, make the two cultures alien—hence the paradox.

Race and Reason

Vietnamese view foreigners through a special prism, one which both distances and stereotypes. What counts is the quality of the association, not what is inherent in it (such as mutuality) or its physical or material manifestations. As a result the individual Vietnamese Communist's perception of the Russian is almost entirely affective. It is idealized, both officially and individually, and almost always expressed in abstract terms. For instance, although the actual relationship over the past decades has been essentially material, there is virtually no sense of this in the Vietnamese consciousness. This attitude was captured in an article on the USSR by Hanoi intellectual, Nguyen Van Kinh. He writes:

> The fraternal peoples of Vietnam and the USSR have always been closely bound by relations of friendship and militant solidarity. Upholding their spirit of proletarian internationalism, the Soviet people have warmly supported and assisted the Vietnamese revolutionary movement right in its embryonic stage. The great victory of the USSR in World War II created favourable objective conditions for the Vietnamese people to successfully wage the August revolution and set up the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. In Viet Nam's resistance to French colonialism in the past as well as in her present anti-US struggle, for national salvation and socialist building, through many rich and lively forms such as meetings, demonstrations, etc.,

> the Soviet people have always deeply sympathized with, and vigorously supported the Vietnamese people's just cause. Solidarity with Viet Nam has become a mass movement throughout the USSR. "Weeks" and "Months of solidarity" with Viet Nam have become a tradition for the Soviet people to support and assist the Vietnamese people against the US imperialist aggressors.[2]

One notes the affective quality of Kinh's sense of the relationship. It is entirely immaterial and intellectualized. In dealing with Soviet support he does not speak of surface-to-air missiles or rice shipments or underwriting Hanoi's petroleum needs. Instead he writes of militant solidarity, of rich and lively demonstrations of sympathy such as blood donations. The USSR is not a fellow player in the revolutionary game but a spiritual cheering section. Moscow is seen not as an important ally, but only as a source of symbolic support.

The reason for this is not, as one might suppose, that selfish Vietnamese are unwilling to give credit where it is due and are determined to keep secret from the world the fact of Soviet assistance.[3] Rather it is a function of the fundamental concept which all Vietnamese hold about the proper relationship of Vietnamese to foreigner. It is a singular view, as we shall see below.

Most Vietnamese have a fairly strong emotive sense of the individual Russian. It is in no way as intricate or as psychologically complex as their attitude toward the average Chinese. The Russian is a strange foreigner from a distant country with alien customs. Culturally the Vietnamese considers himself far closer to other nations, to France, to Japan, even to the United States. In part, of course, this is a result of education. A majority of the Hanoi rulers received French education. None was schooled in the USSR.

The Vietnamese consider Soviet citizens to be extremely racist, more so than citizens of other white societies. In part this is due to tales told by Vietnamese returning from the USSR of racial prejudice which they experienced. Non-Russian visitors to Vietnam in the past several years reported frequent personal incidents with racial overtones in the streets of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, in which they were insulted by Vietnamese taking them to be Soviet citizens. When a Belgian International Postal Union official was stabbed to death in Da Nang in 1977, the Belgians were told privately that his attacker thought him to be a Russian.

Within the ruling Vietnamese Communist Party, where such attitudes have greater political importance, the USSR long has been

stigmatized as having a barbarian mentality largely incapable of grasping the Vietnamese world view. Privately, in Party circles, this is labeled Soviet cultural chauvinism. Party historians may laud the USSR in terms of historic revolutionary accomplishments, but never for having made any specific contribution to the Vietnamese revolution. At best, the USSR serves as a vague model of ideological inspiration. From what little has been written in Moscow on the matter, it is clear that Soviet theoreticians tend to hold Vietnamese communism in low esteem, presumably because it departs so greatly from the Soviet brand. And indeed it does. Marxism for the Vietnamese true believer is not a guide but an icon. The idea that Marxism is a body of knowledge to be absorbed hardly ever occurs to the average Vietnamese Communist. The notion that if one masters this body of knowledge, he becomes infallible in interpreting social phenomena and in predicting social change seems absurd to those few Vietnamese Communists who might think about it. Marxism may be something worth dying for, but it does not require understanding.

This long-standing disparity in Marxist thought has always conferred on the Vietnamese Communist-Soviet Communist relationship the overtone of tenuousness, of being delimited and hedged on both sides, and above all of being transitory. Never has Vietnamese communism had an aura of true proletarian kinship with the USSR. Hence there never has been any particular allegiance. The men of Moscow, to the Vietnamese, are distant from the Vietnamese cause, not because of lack of sympathy but because of ingrained inability to understand either the cause or the Vietnamese themselves. There is in this, of course, a reverse racism on the part of the Vietnamese.

Coupled to Hanoi's sense of superiority is a more finite memory of Kremlin indifference to Vietnam's fate and the Soviet record of frequent untrustworthiness in day-to-day dealings. Hanoi suspicion about Soviet motives is understandable even without a paranoid Vietnamese leadership. It is a suspicion rooted in a Vietnamese proverb: the wolf watches from the mountain top as the tigers battle in the valley.

This attitude has understandably had a backlash effect in Moscow. Soviet officials are not so insensitive to as to be unaware of Vietnamese disdain and distrust, even when it is carefully hidden. In discussing Vietnam privately with Americans and

others, these officials commonly label the Vietnamese as unappreciative ingrates and double-dealing opportunists.

Power and Prestige

A second dimension of the subliminal Soviet-Vietnamese perception has to do with various concepts of authority and the meaning of these in terms of political and diplomatic influence. It involves the links among power, prestige, and success.

The Vietnamese respect power. Old guard officials in Hanoi still unabashedly admire Joseph Stalin, not because of his warm personality but because of the unique power he was able to command.[4] Their tributes to the USSR, in anniversary messages and similar vehicles, are always cast in the rhetoric of Soviet strength, iron determination, irresistible force.[5]

Those Vietnamese who think about the matter are extremely hard-nosed about the USSR. They regard it as a nation with immense military capability for intruding where it sees an opportunity for advancing what it considers to be progressive or revolutionary movements. That drive is not seen as ideological, as many in the West would view it, but as the proper use of raw power. The common-sense Vietnamese view is simply: if you have power, use it. The USSR is admired for its toughness in dealing with other countries, the United States and China particularly. Conversely, China and the United States are held in contempt to the extent that weakness is perceived.

The Kremlin leaders also venerate power and try to project the power image in Vietnam. The USSR's strength in Vietnam always has been regarded as material and its only perceived nonmaterial power as psychological. Certainly it is not a moral force. The USSR has operated in Vietnam using the Marxist myth of invincibility, with communism as the wave of the future. In terms of influencing Vietnamese thinking this is probably the weakest kind of evidence that can be offered for the existence of power. Historical determinism may prove to the Western mind that the future belongs to communism, but to the Vietnamese almost any device—even geomancy—is more persuasive than such dialectical reasoning.

In Vietnam, as in Asia, the other side of this power coin is status or prestige—in Vietnamese terms, face. Moscow, because of other forces at work there, long has recognized that nothing is more important to the Vietnamese than status. Soviet behavior often

strikes the outsider as pompous, but it is the use of pomp to engender prestige. For the USSR in Vietnam this means that it is difficult (even dangerous) to accept any sort of defeat, or even retreat. To do so reduces prestige, which undermines power.

Soviet status is measured by the Vietnamese with the test of success or failure. In Vietnamese thinking success counts for everything. Writing elsewhere the author has described this phenomenon as his Second Law of Asian Politics: nothing succeeds like success, nothing fails like failure. Success equals status. The only true hold Moscow has on Vietnam is in demonstrating its ability to apply power successfully. In dealing with Moscow (or Peking or Washington), the question the Vietnamese put is: are we dealing with a winner? The question may be simply stated, but determining the answer is never easy or certain, particularly if the estimate must calculate a complex multilateral relationship. Thus Hanoi, facing problems and issues which simultaneously involve Moscow, Peking, Tokyo, Washington, and others—and which also involve a good deal of dissembling, intrigue and ambiguity—must seek to determine who among these are winners, who merely appear to be winners, and who are losers.

In the future the USSR in Vietnam will continue to be locked into a position: its hold based on power which rests on prestige which is rooted in its invincibility. To the extent the Vietnamese perceive that Soviet power is in the ascendancy they will to that extent (and only to that extent) adjust their behavior accordingly. Thus Soviet ventures in Vietnam, indeed Moscow's entire future there, will stand or fall on the idea—the fable—of invincible power.

Doc Lap

The famed Vietnamese spirit of *doc lap* (independence)[6] is no simple impulse to throw off an alien yoke—that spirit is found in all societies—but rather is a highly complex attitude compounded of fear, racial memory, insecurity, ethnic pride, xenophobia, and desire for communion. As with children leaving their parents at maturity, it is an independence both to be desired and regretted, one which separates but hopefully does not isolate. Among Vietnamese the *doc lap* heritage manifests a singular view of the world.

Traditionally, Vietnamese view the world as a highly hostile place. Folk psychology has it that the individual cannot cope with aliens. Strangers are dangerous and clever; one should avoid them

if possible, and one is permitted to lie, cheat, and secretly make fun of them. To make it through life one must develop a protective mechanism, a network of special relationships. Success consists in building such a network of contractual relations with those judged reliable. The relationships must be carefully defined (although usually not articulated), reciprocal, and not exploitative. It levies on both parties certain imperatives of behavior, because compliance and meeting demands are part of the arrangement. This is not friendship. It is an arrangement of personal power and status with nonfamily individuals. Its very heart, of course, is face.

When transferred to the broader scene, the international arena for instance, this traditional world calls for three separate behavioral patterns: maintaining minimal relations (but not avoidance of relations) wherever possible; being constantly suspicious of the actions and motives of other nations; and, establishing one reliable special relationship.

The genesis of *doc lap* unquestionably is the initial Vietnamese experience with China. In the beginning (about 500 B.C.), Vietnamese believe, there lived in what is now South China the Hundred Yeuh (Tribes), including one tribe called the Viets. Came the Chinese (i.e., the Han) and slowly all tribes were assimilated in *han-hwa* (sinoization)—all except the Viets, who fled from their home along the Yangtze southward to the delta of the Red River. The Chinese pursued them, occupying Vietnam (about the time of Christ). For 900 years they continued the *han-hwa* effort but to no avail, and finally they were forced out. They returned again in the 13th and 15th centuries and made war on the Vietnamese in campaigns of conquest. The dream of conquest resurfaced briefly in 1945, when the Chinese occupied northern Vietnam. A hint of it came once again in the winter of 1979. In the deep recesses of his mind the Vietnamese believes China still dreams of *han-hwa*.

Political Umbilical Cord

Doć lap then carried dual characteristics, the spirit of independence being balanced by special need for intimate external relations, often ironically, those regarded as threats to *doc lap*. Vietnamese relations with the Chinese and the French became not simply a matter of necessary outside support, but mandatory psychic sustenance from a mother figure abroad, without which survival was impossible.

In modern political terms this has meant an association best described as a political umbilical cord. Every major Vietnamese political movement of the 20th century has had a political umbilical cord to an outside source which the respective Vietnamese involved regarded as essential for survival. The Nationalists had such ties with Japan, China, and the United States; the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, with the Kuomintang in China; the Dai Viets, with the Japanese; the Communists (Stalinists), with the USSR, the Chinese Communist Party, the French Communist Party and the worldwide Communist movement; the early reformist groups, both Catholic and non-Catholic, with elements in France; the Buddhists, with counterpart organizations in Ceylon, Japan, and elsewhere. Indeed the history of the early nationalist and Communist movements in Vietnam largely can be written in terms of leaders wandering in search of some mystic foreign connection. Ho Chi Minh, for example, for nearly 30 years never set foot in his homeland.

All revolutionary and anticolonial movements in Asian colonial countries had relations with left-wing groups in the mother country. But these ties elsewhere were never considered to be life-and-death associations, as they were by the Vietnamese. For example, the Indian Congress Party in its early days maintained liaison with supportive groups in London. But it was a nominal relationship. Congress Party leaders always thought of themselves as being on their own, and that their cause would succeed or fail depending on its merits and on Congress Party strategy. Victory would not be delivered by outsiders.

The Vietnamese equivalents of the Congress Party—in the Communist and Nationalist movements—never could embrace this attitude of self-reliance. Their leaders and emissaries went abroad not in search of political and financial support, but to find a sponsor who would provide permanent and total commitment. The Communists were luckier than the Nationalists in this respect, although the Comintern apparently thought the Vietnamese Communists expected too much and frequently made excessive demands. Mao Tse-tung supposedly muttered to an aide, as the plane carrying Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, and Phan Van Dong landed at Peking airport for a "goodwill visit": "Here comes the three monks with their begging bowls." Vietnamese Nationalists were even more shameless in their demands—to Japanese, Chinese and the French—that they expel the French colonialists and deliver up

Vietnam. Vietnamese anticolonial figures spent decades abroad trying to engineer what in effect was a bilateral Vietnamese revolution.

The history of the Vietnamese Communists' relations with China and the USSR is filled with refusals of Vietnamese demands, regarded by the Vietnamese as acts of betrayal.' For the Vietnamese Communists this involved an involuted approach to proletarian solidarity. Even when the movement was totally dependent on outside economic assistance, the Party continued to act on the implicit assumption that, in the spirit of *doc lap*, all foreigners were betrayers. While asserting that Vietnamese independence meant depending on no one and trusting no one, they levied extraordinary aid requirements on their socialist allies.

Subliminal Heritage

Clearly a subliminal influence exerts itself today on Vietnamese attitudes toward foreigners, toward the USSR, and toward all other countries. It is a contradictory if not schizoid fear of emasculation, which requires that Vietnam escape from foreign influence even while demanding extraordinary commitment by outsiders. The heritage in sum is manifold and dichotomous, manifesting itself as enormous ambivalence towards friend and foe alike in the outside world. On the one hand is the desperate psychological need for ties of sustenance, born of past failure and never-ending gestures of defiance, which for all their magnificence came to nothing—leaving as the only hope the outsider who could put things right. On the other hand, also reinforced by experience, is an enormous distrust of outsiders who ultimately betray or abandon.

The heritage involves several internal behavioral patterns. There is an ingrained indecisiveness, the tendency forever to temporize. There also is great reluctance to assume leadership of attempted change. Responsibility in the past rested somewhere else—in the court, in the village council, with French liberals, among anti-imperialist friends in China or Moscow. Most of all there is this heritage: the Vietnamese, burdened by fear of failure, betrayal and impotency, too often lapse into imposing unreasonable demands on others. They become mean in spirit, hate-ridden—in Vietnamese it is known as *cam thu, cam hon*. It is the spirit of hate: hate the enemy, hate the traitor, hate the exploiter, hate even those who do change the hated condition, or those who come to help.

These then are the subliminal forces from the past. They remain present and operative in Vietnam today. They are difficult to chart or measure. And they are mutations, constantly being translated into new modes, appearing as new responses.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Present-day Vietnamese-Soviet relations can be thought of in terms of superstructure and foundation, the first finite and material and the second psychological and abstract.

The superstructure of the relationship is composed of imperative dependency on Hanoi's part and perceived national interest and opportunism as far as the USSR is concerned. As long as Vietnam remains dependent on the USSR for 20 percent or more of the grain it consumes (and at the same time remains isolated and virtually friendless in the world), and as long as it needs massive arms flows for its Kampuchean War and to defend itself against China, and as long as the USSR's interests are served by feeding and arming Vietnam, then the present close relationship will continue.

It is in Vietnam's interest, and it is its intention, that it be able to feed itself. Eventually the China threat will subside and Kampuchea will be pacified. Then the steel bands of necessity which have bound Vietnam to the USSR will be loosened and the Vietnamese will seek to distance themselves from Moscow. There is virtually no possibility that Vietnam will ever become a satellite of the USSR, in the manner of East Europe.

The foundation of the relationship is subliminal. This is an abstraction and it may be an irrational one, but it is a most powerful force. It is a product of the Vietnamese psyche.

Because of their history, as well perhaps for other reasons, the Vietnamese have always had an extraordinarily singular relationship with peoples around them. Probably Vietnam is unique among all nations in this. In any event, it is a demonstrable historical fact that no neighbor (no nation for that matter) has ever had what could be called a successful long-term relationship with Vietnam. Not the Chinese for a millenium, not the now extinct Cham, not the Khmer of once-vast empire, not the Siamese (Thais) or Burmese since the 15th century, not the Montagnards of a dozen tribes, not the French, not the Americans. Each had moments of amicability and mutual interest, but each relationship carried the seed of its own destruction.

Thus there appears to be a great paradoxical law at work in associating oneself with the Vietnamese: any successful relationship is an eventual catastrophe. It is this law which Moscow now is testing. It may succeed where all others have failed, but more likely it too eventually will become a victim of Vietnam.

ENDNOTES

1. Vietnamese creative genius largely has gone unappreciated in the West. Vietnamese music, with its half-tone scale, is so vastly different from western music that years of special training are required for appreciation. There is an equally formidable barrier in literature. Vietnamese language is so subtle that it defies literal translation, while poetic translation is virtually a creative act in its own. Vietnamese poetry particularly must be read and appreciated in its original or untranslated form.

2. Nguyen Van Kinh, "Welcome to the 50th Founding Anniversary of the USSR," *Vietnam Magazine* (Hanoi), December 1972.

3. US experience with the South Vietnamese was similar. There were few gestures or genuine expressions of gratitude, either official or personal, experienced by Americans in assisting the South Vietnamese.

4. This is particularly evident from the tone of Hanoi press editorials on the various anniversaries of Stalin's death.

5. Typical of this is Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh's October 1977 speech, "Inexhaustible Source of Strength and Inspiration," published in *International Affairs* (Moscow), December 1977.

6. The term *doc lap* virtually defies accurate translation. Its literal meaning is independence, but as such it obscures more than it reveals. In English, independence means not dependent, which is not connoted by *doc lap*; it also implies not subject to the control of others, while the meaning in Vietnamese is of an intimate sort of obligatory control or reciprocal behavior. In English independence is bound up with freedom, with no corresponding relevance in Vietnamese usage. The full meaning of *doc lap* is best understood in its usage.

7. Because of space limitations Vietnamese resistance to the French in *doc lap* terms is not considered here. Resistance was one of the three responses which an individual Vietnamese could make (the other two being collaboration or deliberate "island in the lake" disassociation). The *doc lap* concept of course contributed to the Vietnamese response and was in turn conditioned by the experience of French colonialism.

OTHER RECENTLY PUBLISHED MEMORANDA

Precision ATGM's and NATO Defense	AD AO63723
Soviet Strategy in the 1970's and Beyond	AD AO65039
Dimensions of US-Latin American Military Relations	AD AO62510
Arms Transfer and National Security: An Interpretation of Iran's Perspective	AD AO62343
Contemporary Problems of the Unfied Command System	AD AO66180
The Shrinking Baton: Future Challenges to Leadership	AD AO65257
ASEAN, 1985-2000: A US Role to Influence Its Shape	AD AO63939
US Military Strategy-From 1946-78	AD AO67705
Adapting Academic Methods and Models to Governmental Needs:The CIA Experience	AD AO65258
Soviet Perceptions of NATO	AD AO66801
Bargaining Within and Between Alliances on MBFR	AD AO66114
The Soviet Perception of the American Will	AD AO66930
National Service as an Alternative to the Draft	AD AO67706
The Future of Soviet-Cuban Relations	AD AO67707
Toward An Estimate of the Soviet Worldview	AD AO70035
US Global Retrenchment and the Army of 2000	AD AO70046

Copies of any of these memoranda may be obtained from the Defense Documentation Center. The request, indicating title and AD number, should be sent to the following address:

Techn. Info.

Defense Documentation Center
Cameron Station
Alexandria, VA 22314

DISTRIBUTION

ODCSOPS, DA	6
National War College	3
Naval War College	2
Air War College	4
Air University	3
Command and General Staff College	2
Armed Forces Staff College	1
Industrial College of the Armed Forces	2
Inter-American Defense College	1
University of National Defense	1
Defense Intelligence School	1
US Military Academy	2
Marine Corps Development and Education Command	3
National Defence College	1
Royal College of Defense Studies	1
L'Ecole Superieure de Guerre	1
Fuehrungsakademie der Bundeswehr	1
NATO Defence College	1
Concepts Analysis Agency	2
Intelligence Threat Analysis Detachment	1
Training and Doctrine Command	1
Combined Arms Combat Development Activity	1
Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Agency	1
Office of the Chief of Engineers	1
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency	1
Defense Intelligence Agency	2
Central Intelligence Agency	3
Department of State	2
Defense Logistics Studies Information Exchange	1
Institute for Military Assistance	1
US Army Federal Executive Fellow, Brookings Institution	1
US Navy	2
US Marine Corps	2
US Air Force	3
432d Military Intelligence Detachment	1
434th Military Intelligence Detachment	1
467th Military Intelligence Detachment	1
I ROTC Region Headquarters	1
II ROTC Region Headquarters	1
III ROTC Region Headquarters	1
IV ROTC Region Headquarters	1
National Guard Bureau	1
Defense Documentation Center	12
Army Library	1
Military History Research Collection	1
Army War College	57

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE	READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER: ACN 80018	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.: AD-A088 005
	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle): The USSR and Vietnam	5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED: Strategic Issues Research Memorandum
	6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s): Douglas Pike	8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 17013	10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS	12. REPORT DATE: 7 May 1980
	13. NUMBER OF PAGES: 20
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)	15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report): UNCLASSIFIED
	15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

Soviet foreign policy; Southeast Asia; Vietnam; USSR

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

This memorandum considers the relationship between the USSR and Vietnam. The author suggests that the bands of necessity which have held Vietnam to the USSR eventually will be loosened and the Vietnamese will seek to distance themselves from Moscow. He foresees no possibility that Vietnam will ever become a satellite of the USSR, in the manner of East Europe. He concludes that there appears to be a great paradoxical law at work in associating oneself with the Vietnamese: any successful relationship is an eventual catastrophe. Moscow may succeed where others have failed but

DD FORM 1 JAN 73 1473 EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 IS OBSOLETE

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

310230

more likely it too will become a victim of Vietnam.