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SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

INWARD POLITICAL PROCESSES AND FOREIGN POLICY

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A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OF THE RF AND THE SRV: THE ACHIEVED RESULT OR A PERSPECTIVE TARGET?

I.V. Britov ¹

Abstract. The author of the article makes an attempt of the conceptual consideration of a comprehensive strategic partnership, a poorly investigated kind of international relations, so far. It is mentioned that different countries, as well as official documents and research-works discuss the features of this status of international relations differently. General theoretical conclusions are applied to the concrete object of the research, i.e., to current Russia-Vietnam relations. The conclusion is that the level of their development does not fully correspond to the content of the term “comprehensive strategic partnership”. It is emphasized that such a situation interferes with the efficient development of cooperation. The current confrontation of the West with the Russian Federation against the background of the developments in Ukraine affects Russia-Vietnam relations.

Keywords: comprehensive strategic partnership, Russia, Vietnam, international relationships, the concept of rectification of names.

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Introduction

This year celebrates the tenth anniversary of the establishment of relations of a comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP) between Russia and Vietnam. At the end of 2021 during the visit of the SRV President to the RF, as the final outcome of the negotiations of V.V. Putin and Nguyen Xuan Phuc there

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was adopted Joint Statement on the Vision of the Development of Relations of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries up to 2030 [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie: 30.11.2021].

Over the last ten years expert community has not given a definite answer to the question of how much Russia-Vietnam relations correspond to the content of the CSP concept. Neither diplomatic documents nor research works in Russia, Vietnam and other countries formulate clear-cut criteria for the definition of this level of relations. It is correctly stated that this concept is vague [Zheglova 2014: 115].

Vietnam belongs to the countries of Confucian civilization. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the problem of “the concept” is connected with that of rectification of names in Confucianism. This concept states that to improve oneself and to govern it is necessary to build concepts correctly. Confucius said that if a name does not correspond to the essence, the word contradicts the deed, and if the word contradicts the deed, the deeds will not succeed [Confucius 2013: 159]. This statement is as relevant nowadays. Also, it can be fairly applied to the concept of CSP.

The author has investigated the approaches of official structures and academic community of different countries to the issue of CSP, generalized different standpoints and attempted to introduce this concept all-embracingly and substantively. In Russia theoretical aspects of CSP have been discussed in the works by Yu.G. Zheglova [2014], A.A. Krylov [2020], A. Al'mukanova [13.12.2015]. Theoretical conclusions have been applied to the concrete research object, i.e., to current Russia-Vietnam relations. The base of the research-work are such methods as proceeding from private to general, consistency, the unity of external influence and internal conditions.

Documents of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the RF and the SRV being compared, Vietnamese ones give more clear-cut and detailed definition of CSP concept [Triển khai: 12.12.2021]. In Russia the issue of CSP with Vietnam has been indirectly broached in numerous research-works on Russian-Vietnamese cooperation. This theme has been discussed methodically and minutely in articles by D.Sc. (History) E.A. Kanaev[2019], Ph.D. (History) E.V. Kobelev [2020]. The economic aspect of CSP has been exposed in detail in one of the articles by D.Sc. (Economics) V.M. Mazyrin [2020]. In their works on this issue Vietnamese researchers mostly lean for support on the official conception of a three-pronged task which CSP relations ought to solve [Định Công Tuấn: 01.08.2013].

Relevance and importance of the given research are determined with the necessity of the objective assessment of the current development level of relations between the RF and the SRV. This could allow henceforth to avoid some possible errors and build the relations in accordance with real possibilities of the two countries taking into consideration the existing problems. The additional importance to the research is attached with the current international situation intensifying the confrontation between the RF and the West connected with the developments in Ukraine. It is important to assess not the momentary problems but to understand how this situation may influence the long-term perspectives of the CSP relations development of Russia and Vietnam.

What is a comprehensive strategic partnership?

The method of analysis in scientific research allows to break a complicated phenomenon down into its component parts to cognize them as the elements of a complicated whole. This contributes to a deeper knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation.

Using this method, we will analyze every component element of the CSP concept (“partnership”, “strategic”, “comprehensive”) and then generalize the achieved results in order to get the integral picture of this phenomenon in current international relations.

“Partnership”

Partnership is a joint activity based on equal rights and duties and directed to the common goal [Sociologicheskij slovar': 05.01.2022].

The investigation of diplomatic documents and theoretical works of Russian and foreign experts in the field of foreign policy allowed to determine a number of conditions being the basis of the partnership building in the sphere of international relations.

The important condition is equal relationship

In the Soviet period the relations with Vietnam were characterized “fraternal”. In Vietnamese it means “the relations between a senior and a junior brother”. “A junior brother” meant Vietnam. This expression determining the nature of the relations between our countries left the political vocabulary long ago. They are free of ideology, either. The cooperation desires to orient to economic and political interests of the two countries. Current dynamic economic development and strengthening of international authority of Vietnam increase its weight and positions in its relations not only with Russia but also with the rest partner countries. At the same time only taking into account a relatively low level of bilateral trade it is possible to conclude that Moscow underestimates the SRV’s potential, and Hanoi is sceptic about material, financial and organizing possibilities of the RF, the more so, in the conditions of the current sanctions’ regime from the West.

A high degree of trust is required

A high degree of trust is usually declared in joint Russian-Vietnamese documents. However, in reality in the relations of the two countries there is a number of factors influencing the mutual economic and political trust.

The trust of the Vietnamese in the possibilities of their business in Russia was significantly undermined in the 1990s, when the Russian side could not perform the assumed obligations in the frameworks of the business collaboration with Vietnam. After the collapse of the USSR numerous enterprises did not integrate in the forming capitalist model of economy and became bankrupts. Most of them could not send Vietnamese workers to their homeland due to the shortage of finance. Dozen thousands of Vietnamese workers accommodating to the existing situation had to do illegal business. Sometimes they met serious problems both with local authorities and with criminal structures. Therefore, those “illegal” Vietnamese businessmen and their relations got a deeply rooted idea of Russia as the country with “wild” business conditions and they turned to other countries having successful business developments with them now².

² During fifteen years the author conducted the program on the Vietnamese community in Russia on the Voice of Russia. He studied this problem and regularly broadcasted it.

In recent years the Russian business has got a severe blow on its trust in its Vietnamese partners, the Vietnamese side having refused to carry out joint projects with the RF. This concerns projects in the fields of subway construction, cosmos, gas production, as well as projects of modernization of the oil refinery “Dung Quat”, the purchase of Russian aircraft “Superjet-100”. “Hanoi’s refusal in 2016, to construct the nuclear power plant “Ninh Thuan” was the most famous one: AO “Rosatom” had been preparing it for eight years and USD 10 billion was granted for the construction. This decision was motivated with doubtful economic and ecological reasons, but it is known that opting for Russia was directly torpedoed by Japan, the EU and the US” [Mazyrin 2020: 126].

As far as political trust is concerned, every side has its own matter for concern. For Vietnam, debating territories in the South China Sea with the PRC and fearing Chinese expansion, the chief complicating event in its dialogue with Russia is the rapprochement of Moscow and Beijing. Vietnam would rather hear a more concrete position of the RF on the territorial debate in the South China Sea than that being articulated now: “Russia stands for international relationships based on mutual respect which could never grow into military conflicts” [Lavrov: 25.09.2021].

The development of collaboration between Vietnam and the US, including the security sphere, in conditions of Washington’s pressure on Russia cannot help being a matter of concern of Russian leadership towards their Vietnamese colleagues. Representatives of the US administration address Russia with such words as “adversary”, “real challenge”, “threat”, “enemy”. In the like situation, it is difficult to have a full trust to the partner, who at the same time is a partner of the side being in the state of a tough confrontation with Russia.

Complementarity of economies is necessary

Russia and Vietnam belong to the countries with the economies able to complement each other. Their economic complementarity is shown in the goods forming the RF and the SRV leading export group to various world’s countries. Russia delivers abroad fuel and energy products, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, cars and equipment, fertilizer. Electronic products, clothes, shoes, seafood, agricultural products prevail in the Vietnamese export. However, a serious barrier for the delivery of Russian goods to the Vietnamese market is the increased competitions of the third countries.

The perspective areas of cooperation may become cyber security, medical technologies, space exploration, i.e., those spheres where the RF has competitive advantages able to fill the interaction with the “exclusive” content [Kanaev 2020: 362–363].

The commensurate level of economic development of the partner countries is desirable

The assessment of economic development of this or that country takes into account a complex of factors, which determine economic growth, structural shifts in economy, improvement of the population’s living conditions. Below you see the comparative table showing the main macroeconomic indicators of Russia’s and Vietnam’s development in 2019, just before the period when the economies of the both countries experienced strong effect of COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. The main macroeconomic indicators of the SRV in 2019

Indicators of economic development		Russia	Vietnam
GDP volume, USD billion		1693	262
GDP growth rates per annum, %		1,3	7,02
Sectoral structure of economy	Service industry, % GDP	54,3	41,6
	Industry, % GDP -	26,5	34,5
	Agriculture, % GDP	3,9	14,0
Commodity turnover, USD billion		666,5 (surplus - 179)	558,6 (surplus – 9,6)
Unemployment rate, %		4,5	2,17
GDP per capita, USD		11 498	2 715
Life expectancy		73	73,6

Source: [GSO 2019:15.04.2022]; Makroekonomicheskie issledovaniya: 15.04.2022; Vneshnyaya trgovlya: 24.12.2021

In its scope Vietnamese economy significantly yields to Russian one. But Vietnam's economic model surpasses the Russian one in its efficiency and dynamics. The practice shows that the efficiency of economy (not its volume) is important for active international economic and trade exchanges. Besides, active transition to import substitution policy, the chief target of Russia's government in the current international situation, assumes the economic orientation to the internal market and a certain isolation from the outside world.

The availability of the solid legal framework for the collaboration

The bilateral contractual legal framework consists of more as 100 documents. At the end of 2021, during the visit of the SRV President Nguyen Xuan Phuc to Russia, 15 documents had been signed.

Mutual sympathy both of the Supreme Leaders and of the peoples of the partner countries must be of favorable influence

Subjective factors, including the attitude of the leadership of one country to the other country as a whole and to its leaders in particular, are of great importance. It can be supposed that Vladimir Putin has got a positive perception of Vietnam. He is a man of the Soviet era, and Vietnam was “a brother”, a heroic country which had won the US, our common ideological adversary, for Soviet people (Fig. 1).

As a whole, the Russians' attitude to Vietnam is assessed positively. The elder generation's good feelings to Vietnam were laid in the epoch of the Soviet-Vietnamese friendship. In recent years, the interest for Vietnam of the younger and middle generations was being formed due mostly to tourist trips to the country. Russian mass media are not eloquent on the SRV.



Fig.1. President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin at the APEC summit in Vietnam, 2006.

An open source photo

Formerly positive attitude to Russia was expressed by the leadership of Vietnam, while most of the leaders had been educated in the Soviet Union. In the early 2000s nearly all the SRV top leadership consisted of the graduates from Soviet universities. Currently this resource is not so effective as before. Now, among the SRV top leaders only Nguyen Phu Trong, the General Secretary of the CC of the CPV learned in Russia. In Vietnam “there have emerged political forces, social strata, which are incited against the maintenance of the relations [with Russia]. Such is the result of changing elites, leaving of the leaders who had contacts with the RF and spoke Russian and the emergence of new leaders who were educated in the West” [Mazyrin 2021: 150].

Since the collapse of the USSR, the attitude of the Vietnamese to Russia has significantly changed. These changes have a negative vector due to a complex of causes. One of the most important causes is the shortage of information of Russia from Russia itself, and a rather broad dissemination of what has been written and thought of Russia in the West. For a long time, Western mass media have eagerly demonized our country (this campaign has increased with the special military operation in Ukraine), the anti-Russian rhetoric having found its place in the Vietnamese mass media.

“Comprehensive”

Comprehensive partnership means that it is:

Multidimensional/thorough

Russian-Vietnamese interaction touched numerous fields. However, the level and the intensity of the relations in different fields differ greatly. The leading directions are political and military-technical spheres. Trade and economic cooperation does not correspond to the existing potential of the two countries. Only the interaction in the sphere of energy can serve a positive example. Such Russian industrial giants like “Zarubezhneft” and “Gazprom” implement contracts with the Vietnamese corporation “Petrovietnam” on oil delivery and production, as well as on joint gas production. A new track of cooperation are the agreements on fighting COVID-19 pandemic.

Other fields of interaction including technologies, education, science, culture, mass media develop irregularly and fragmentarily.

Multiscale

Only political and military-technical spheres can be called multiscale. Other spheres of cooperation are not just small, but scanty. To understand this, it is sufficient to compare Russian-Vietnamese commodity turnover and the trade volume of the SRV with the PRC and the US.

Table 2. The commodity turnover of the SRV with the RF, the PRC and the US in 2020

The SRV commodity turnover with	Indicator, USD billion
RF	4,85
PRC	133,1
US	90,8

Source: [Báo cáo 2021: 85, 117, 121]

In 2020 Vietnam's share in Russia's foreign trade turnover was 0,998% [Vneshnyaya trgovlya: 24.12.2021].

In the conditions of sanction pressure on Russia the interaction with Vietnam is exposed to attack, first of all that in trade-economic, military-technical and tourist spheres. Difficulties for the cooperation in these fields are connected with the problems of mutual settlements, rise in price of freight and insurance of vehicles, logistic service, purchasing equipment in the third countries for joint Russian-Vietnamese projects. Usually, the consequences of any crisis are overcome, and adapted to, which takes certain time, usually lengthy. This is evidenced by the weak growth in trade between the Russian Federation and Vietnam in 2021 (by 13%) compared to the previous year (USD 5.5 billion) and its sharp decline in 2022, which was caused not only by the COVID-19 pandemic [Việt Nam giảm: 18.04.2022].

Russia's new international situation can become a stimulus for the increase of cooperation with Vietnam, a friendly country of the RF. The Russian leadership is going to re-orient its foreign trade policy to such states.

Multilevel

From the very beginning of this century the RF and the SRV have established an elaborate system of active political contacts at the highest level, a solid base for political cooperation. Being the RF President, V. Putin visited Vietnam four times (2001, 2006, 2013, 2017).

But intensive Russian-Vietnamese political interaction at the state level could not become a locomotive for activating cooperation at the rest levels. There are some positive examples, but so far there are no direct close contacts between business circles, representatives of academic, educational and creative associations of our countries. In recent years there has been established relationships between new twin regions, as a whole, the interregional cooperation is irregular and sometimes formal. Friendship Societies and other public organizations (various unions of the Vietnamese in Russia) have no finance to develop broad activities in the frame-works of "public diplomacy" (Fig. 2). As far as private trips are concerned, the increasing tourist stream of the Russian to Vietnam (over 600 thousand in 2019) and the Vietnamese to Russia was brought to nought in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.



Fig. 2. The Russian Society for Friendship with Vietnam seeks to intensify its activities: a meeting of Vietnamese students with cosmonaut S.K. Krikalev, 2022. *Photo: Hoang Hoa*

“Strategic”

Strategy is important to achieve common general goals. In international relations strategic partnership means:

The mutual interest to achieve strategic goals of internal development and the solution of prior tasks in foreign policy

Establishing CSP relations, the RF and the SRV follow mostly political motives, not economic ones.

Vietnam’s political elites understand well that “Russia being a great world and Asian power with its military potential, and as a constant member of the UN Security Council was and still is a significant factor of maintenance of peace and stability in the region. It can and must perform an important role in establishing future security system in the Asia-Pacific Region. Particularly in South East Asia” [Kobelev 2020: 27]. Russia’s opportunities and importance in this process will mostly be determined with the exodus of the RF and the West confrontation at the Ukrainian conflict background.

Vietnam can become one of the chief partners of Russia in its Pivot to Asia strategy. To tell the truth, now the RF is mostly orienting towards China. Vietnam is the only country of South East Asia having the closest relations with Russia. Therefore, Vietnam is considered to be a bridge for developing the RF cooperation with ASEAN.

The coincidence of views on crucial international issues

Usually, Russia and Vietnam have common views on different issues of international and regional scope in the international scene [Кобелев 2020: 21]. However, there is a lot of international topics where the views either do not coincide or disagree.

It is important that Vietnam was among 34 countries which on March 3, 2022 abstained from voting the UN General Assembly resolution on Ukraine. The document contains the appeal to Russia to put an end to the special military operation in Ukraine. On April 7, 2022, Vietnam voted against the temporary suspension of the RF participation in the UN Human Rights Council. However, this does not

mean that the SRV supports the RF in this conflict. Vietnam's official position is to remain neutral on this issue [Malajziya i V'etnam: 22.03.2022].

The two sides differ in their views on a number of important international and regional problems, in particular, on the perspective of the development of the Asia-Pacific region in the context of contesting megaprojects, i.e., "One Belt One Road" strategy and the "Indo-Pacific" initiative. Russia willingly supported the Chinese "One Belt One Road" project, but Vietnam perceived it with a certain degree of fear. This project can challenge the security in the South East Region and ASEAN unity. The idea of Indo-Pacific region promoted by the US, mostly directed to the containment of the PRC, serves the interests of Vietnam, accounting the importance of the South China Sea problem for it. At the same time this idea is contrary to the RF interests in China³.

Also, Russia raises questions on Vietnam's position on such relatively new alliances as Quad and AUKUS in the Asia-Pacific region.

The two sides differ in their assessment of the globalization process, too. Vietnam's leadership always emphasizes its desire to participate in this process, and to draw dividends out of it. But now Russia often states negative consequences of the globalization. The most revealing evidence is its discontent with the membership in the WTO.

Stability

Bilateral relations must endure negative influence of the third countries and amortize the influence of negative tendencies in the development of the international situation. However, Russian-Vietnamese interaction, first of all, economic interaction, has been mostly complicated due to the sanction of the West to Russia. For a long time, Vietnam has not opposed the sanctions, and "consequently has become their hostage to the extent that its companies had to restrict their cooperation with Russian partners subject to sanctions and could not fulfil their obligations" [Mazyrin 2020: 116]. But Vietnam does not support the sanctions against Russia due to the current events in Ukraine [Malajziya i V'etnam: 22.03.2022].

At the same time, the Chinese position on regional issues also negatively influences Russia-Vietnam relations. In particular, not to irritate China, Vietnam's government constrained work on the disputed gas shelf departments in the south of Vietnam. Therefore, the Russian companies which participated in the joint projects with the Vietnamese partners in this region had to leave [Mazyrin 2020: 125].

Intensive political dialogue at the top and high levels

It has already been noted that since 2012, when strategic partnership of the RF and the SRV acquired the status of comprehensive, the intensive political dialogue at the top and high levels has been maintained.

³ See in detail [Kanaev 2019: 157].

Table 3. Mutual visits of the RF and SRV leaders

Year	Visits to Vietnam	Visits to Russia
2012	Prime minister D. Medvedev; Chairwoman of the Federation Council V. Matvienko	President Truong Tan Sang
2013	President V. Putin	Prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung; Chairman of the National Assembly Nguyen Sinh Hung
2014	Chairman of the State Duma S. Naryshkin	General secretary of the CC CPV Nguyen Phu Trong
2015	Prime minister D. Medvedev	President Truong Tan Sang
2016		Prime minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc
2017	President V. Putin took part in the APEC summit in Vietnam, conducted talks with president Tran Dai Quang; Chairwoman of the Federation Council V. Matvienko	President Tran Dai Quang; Chairwoman of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan took part in the Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the RF
2018	Prime minister D. Medvedev; Chairman of the State Duma V. Volodin	General secretary of the CC CPV Nguyen Phu Trong
2019		Prime minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc; Chairwoman of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan
2021	Secretary of the Security Council N. Patrushev	President Nguyen Xuan Phuc

Made up by the author

However, the attempts of Moscow and Hanoi to revive the development of the bilateral relations with the efforts “from above” were no tangible success [Kanaev 2020: 357].

In-depth interaction in the sphere of defense and security

The military-technical direction is one of the RF and the SRV cooperation spheres which has successfully developed for many years. The current Russian-Vietnamese interaction was fastened in the 1960/70s with the strong attachment of Vietnam military forces to the Soviet military technique. Now the share of Russian armament in the SRV defense system amount to 75 % [Kobeleev 2020: 22]. Russia grants Vietnam a broad spectrum of armament and military technique, such as ships, aircraft, tanks, surface-to-air missile systems. By 2017 Russia had completed the deliveries of six submarines of Kilo type to Vietnam. That order was the largest in value and the most important one in the current interaction of the two countries in the sphere of defense. Vietnam simplified the procedure of entry into the Vietnamese port Cam Ranh for Russian battleships. The parties periodically conduct joint military exercises at sea and army games to train interaction (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. The Vietnamese team is a traditional participant in the International Army Games initiated by the Russian Ministry of Defense. *An open source photo*

A significant contribution into the development of military-technical cooperation is the activity of Vietnam-Russia Tropical Centre; one of its research directions is tropical material science. However, Russia has reduced its finance and personnel participation in this Centre.

It is noteworthy that the SRV desires to diversify its contacts in the defense sphere, ensuring military supplies also from other countries. First of all, they are Israel, South Korea, the Netherlands, Japan and the US.

Besides, Russia “cannot fulfil functions of security, as it used to be in the era of the USSR. Its interests in the region are limited” [Kashin 2020: 74].

Large joint projects of strategic cooperation

Today such a project is considered to be but “Vietsovpetro”, a joint Russian-Vietnamese enterprise for oil and gas exploration, established in the era of the USSR (1981). During many years, it has brought incomes to the budgets of the two countries. During its exploitation the enterprise produced about 240 mln tons of oil [Mezhgosudarstvennye otnosheniya: 30.11.2021].

Unfortunately, now there are no new large-scale projects of strategic importance. The construction of the nuclear power plant promised great hopes. But the Vietnamese side, as has been said above, spoilt the achieved agreements.

Long-term sustainability

The treaty on the base of friendly relationships adopted by the RF and the SRV in 1994 has a conditionally determined term: it will be valid until one of the sides warns about its rejection. Currently Russian and Vietnamese sides are establishing their CSP relations with the far perspective up to 2030, like in the Statement adopted on the results of the negotiations of presidents V. Putin and Nguyen Xuan Phuc at the end of November, 2021. The supplies of military techniques for Vietnam count for a long perspective. Also, there are long-term agreements in the field of economic cooperation. “Vietsovpetro”

participants have concluded inter-governmental agreement on prolongation of this joint enterprise's duration till 2030.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that the Russian-Vietnamese CSP possesses fully but some necessary elements. Most components are present partially; some are absent.

When addressing the Vietnamese approach to the CSP issue, it is mostly utilitarian. The official documents of the SRV MFA which expose the CSP content, usually mention that they must contribute to the three chief tasks, i.e., security insurance, economic prosperity, and strengthening Vietnam's positions in the international scene [Đinh Công Tuấn: 01.08.2013]. In the context of this Vietnamese statement Russia-Vietnam relations do not rise to the level of the CSP, either.

However, while considering the CSP, it is necessary to remember the three important aspects.

Firstly, the presence of the whole complex of the CSP elements, mentioned above, is not necessary. Any country, being flexible and selective, varies the CSP principles with different partners basing itself on concrete conditions. But in "the menu" of the CSP components there are some basic ones; in their absence it is impossible to acknowledge this relation type. They are such as equality of the relations, a high degree of the partners' trust, sustainable and multidimensional interaction, the coincidence of strategic interests, implementation of joint long-term projects. It has already been mentioned that not all these factors are fully present in the Russian-Vietnamese cooperation. That is why some professionals in international relations have reason to question the reality of the CSP status in Russia-Vietnam relations. "The codification of the relations in the terms of comprehensive strategic partnership misleads Moscow and Hanoi about the real conditions of their relations, compensating not quite convincing results with a striking figure of speech" [Kanaev 2019: 157].

Secondly, it is necessary to consider CSP not in the concrete moment of the relations' development but in the long-term perspective. "Whatever is the general situation in the partners' relations at the given historical space of time, strategic partnership in any forms and in any sphere remains the "alternativeless" way to conduct their affairs". [Zheglova 2014: 118]. It is the very standpoint to approach current complications in Russia-Vietnam relations (first of all in trade and economic ones) in connection with strict sanctions of the West against Russia.

Thirdly, there is no common approach to the question what the essence of the CSP is: the result? or the goal? As far as Russia-Vietnam relations are concerned, officially a CSP is considered like a movement in time, a process of development. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the format to achieve the results. In particular, addressing the RF and the SRV Presidents' Statement on viewing CSP up to 2030, one can conclude that the sides attach greater importance to intensions, but not to the achieved results. Formally, it is shown in the proportions of the text on results and goals, which is 1:5. This reveals the CSP stimulating function [Krylov 2020: 65]. Research works usually define CSP as the result of the process: first, it is necessary to achieve the result, and only then to certify the status corresponding to the result. I.e., the CSP identifying function is emphasized.

Currently the content of the concept "comprehensive strategic partnership" has not been thoroughly interpreted yet. Various countries differ in their interpretations of it. Often the statements of

official diplomatic documents do not meet the conclusions of scientific expert association. The CSP issue requires further conceptual study.

As for Russia-Vietnam relations, their development level does not fully meet the CSP features enumerated in the article. The current confrontation of the West and Russia creates additional difficulties for the development of Russia-Vietnam relations. The CSP concept is used due to the desire to stimulate cooperation, which to a certain extent hampers its efficient development, because it excludes the real assessment of the state and perspectives of the relations.

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POPULISM IN VIETNAM TODAY: STATUS-QUO AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION¹

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Abstract: Populism has been on the rise globally since the earliest years of the twenty-first century. Recently, the term “populism” has appeared with relatively high frequency on a number of news media, notably at a time during the double shock of the 2016 Brexit movement and the success in the US presidential election of Donald Trump. In Vietnam, populism does not have enough grounds to exist in a form of “ism” in the original sense, but mainly in specific manifestations. Despite the fact that the idea has not yet governed the Vietnamese people’s lives, its influence is still considerable. This is one of the complicated problems that need to be carefully studied. This article focuses on analyzing the status-quo of populism in Vietnam, thus offering some policy recommendations.

Keywords: populism, Vietnam, political movements, ideology, policy recommendations.

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Introduction

“Populism”, as a political ideology and sociopolitical movement, is a trend that provokes major political and social upheavals. There is a growing body of evidence indicating that populism is a notable factor causing “chaos and instability”, which challenges nation-states and the world order in terms of contemporary values and institutions.

Internationally, there is a deep concern in the face of globalization. A number of values, institutions, and international law (though imperfect) are being violated and distorted by the extreme tendencies of populism; for example, that is the threat of IS to global security and to the citizen’s safety;

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or the destabilized EU by separatist movements. On the national level, many states are facing negative forms of populism aimed at inciting the “discontent” of the people and particular populations, creating divisions between the people and the government, as well as among ethnic communities, etc. Therefore, identifying the tendencies of populist movements is not purely an epistemic requirement, but also the practical complex movement of contemporary political life. In Vietnam, “populism” has been a relatively new concept so far. Hence, the task of clarifying theoretical and practical issues of populism, and assessing its impact on the world in general and Vietnam in particular, becomes increasingly urgent.

This research article is carried out by clarifying the two primary study questions and hypotheses as follows:

Q1: What is populism and how to identify it?

Q2: Is populism likely to arise and give threats to the political life in Vietnam?

H1: In Vietnam, populism does not exist in the original sense.

H2: Although it is not likely to become the mainstream political movement, populism is still posing challenges to Vietnamese politics.

This article uses data and materials from several recent and up-to-date research projects to answer these above questions. To start with, we should also keep an objective attitude toward populism as a research object.

Literature review

Populism has been at the spotlight internationally in recent years due to its rise in different political settings. When it comes to theories on populism and the populist emergence in Western politics, there are some prominent studies worth mentioning such as “The Oxford Handbook of Populism” [Kaltwasser et al. 2017] and “Populism and Democratic Theory” [Mansbridge & Macedo 2019]. Closer to the context of Vietnamese politics, it is also worth referencing such documents as “Populism in Southeast Asia (Elements in Politics and Society in Southeast Asia)” [Kenny 2018] and “Populism in Southeast Asia: A Vehicle for Reform or a Tool for Despots?” [Robison & Hadiz 2020], which clarifies the socio-political origins of populism in several Southeast Asian cases (like the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, etc.) and the impacts of populist movements in the region in the context of advanced social media and increased internet use. The following materials are reviewed for a better understanding of populism from Vietnamese scholars’ viewpoints.

One of the typical research projects on populism recently in Vietnam is the one titled “Populism: history of formation and development, status-quo, and consequences” carried out by a group of authors from Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics [HCMA 2019]. The research pulled together a number of high-quality scientific reports that address many aspects of populism. Many of the arguments in this book affirm that the de facto populism in Vietnam has no economic and politico-social basis to exist in the form of “ism” or “ideology”. It only exists as opinions and thoughts, which do not develop a system of reasoning and manifest itself in the words and actions of some people, especially influential ones. However, there are some negative effects of these thoughts and actions on social life. Hence, the research suggested a number of effective solutions to put a restraint on the threat of populism.

The book titled “Changes of the world situation – Opportunities, challenges and prospects” was drafted by the Central Theoretical Council in 2018. This book is composed of discourses by theoretical researchers, presenting the challenges and opportunities in the fast-changing world. Referring to populism, the book states that the populist movement has recently been in a growing surge in developed countries. In particular, the populist movement in Europe is characterized by the backlash against the trend of international integration and globalization, the support against immigrants, and opposition to giving the EU’s interests priority over each nation’s sovereignty and interests. In the United States, the surge of rightist populism has attracted the support of Republicans, bringing success to Donald J. Trump’s presidential election as a result. In the case of Vietnam, the book argues that the populist movements are promoting the building of a powerful state capable of tightly controlling its territory and national borders as well as defending the people’s interests [Hội đồng lý luận 2018].

Besides, there is also another remarkable work on populism in Vietnam titled “The fight against Trotskyism to protect the Party's directions (1930–1945), and the lessons today against opportunism and populism” by Nguyen Trong Phuc, published in 2019. The work is to show that a number of Trotskyists, mainly from France, had designs on forming their own party to oppose their “leftist” slogans against the Communist Party's revolutionary line, aimed at deceiving the masses and taking them out of the revolutionaries. A sharp struggle against the Trotskyists was taken up in a timely manner, from which we can draw valuable lessons for today’s politics. The article underlines the need to build a strong and transparent ruling party, developing and completing the political system to counter opportunism and populism [Nguyễn Trọng Phúc: 08.09.2019].

In addition, the work “The thematic paper on today’s populism” [Võ Văn Hải 2019] also points out several noteworthy issues and suggestions to prevent the risk of populism in Vietnam. Accordingly, to defend against populism, the most important thing is to raise consciousness about populism as well as taking account of some acute problems. *Firstly*, there is the need to identify and warn against the populist manifestations in Vietnamese political life. *Secondly*, from practical experiences in the world, one major reason why the people believe and follow populist movements or support populist characters is partly related to ineffective management of the government in solving the people's problems. *Finally*, it is necessary for people of all ages, especially young people, to be known more about the flip side of populism through the mass media, including public broadcasting agencies, social networking sites, etc.

Although the aforementioned research results have discussed a number of issues about populism in general and how it relates to Vietnam, the political impacts of populism on Vietnam have not been comprehensively interpreted. To reiterate, populism is still a relatively new topic in Vietnam so far. Hence, the task of clarifying theories on populism, assessing its impact on Vietnam, and providing policy recommendations becomes increasingly urgent.

Theoretical framework on populism

“Populism” is the term that brings controversy and ambiguity in terms of its connotations and other related expressions [Kazin 2016]. This view is supported by several political scientists like Cas Mudde. He supposed that “populism” is one of the most controversial concepts in the domain of social sciences, and there is no academic consensus on how to define it [Mudde & Kaltwasser 2013]. From the

perspective of political science, we reckon that populism is a combination of a variety of factors. Similar to the views of some other researchers, we believe that populism could be studied as an ideological issue, approached as a strategy or a tactic, or even acknowledged as a particular style of political leaders, to attract the masses. It is important to consider all the above factors in many ways to get the overall picture.

More specifically, with the aim of interpreting the concept of populism in Vietnam, we create the theoretical basis of populism as follows:

Firstly, as pointed out by recent studies, populism has no economic and politico-social basis to exist in the form of “ism” or “ideology” in Vietnam. It mainly exists as opinions or thoughts expressed by words and actions of some people, especially influential political ones. This leads to the fact that there have been no widespread populist movements in Vietnamese political landscape.

Secondly, from the political perspective, specifically focusing on the struggle for political power, populism is deemed to be a political movement that places emphasis on chanting slogans, giving idle and empty promises due to the lack of viability in concrete situations for the purpose of achieving certain political goals. Accordingly, populism is associated with activities aimed at disseminating populist views among the masses with baseless promises and demagogic propaganda [Nguyễn Vũ Hảo & Nguyễn Thị Châu Loan 2018: 153]. Based on the realities in Vietnamese politics led by the CPV, Vo Van Thuong [2018] wrote an article to further specify populism and its manifestations in Vietnam. According to him, there have been statements in Vietnam that were not in line with the CPV's platforms, ignored legal basis and lacked feasibility, exceeded or fell within the authority of a few individuals, even some top political leaders, praised by mass media and social networking sites. Combining all of these arguments, when approaching populism in Vietnamese politics, we mainly focus on the statements and activities of influential individuals, especially political officials, aimed at disseminating baseless promises and demagogic propaganda, many of which are not in line with the CPV's platform and Vietnamese legal framework, among the masses.

Thirdly, for studying the recent resurgence of populism in Western countries, which provides good examples and lessons for the Southeast Asian region, we use the analytical model developed by H. Kriesi and J. Schulte-Cloos [2020] (Fig. 1).

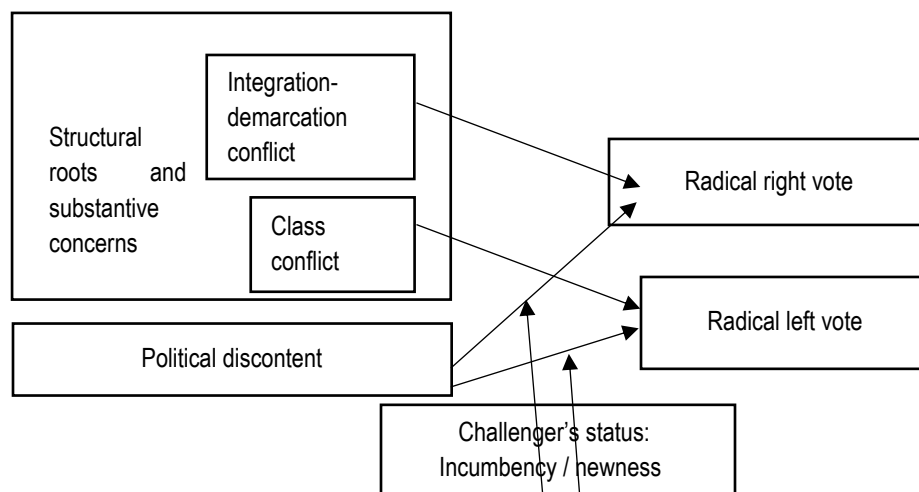


Fig. 1. The conditions for the rise of populism in Europe. *Source:* [Kriesi & Schulte-Cloos 2020]

Populism in Vietnam today: Manifestations and reasons

Even though the pros and cons of populism are still controversial among social scientists worldwide, the official approach to it in Vietnam inclines to treat it negatively. In the authors' opinions, there are two main reasons for this tendency.

The first has its root in the development history of the CPV. Looking back to the 1930s, the communists, during their party's infancy, were striking against the Trotskyists, whom they deemed populist and criticized for denying national independence, self-reliance, and creativity of the Indochinese peoples in the revolutionary process [Nguyễn Ngọc Hà & Nguyễn Thanh Huyền: 30.11.2020]. Despite the fact that populism has transformed greatly over time, this combat against the populists and the ideology behind it has long been anchored firmly in the political history and tends to incite preventive reactions among the CPV's followers to populism.

The second reason should be the practices of populist movements in recent years. Populism has evidently provoked substantial changes in political settings across the globe, ranging from the rise of demagogues and anti-establishment movements to the fragmentation of regional integration. Objectively speaking, many of these outcomes run counter to the established political direction of Vietnam, which is set for upholding the leadership of the CPV and political monism. That is why the behavior of "supporting extreme views" is mentioned among the 27 signs of degradation in political ideology, morality, and lifestyle of the CPV's members [Nguyễn Thị Phương Hoa 2019].

Accordingly, populism tends to express itself in Vietnam through the following aspects.

Firstly, although populism is considered an opposition to the CPV's ideology and not a theoretical tool of the whole political system, part of CPV members and state officials have shown the signs of being influenced by populist movements, especially in the form of demagogic politicians. They made lots of decisions and policies based on the opinions and wishes of a certain group under the label of "for the masses", whether complying with the legal policy-making process or not, for the purpose of reaching the position of power and gaining personal benefits for themselves and for their interest groups. One of the most prominent characters of this case should be Đinh La Thăng (Đinh La Thăng, recently being sentenced to 30 years in prison). During his time as the minister of transport ministry and then a member of the CPV Politburo, he was famous for his simple and resolute working style. In fact, many people "admired him from strictly scolding his subordinates for breaking the rules, publicizing his hot-line so that people could promptly reflect on their problems ... Therefore, when knowing that 'Mr. Thang' was disciplined for being related to past mistakes, many people were even surprised that they did not believe it was true. Simply because the public knew more about Đinh La Thăng as an assertive and for-the-people leader than his violations in leadership positions" [Ngọc Huyền: 22.04.2020].

Secondly, as an opposition to the mainstream political ideology in Vietnam, populism provides the anti-CPV forces, both domestic and overseas, a channel to spread their anti-system propaganda and activities, especially through social networking sites. They often capitalize on these sites to gather their domestic supporters under the words and acts contrary to the policies of the CPV and Vietnamese government, mainly on the label of demanding freedom and unlimited democracy, political pluralism and multi-partism, and the abandonment of socialism. These individuals and groups abuse the rights of freedom and democracy to make unreasonable demands and demagogic programs of action, which are

inconsistent with the directions and policies of the CPV and the State of Vietnam. An instance to be mentioned here should be the case of China's illegal deployment of the HD-981 oil rig in Vietnam's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in 2014. At that time, the anti-system populists took advantage of the people's justifiable combat against the incident to provoke resentment and xenophobic sentiments toward both the Chinese authority and the entire Chinese people. Similar observations could be found in several subsequent cases like the 2015 tree-felling scandal in Hanoi, the 2016 Formosa protests, etc.

Although it is hard to generalize the core characteristics of these populist manifestations into environmental populism, nationalist populism, or anti-establishment populism, all of these cases share a common point that the populists intend to mobilize support from the masses in demagogic, sentimental, and/or illegal ways. The reasons for their emergence could be explained as follows.

First, the deterioration in ideology, morality, lifestyle, and working style of a certain part of the CPV members and State officials. This is the cause of corruption, the chase for promotion and power, group interests, and lobbying. These are the negative manifestations of politics in Vietnam that make the people lose faith in the pure-mindedness and the leadership of the CPV, the constructive and managing role of the State as well as the fairness and transparency of the judicial system. The 4th Plenum of the 12th CPV Central Committee affirmed that "Many cadres and Party members, including the heads, have not shown their pioneering role and exemplarity; there are still signs of red-tapes and authoritativeness. Besides, the Party's supervision, inspection, and discipline have not enough deterrence to prevent and push back the degradation" [Văn kiện Hội nghị Trung ương 2016: 22]. Such manifestations as the deterioration in political ideology, morality, and lifestyle, the divergence from the policies of the CPV and State, or the pursuit of immediate interests of parts of cadres, party members, and people, could be considered as the motives for degraded Vietnamese politicians to utilize populist viewpoints and actions as their political tools.

Second, the limitation in political awareness and practices of certain segments of the Vietnamese population. In certain instances, this becomes an opportunity for the populists to distort the policies of the CPV and the Vietnamese Government. These falsifications over-amplify difficulties in people's livelihood as well as affecting domestic, international, religious and belief affairs. To be specific, some individuals and organizations with populist expressions took advantage of erroneous information on the Internet and Vietnamese patriotism to unleash a series of protests, which then escalated into violent riots in some cases. That not only made the problems hard to resolve at home but also affected the foreign relations between Vietnam and some other concerned countries.

Third, the objective factors such as economic globalization, the drawbacks of market economy or information explosion, and many others also exacerbate the domestic affairs, widening the polarization between the rich and the poor and social inequality. The fact that these pressing problems have not been fully resolved, which is likely to be exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, is the condition for the appearance of populist manifestations. The CPV and the Vietnamese Government have been striving to associate economic growth with social progress and equity for years. However, the downside of the market economy clearly reveals the shortcomings that amplify the disparities between the urban and the rural, river deltas and mountainous areas, or even among ethnic minorities, etc. (see

Table 1 as an example) These limitations are likely to cause great division and frustration among the population, becoming the important factors for the surge of populism.

*Table 1. Average income per capita per month during the period 2010–2020
thousand VND*

Year	Average	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	a	b (times)
2010	1387	369	669	1000	1490	3410	3041	9.2
2012	2000	512	984	1500	2222	4784	4272	9.3
2014	2637	660	1314	1972	2830	6413	5753	9.7
2016	3098	771	1516	2301	3356	7547	6776	9.8
2018	3876	932	1907	2934	4291	9320	8388	10.0
2019	4295	988	2100	3330	4954	1010	9115	10.2
2020	4249	1139	2491	3528	4896	9193	8053	8.1

a: Income gap between Group 1 and Group 5 (Absolute Difference);

b: Differential times in income between Group 1 and Group 5.

Note: According to General Statistics Office of Vietnam, there are 5 income groups in Vietnam including Group 1/Quintile 1 (the lowest-income households), Group 2/Quintile 2 (the near-poor households), Group 3/Quintile 3 (the middle-income households), Group 4/Quintile 4 (the good-income households), and Group 5/Quintile 5 (the highest-income households)

Source: GSO (2021). Statistical Yearbook 2020. Hanoi. P. 362

Returning to the aforementioned Kresi model, social and class inequality issues tend to be on the agenda of leftist parties, including both populist and progressive left-wing ones. Accordingly, these are the suitable conditions for the rise of populism in many European countries. Although there are no opposition parties, not to mention the populist ones, in the party system of Vietnam, these social phenomena are still tapped by the anti-CPV forces in populist ways as revealed for their purpose of weakening the CPV's leadership.

Based on recent studies on populism in Southeast Asia [Kenny 2018], over the past few years, some countries following the multi-party system in the region (like Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand) have been facing the rise of populism, and one reason for its spillover in these cases should be the mushrooming of social network users. As illustrated in Fig 2, Vietnam ranks 12th over the globe and 3rd in the Southeast Asian region with respect to the highest growth rates of social network users from 2021 to 2026.

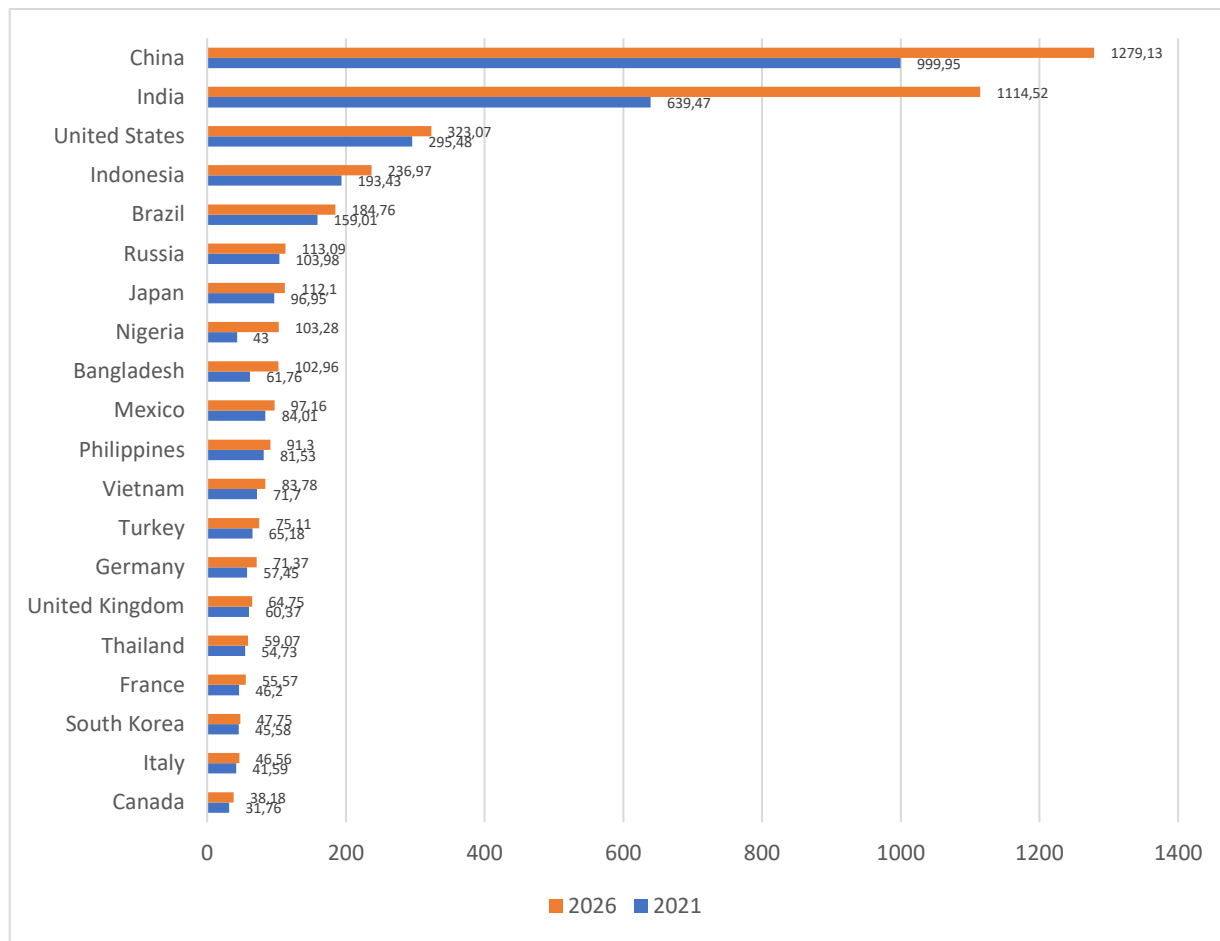


Fig. 2. Number of social network users in selected countries in 2021 and 2026 (in millions).

Source: [Statista: 16.05.2022]

Information overload in the age of information technology and social networking sites makes it hard for many citizens of all ages to evaluate and classify. Moreover, the provision of information in Vietnam in some cases, some of which are hot and confidential, is not yet sufficient, accurate, and timely. Besides, the cultural and legal standards of many Vietnamese citizens, including young people, are not high enough, making them easily directed by the populists. The booming of these sites assists political populists in forming promising images in the eyes of the masses, many of which bear little resemblance to reality, pushing people to follow populist programs contrary to the official directions and policies. Despite not being the heart of the matter, it is undeniable that the rapid increase of social network users in Vietnam in this day and age also adds fuel to the fire.

Conclusion

Populism at present is a burning and complex issue that could become one of the decisive political phenomena over the next decade. As explained above, in Vietnam, populism does not have enough economic and socio-political grounds to exist in a form of “ism” in its original sense, but rather in populist manifestations. Despite this fact, its influence is still considerable, especially in political aspects. More specifically, a segment of CPV members and state officials in Vietnam have shown signs of being

influenced by populist movements, especially in the form of demagogic politicians. No less complicated is the way the anti-CPV forces, both domestic and overseas, use populism as a channel to spread their anti-system propaganda and activities, many of which is through social networking sites. Facing this status-quo, the article supposes that it is necessary to pay attention to the following recommendations.

Firstly, step up research on the connotation, forms, sources, manifestations, and impacts of populism. Along with that are practical activities on communication, dissemination, and education for the officials, party members, and the people to be aware of populist manifestations. It is necessary to provide sufficient and accurate information, especially about political flashpoints, in order to raise people's knowledge about ways to identify and prevent the flip sides of populism.

Secondly, accelerate national renewal and development led by the CPV, thus preventing corruption and regaining public confidence; building up a clean, strong, and wholehearted CPV and political system to serve the people; strictly implementing what Ho Chi Minh said, "What is beneficial to the people, we must do our best" and "What is harmful to the people, we must do our utmost to avoid" to reinforce the people's faith in the CPV and Vietnamese State [Le Minh Quan: 23.06.2019].

Thirdly, learn from international experiences in building the economic and socio-political environment that halt and reverse the downside of populist manifestations. If not being well-regulated, political media and social networks are likely to facilitate the surge of populism. From that reality, Vietnam should draw other countries' lessons, Southeast Asian ones for instance, on establishing more efficient communication and improving the understanding of populism, thus further raising the Vietnamese people's awareness to avoid them from being drawn into the negative populist manifestations.

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VIETNAMESE DOMESTIC POLICY: ECONOMIC STRATEGY AND THE “SHIFT TO SERVICES”

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Abstract. The paper discusses recent changes in Vietnamese development strategy: a shift to greater emphasis upon services rather than industry. Given the historical focus of strategy upon the traditional ‘trope’ of factories and an industrial proletariat ‘led by the Party’, this change clearly has significance across many dimensions. The paper explains the policy shift. It then links this strategy, endorsed by the Party, to tensions globally. On the one hand the data shows that developing countries have since the end of the Cold War tended to servitise, not industrialise, with the faster growing countries showing more servitisation (as a share of GDP). On the other, data on research and donor advice shows a continuing and far greater interest in industrialisation. The paper points to published research on Vietnam since 2016 that appears to endorse servitisation. Contrast is made between Vietnam and ‘poster boys’ such as Thailand and Malaysia, praised in the early 1990s as ‘Newly Industrialising Countries’, that now seem to confront relative economic stagnation. Vietnam’s rapid economic growth whilst not implementing the Party’s strategy of ‘Modernisation and Industrialisation’ invites reexamination of the underlying forces driving change in Vietnam.

Keywords: Vietnam, economic strategy, industrialisation, servitisation.

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Introduction

This paper has two aims. *First*, I introduce recent important Vietnamese economic policy changes. These are to do with the desired pattern of structural change. I interpret the policy changes as shifting away from a focus upon ‘factories and industry’ and towards ‘services’. *Second*, I place these changes into two wider contexts: first, the twin facts that global averages in developing countries have shown both servicisation, and the faster the growth the more servicisation, and second that mainstream analysis and policy advice has continued with support for, and interest in, industrialisation; and second, some ideas for possible implications for the country in the future, and how its recent past might be explained.

The policy issue: the pattern of economic change

Both before and after *đổi mới*, the Vietnamese Communist Party’s slogan for the country’s development was ‘hiện đại hóa, công nghiệp hóa’ – modernisation and industrialisation. This was re-affirmed in the early 1990s with approval from donors such as the World Bank. Industrialisation had a clear meaning: the share of total economic activity (GDP) coming from agriculture, forestry, and fishing, dominant in the largely rural society of the period just after reunification in 1975–1976, should and would fall, and instead workers and capital would increasingly be concentrated in industry. This image matched the basic vision of Vietnamese society as being the alliance between farm and factory, the ‘liên minh công nông’. At the time, this was widely seen as being the natural path of economic change. It had normative implications as something that was progressive and should happen, and policies, public and private decisions were expected to bring it about.

Earlier Vietnamese Communist economic data based upon Soviet methodology measured what was called ‘Total Social Product’ and ‘(Produced) National Income’ [Fforde & Paine 1987: Tables 19–24]. This methodology tended to somewhat ignore services but offered measures of the share of industry in Produced National Income, rising (for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam – North Vietnam) from 18.6% to 27.9% between 1960 and 1975 [Ibid.: Table 21]. With this data also went stress upon industrial physical capacity, which was part of the ‘trope’ of ‘modernisation and industrialisation’ and was also related to capacity to produce military materiel, which at that time, and supporting Soviet and American victories against the Axis powers in WWII, relied in part upon capacity to out-produce Axis capacity to produce tanks, aircraft etc. [Ellis 1990]. VCP commitment to industrialisation as a defining economic change after 1975–1976 and after the end of the Cold War is therefore easy to understand. Replacement of Soviet statistical methodology by the National Income Accounting system developed in the later 1930s and early 1940s [Kuznets 1942], in some ways using very similar methods, allowed for this process of structural transformation to be measured by changes in the share of GDP going to industry: the share of rewards to labour and capital occurring in industry should, and it was expected would, rise with successful economic development. This would involve also satisfying the perceived need to create a domestic armaments industry (as in North Korea), and to supply the industrial goods needed by the population for consumption, and construction of buildings as part of the expected urbanization.

However, whilst the speed of economic change and development after the end of the Cold War and the associated reductions in poverty were very great, the country did not industrialise; rather, since GDP rose fast and the share of rewards to labour and capital in agriculture, forestry and fisheries

fell, without the share of industry rising, this meant that, as the GDP data showed, growth was occurring in services sectors. To quote from an early study [Fforde 2016: 9]:

“Whilst some 15 million jobs were created between 2000 and 2014, manufacturing and mining only generated about 3.9 million jobs” and “... the service GDP share rose from 38 per cent in 1992 to 43 per cent in 2013. In addition, whilst the share of the broad category ‘industry’ over the same period rose from 23 per cent to 29 per cent, this growth was largely due to increased mining output. In 2013 mining – included in the industry statistical definition – was 12 per cent of GDP yet below 5 per cent in the early 1990s; this means that the non-mining ‘industry’ share of GDP fell from around 18 per cent in the early 1990s to around 17 per cent in 2013 (GSO 1993: Table 18 and GSO 2014: Tables 66 and 68). If one cares not to believe this data then the point to bear in mind is that it is the public face of quantified economic change [Fforde 2016: 12].

The original trope in the slogan refers clearly to factories; increased Vietnamese production of crude oil was not seen as a sign of qualitative economic development.

This issue, of the distinction between measures of ‘industry,’ and measures of ‘manufacturing’ output signals a need for care. In another paper [Fforde 2021]. I look at the Vietnamese data and statistical issues in greater detail, but three main points are usefully stressed:

First, GDP measures, not actual ‘output’ but, like the earlier Soviet data, levels of economic activity defined as rewards to labour and capital (the latter had conceptually to be finessed in Soviet definitions): that is, to ‘value added.’ Calling this ‘output’ is misleading. It equals the difference, in a sector, between total sales and payments for inputs that are neither labour nor capital. For Kuznets, this was what was ‘real,’ not statistics that result from attempts to take out price changes to produce ‘volume’ estimates. These payments for labour and capital then result either in savings or demand for goods and services. In economies where most GDP is generated in services sectors, a higher share of this demand will be for services, by value, than for industrial goods – higher than when industrialisation, rather than servicisation, was experienced by countries with fast economic growth.

Second, globally, since the end of the Cold War the observable pattern of structural change in developing countries has been like that in Vietnam, on average [Fforde 2018] servicisation. These are averages, but these show that Vietnam, a faster growing-country, has serviced more, and the slower growing countries have been servicing less. This means that GDP/worker in services has tended to be higher than in other sectors, for that is simple arithmetic.

Vietnam started its period of fast growth with GDP/worker in manufacturing much higher than the national average, around twice as much [Fforde 2022, Table 3]. However, by 2018 it was about 10% below the national average. Workers moving into services sub-sectors on average were generating more GDP/worker than in manufacturing. Further, whilst it is true that in recent years FDI into manufacturing in Vietnam has been large, and the value of manufactures exports has grown fast, the economic activity involved has generated little incomes for Vietnamese workers and capital. The data shows this. Total GVA in the sector for 2018 (using 25,000 VN Dong to the USD as an exchange rate) was around USD 35 bn. This compares with total manufacturing exports in that year of USD 208 bn on an SITC basis [NGTK 2018: 612]², or USD 227 bn using the GSO’s definition [Ibid.: 611]. Clearly, these export values included rather little Vietnamese value-added (below 15%, as some of the sector’s output was domestically consumed). This shows the usefulness of the GDP data in

² This refers to the Vietnamese General Statistical Office’s *Niên giám thống kê* (Statistical Yearbook) available in downloadable form from their site, starting with NGTK 2005, and before then in hard copy.

showing the relative value (in terms of generation of wages and rewards to capital) of economic activities.

Third, detailed examination of the services sector shows that it is unlike industry in a key aspect: there is no sub-sector that can play the role conceptually of ‘manufacturing’ as a leading, superior sub-sector that others must ‘serve’. Two sub-sectors (financial services and real estate) report very high levels of GDP/worker, but they generate low levels of employment and the ratios of their GDP/worker to the national average vary greatly year-to-year, suggesting (as do other considerations) that they are areas of rent-seeking and rent-acquisition. Services, then, as part of a servicisation strategy, appears conceptually as requiring a focus upon current values of rewards to labour and capital (what Kuznets considered the ‘real’ data) and requires a more holistic approach as there is no ‘super sub-sector’ to match manufacturing in its claims to be a growth driver: there is no obvious hierarchy of sub-sectors. Rather than being, as many seem to think, a place where there is a plethora of badly paid petty producers on the margins of the modern, formal economy, services sub-sectors are areas of relatively well-paid workers and owners of capital.

This, perhaps oddly, fits with a linguistic issue. Why do Vietnamese statistics abstain from referring to services sectors with the common term ‘phục vụ’ and instead use the term ‘dịch vụ’? In my reading, the latter term avoids the sense of inferior subordinate status that might be associated with the former. I have asked Vietnamese colleagues but remain intrigued. My dictionaries translate both as ‘to serve’.

The policy issue: orthodoxy talks about ‘premature deindustrialization’

The previous section would suggest to any researcher that there should be an established literature on servicisation. But this is not the case. The term appears not at all in the World Bank’s *World Development Review*, and there are a total of 36 mentions in Abstracts of articles in the EBCSO database (<https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases#>) from 1961 to August 2021, compared with 10,977 references to industrialisation.

In the famous Economic Miracle study of the World Bank in the early 1990s [World Bank 1993], the recipients of praise were NIEs – Newly Industrialising Countries (such as Malaysia and Thailand – p.1). World Bank advice to Vietnam followed, obediently, this analysis [World Bank 1995, see also Fforde 2016 and 2018].

Such views were echoed by a wide range of experts, such as Rodrik, who deployed the telling phrase ‘premature de-industrialisation’ [Rodrik 2015].

The gathering support from literature: heterodoxy emerges

The shared doctrine of the necessity and value of industrialisation as a development strategy has never been unchallenged. For Vietnam, an early report [UNDP 2005] pushed for servicisation as a strategy, but this seems to have been simply shelved. Fforde 2016 was a paper for a conference on ‘40 years of doi moi’, and the commissioner, a Vietnamese at ISEAS, requested consideration of the slogan of modernisation and industrialisation. Subsequently, Nguyen HC 2018 is a peer-reviewed academic paper looking at structural change, but then Nguyen Dinh Chuc & Ta Phuoc Duong 2019 overtly (but politely) challenge the slogan by titling their paper ‘the shift to services’. As the next section shows, Party public thinking had already shifted at the 2018 Congress. But was still deploying the slogan into areas such as education policy in 2017 [Công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa: 19.08.2017].

Reasons of space preclude detailed examination of the non-Vietnamese literature. Fforde 2018 was loudly critical of the lack of interest in servicisation in contrast to the observed reality discussed

above. Helbe & Shepherd 2018, an ADB report, talk positively about ‘leveraging services for development’, and contrast with Haraguchi 2017 who avoids the issue by focussing on the fact that servicisation as a % of total global developing country output has not increased, but this is largely due to the massive industrialization numbers in China. China has probably been servicing strongly since the start of the current decade, but Chinese economists report that the Chinese Communist Party does not have a thought-through conceptualisation of servicisation strategy [Li et al 2018]. Mention can also be made of various other studies that seem increasingly to grapple with the realities and nature of servicisation (for example Hoekman & te Velde 2017). This poses a wide range of theoretical problems, as discussed in Fforde 2021, such as the shortcomings of measurements of constant price sectoral GDP (see also Arrow 1974 and early work he cites): the available measures do not measure what standard economic theory deploying production functions needs, which is estimates of changes in the real (volumes) of factor inputs.

Against this fascinating background, we find interesting changes in Vietnamese strategy.

The new policies

The VCP, in 2018, produced a major change of emphasis. In a recent official exposition of this new direction. Nguyễn Quang Thuấn (in 2021 the author is cited as ‘Deputy Head of the (Party’s) Central Theoretical Council’), with reference to the documents of the 2018 13th Party Congress, states:³ “Regarding the development of the services sector, the Documents of the 13th Congress stressed promoting development of the services sector in a modern direction, securing a growth rate faster than the productive sectors and faster than the growth of the national economy ... The Documents emphasised “A strong development of services ... especially those with high value-added ...” [Nguyễn Quang Thuấn 2021: 4].

This was then concretised in the 2021 (State) policy [Premier 2021] which is a national development strategy that moves away from industrialisation, seeking to **raise** the share of services sectors in GDP.⁴ These changes in strategic emphasis, combined with the reality of servicisation during the Miracle, have generated an increasingly vivid discussion in Vietnam. Directive # 531, as I read it, considers that the main policy issue is to ensure that factor markets work well and so continue to seek out areas of relatively high returns to labour and capital; as this happens to be services, then such processes should be encouraged. I return to this in the next section.

It is important to realise how unusual and path-breaking the 2018–2021 Vietnamese policy shift is, in a global context. However, as services issues are researched and, in a new ‘moment’, become part of the cognitive aspects of economic growth, this may point to Vietnam’s emergence as one of the first fast-growing developing economies to openly accept servicisation and, through an understanding of it, improve growth quality. Since servicisation is now the global average – and has been since the end of the Cold War (see below) – this suggests that we may well be seeing a further development of Vietnam’s position as a source of useful ideas and practices for others.⁵ Research

³ Author’s informal translation.

⁴ # 531 has 18 pages and was quickly echoed by related directives from provinces and cities, available for free on the massive website www.thuvienphapluat.vn. Like # 539, from central government, this pattern deserves detailed analysis, but I avoid this here for reasons of space. I am personally intrigued by the responses of cities like Đà Nẵng.

⁵ It is striking how methods of economic analysis and practical experience with the commercialization of a planned economy that were worked out by the Vietnamese in the early 1980s seem to have been somewhat off the radar screens of officials working for the then major aid donor, the Soviet Union [Fforde & Mazyrin 2018]. See also [Prostiakov 1998].

metrics still show a formidable bias towards industrialisation and lack of interest in servicisation [Fforde 2018]. Vietnamese contributions are striking in the speed with which they are increasing and developing.

A Google search on terms such as ‘national services strategy’ turns up rather little. Perhaps the Vietnamese are unique in this area – further research is needed. This might include examination of the situation of countries such as Thailand and Malaysian, praised as Newly Industrialising Countries in the early 1990s just after the end of the Cold War.

Conclusion

As already mentioned, ‘industrialisation’ has had high status as a hoped-for reality and a purpose. Much data suggests that this has proven to be troubled by facts, and by the persistence of a striking lack of academic and expert interest (though this may be changing).

It is possible that the experience, for Vietnam, may have intriguing implications.

First, does it matter than ‘the Party got it wrong’ when the experienced reality was one of rapid growth? On the one hand, this leads us to ask questions about the role in Vietnam of national development strategy as a source of hoped-for political support for the Party. Here perhaps the rather rapid emergence of a new strategy is indicative. Of what, more research may tell us. Loss of face does not seem to matter that much. As a leading retired economist remarked to me in 2019 (having long been, obediently, an advocate of industrialisation, when presented with the facts) – ‘dynamic flexibility is the thing’ (linh hoạt là chính). This, to my mind, reinforces Kuznets’ view that it is actual values of rewards to labour and capital, which generate savings and demand for goods and services, that are ‘real’, not attempts to use GDP data to talk about ‘actual output’. What matters is what is earned and what it can be spent on [Fforde 2021].

Second, it was not just public officials who bought into the industrialisation narrative, but also citizens, who had good reason to believe in it as the most prestigious donors (the World Bank) and experts (Rodrik, Ohno) were its advocates. Clearly one can expect much rethinking, and there is evidence that this is ongoing. Perhaps one basic lesson is that it is well-functioning markets for labour and capital, powerful enough to respond to economic fundamentals rather than slogans, that require thought. And of course, if previously officials could ‘get up’ public investment projects by saying that the massive investments required by manufacturing were profitable, and that environmental damage would be part of rapid growth that would create the resources to clean up later, this is now less likely. Again, this ‘turn’ is a very fruitful area for research.

Third, and more fundamentally, perhaps, and also intriguingly, ‘servicisation’, in that it is not well understood, but clearly positive in its creation of economic growth, pushes to reposition national leadership in ways that are less mechanically scientific, and more to do with creating suitable environments, where the population can then decide what to do, as the national labour market does.

Vietnam is rarely dull.

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SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE MEKONG DELTA IN VIETNAM

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Abstract. The article discusses the features of the socio-environmental situation in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. The first part analyzes the causes of its degradation under the influence of factors related to the economic development of the river both in Vietnam and abroad and multiplied by the consequences of climate change. The destruction of the Mekong Delta ecosystem calls into question the sustainability of the region's future economic development and threatens the country's food security. The second part of the article analyzes the policy promoted by the state to minimize the environmental consequences of ongoing development projects and adaptation to climate change. The author comes to the conclusion that despite the existing difficulties in implementing the planned measures, the state is ready to create conditions for the transition to sustainable development in the Mekong Delta.

Keywords: Vietnam, Mekong Delta, climate change, environmental problems, sustainable development.

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Introduction

The Mekong (it ranks the twelfth in the world as far as its length is concerned) coming from the Tibetan plateau in China and flowing into the South Chinese Sea, is the chief waterway of Indochina, its resources providing for vital activity of more as 60 mln people, including Vietnam (Fig. 1). However, its intensive economic exploitation for needs of agriculture and fishery, industry, energy and town while ignoring environmental and social costs, multiplied in the conditions of climate change, is accompanied with the growth of contradictions between society and environment and calls into question the achievement of this region's sustainable development. This devalues the results of economic progress and enhances the issue of searching the measures to minimize ecological losses from the intensive use of the Mekong water resources.

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Fig. 1. The Mekong River on the map of Southeast Asia. *An open source photo*

Relevance and practical importance of this problem research is due to the impossibility to consider it but the one of strictly local nature. Also, it is the question of Vietnam's development perspectives and of its food security, its usual rice export from the Mekong Delta to the world's markets, what acquires the global character, the country's export potential being taken into consideration.

The article discusses the origin of environmental and social problems in the Mekong Delta in the scope of systematic approach, which allows to analyze the nature of interrelationship between economic and ecological development processes. It considers the state policy of adaptation to the changing environmental situation in order to stabilize it in perspective of the conditions created for the transition to sustainable development with the parity of economic, environmental and social interests.

The aim of this work is to analyze the interaction of environmental, social and economic development processes in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam over the past decade. The objectives of the article include consideration of the features of the socio-ecological situation in the region; analysis of the causes of its degradation under the influence of factors related to the economic development of the river both in the country itself and abroad; identification of the impact of climate change on the nature of nature management; study by the state of policy to minimize the environmental consequences of ongoing development projects and adaptation to climate change; assessment of sustainable development prospects.

The approach used in the study of this issue is complex and allows for the first time to analyze the complexity of interaction in the system "society – environment", which allows us to assess both the scale of the emerging imbalances in its functioning and the prospects for achieving its sustainability.

The issues raised in the article find their reflection in various foreign works concerning some aspects of the problems under investigation. Their common feature is the lack of comprehensive approach to the research of the socio-environmental aspect of the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. These

works mostly deal with the analysis of this region's socio-economic development. Among them, the work by M. Garschagen et al. [Garschagen et al. 2012] is worth to be noted. It analyzed the main tendencies of the region's development caused by the transformation of the agrarian sector, urbanization and industrialization. The authors show the inconsistency of this process; the Mekong Delta with its considerable contribution into national GDP (17%), at the same time lags behind other regions of the SRV in terms of dimensions of poverty, education and incomes of the population.

The work by O. Dun [Dun 2009] touches on some problems of inundations' influence on migration processes being a factor increasing disproportions in the development of the region. Vietnam has been chosen the research object due to its vulnerability to natural disasters intensified in the conditions of climate change. The author comes to the conclusion that though the migration is a kind of the local population's reaction to the living conditions changed under global warming influence, this is not the only factor, and the problem demands the comprehensive approach. In her work, Nguyen Phuong Nga [Nguyen Phuong Nga 2015] investigates the inundations affecting the living and economic conditions of the local population. Concentrating on the adaptation of local dwellers to this disaster, she comes to the conclusion that their behavior, lifestyle, and forms of economic activity are better fit for inundations in comparison with the state programs enhancing social risks. Unlike the above-mentioned work, P. Minderhoud [Minderhoud 2017] shows the destructive effect of the traditional groundwaters' use for the environment. J. Weger [Weger 2019] has investigated a number of questions connected with the design of the Mekong Delta's development from the origin of the idea to its implementation in Vietnam.

The lack of theoretical works on environmental and social problems of the Mekong Delta in Vietnam is balanced with a broad empirical material which has been used for this article. Such sources are the World Bank's reports [World Bank 2010], as well as those for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment [Tran Thuc et al. 2016], for the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) [World Bank 2015] and "The Mekong River: Geopolitics over Development, Hydropower and the Environment", the report prepared for the European parliament [Soutullo 2019]. Also, materials of Vietnamese and foreign press have been widely used.

Environmental and social disbalances in the Mekong Delta

The importance of the Mekong Delta's region (it consists of 12 provinces and the city of Can Tho in the south of Vietnam) for the country's economy depends on its role in Vietnam's economic activity. Occupying but 12% of the country's territory, this region provides 17,7% GNI (former GNP), 54% of rice crops, 60% of fruit and 70% of seafood [Vien Thong: 15.12.2020]. The Mekong Delta, being the most productive region, as far as agriculture and aquaculture are concerned, is important for providing its food security and for maintenance of its export potential. The region accounts for 50% of agricultural production export. Besides, here runs the trade corridor between Vietnam, ASEAN countries and those of the Mekong River basin. More than 20% of the country's population lives in this area, employed mainly in the agricultural sector.

However, the further maintenance of the Mekong Delta vitality, being the main country's granary, is becoming a serious socio-environmental problem. Its solution demands for immediate reaction to overcome the consequences of the river's economic development multiplied in the conditions of climate change. The Mekong Delta's ecosystem undergoes serious degradation showing itself in frequent droughts, inundations, water salinization, and soil erosion.

The Delta lies in a low place; that is why it is highly vulnerable to inundations caused with the sea-level rise, being a consequence of climate change. According to the forecasts of the International Centre for Environmental Management, it can reach 28–33 cm by 2050 and 65–100 cm by 2100, which can result in the Delta's 40% loss [Khadka: 20.10.2015]. The Delta's flooding will result in inundations, particularly in the Ca Mau Peninsula, the destruction of the irrigation system and infrastructure, houses, water resources salinization, undermining of agricultural sustainability. The data of the experts of Utrecht University (the Netherlands), who investigate the climate change consequences in the Mekong Delta, show that more as 12 mln persons will be forced to migrate from the flood areas [Minh Nga: 02.11.2019].

Another problem has emerged due to climate change and the sea-level rise is the water salinization and erosion of the soil along the banks. The existing forecasts show that by 2050 the Delta can undergo the complete salinization due to the penetration of sea water. This will result in the loss of fertile soils, make them unfit for cultivating rice and most other cultures. By the end of the century such losses can account to 70% of the total agricultural area [The Mekong 2014]. This is a serious threat to Vietnam's food security allowing for the region's role in the country's agriculture.

Though the Mekong Delta belongs to the world's regions most vulnerable to climate change (according to the Vulnerability Index to climate change Vietnam belongs to the group of 30 countries which are most at risk) [World Bank 2015: 14], the main cause of environmental degradation of this region should not be sought in climate change. Its influence on the growth of environmental problems in the Mekong Delta is assessed but 5% [Osborne: 25.07.2021]. Both in Vietnam and abroad, the main harm is brought with those development projects which are implemented without ecosystem limiters. The most dangerous among them are the construction of hydroelectric power stations on the Mekong and its tributaries, sand mining, excessive use of groundwaters for the needs of agriculture and town.

The construction of big dams on the Mekong and its tributaries abroad, in particular in China, as well as in Laos and Cambodia², has been connected with the breach of the hydrological cycle in the Delta, the decrease of water runoff and the reduction of sedimentary deposits necessary for the maintenance of the soil fertility. According to the data of the Mekong River Commission (MRC), in case of the construction of all the planning dams the volume of sedimentary deposits will reduce from 143 mln tons in 2017 to 5 mln tons by 2040 [Minh Nga: 02.11.2019]. This will result in the water salinization level rise along with the sea-level rise and speed up the process of the soil erosion, its catalyzer being also the increase of the area of the land used for urbanization and numerous infrastructural objects on the Delta's fertile soils and extensive sand mining both in Vietnam and in neighboring Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Every year up to 500 ha (5 km²) of the cultivated land are lost [Khadka: 20.10.2015]

The increasing demand for sand in Vietnam in the course of urbanization spread and quick development of the construction sector resulted in the emergence of numerous sand mining companies. Some of them are illegal, which hampers the state regulation of the branch. The extraction of more than 50–100 mln tons of sand from the river's bottom can deepen the river-bed (by 200–300 mm annually) [Osborne: 22.04.2020] which results in the Mekong Delta's salinization.

² By now, 102 dams have been built, 11 dams in China and 64 ones in Laos among them. 64 dams more are being planned [Minh Nga: 02.11.2019].

All these problems are aggravated in the periods of drought. According to some assessments, during the dry season the Mekong Delta loses up to 10 billion m³ of water [Ibid.], while the demand for the water increases in the course of agricultural intensification. The shortage of fresh water, its pollution with the wastes of industrial and agrarian production, as well as its salinization excite local dwellers (nearly half of them experience the shortage of fresh water) [Khadka: 20.10.2015]. They actively collect groundwaters; therefore, the water line has been 15 m lower according to the database of Vietnam Association of Hydrogeology [Minh Nga: 02.11.2019]. In its turn, it speeds up the process of the Delta's subsidence. That has been confirmed with the model developed by the experts at Utrecht University; in their opinion, in case of the present level of groundwaters' use, the Mekong Delta will either become a saltwater or be flooded by 2100 due to climate change [Minderhoud et al. 2017]. Philip Minderhoud, the leader of the project, believes that intensive use of groundwater should be considered along with the most important factors which influence the delta's subsidence 1 cm annually [Boyle: 16.02.2019].

The Mekong Delta's salinization and the shortage of fresh water complicate livelihoods of the local population and undermine the stability of the local economy based on rice and fish cultivation. Droughts 2016 and 2020 exposed the severity of the problems. Traditional modes of collecting and storing water in reservoirs and dams, which peasants use in the dry season, are inefficient, and local dwellers are forced either to buy water for domestic needs or to use salt water. Fishing, rice cultivation, horticulture and vegetable-growing, shrimp cultivation are declining. The reduction of the agricultural area and the productivity entails the reduction of the jobs in these economies and in the branches connected with transportation, treatment and sale of the products. The reduction of incomes from agriculture results in the growth of debt among peasants, who are forced to look for additional sources of earning, which stimulates migration from the countryside to town, mostly the youth. For the recent decade, the Mekong Delta region, according to the assessment of Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), has lost more as 1,1 mln dwellers, who moved to Ho Chi Minh City and to neighboring industrial areas [New development model: 16.12.2020]. However, socio-economic consequences of the Mekong Delta ecosystem degradation have not been limited with local changes; they acquire national scope, because they may breach the whole chain of production and food deliverance.

The measures for overcoming socio-environmental crisis

The Mekong Delta socio-environmental problems are becoming the topic in the community of experts, which offers a wide scope of recommendations to the government including the enhanced cooperation in the field of collective control of the Mekong water resources, also with China. The latter's hydroelectric projects are of special concern to Vietnam. The propositions to change the existing development model revealing its socio-environmental disbalances are more radical. The adaptation to a climate should be combined with the measures creating conditions for sustainable development. It was in the past decade that the government became aware of the necessity to overcome the socio-environmental crisis in the Mekong Delta and to create a new model of its development based on the observance of environmental, social and economic imperatives. It has largely been the result of the successful cooperation with Dutch experts, who were the first to sound the alarm concerning the increase of environmental problems in this region of Vietnam in the conditions of climate change. Seeing that it is impossible to completely overcome negative tendencies, they suggested to minimize the future consequences. Since 2009 there has begun the work at Mekong Delta Plan. It was accompanied with a number of important state papers, the first of them

being Resolution 120, “a road-map” for “sustainably developing the Mekong Delta in adaptation to climate change” (2017). For the first time it was openly acknowledged that the Mekong Delta’s viability was threatened not only with the climate change consequences but also with the short-sighted resolutions on the economic development of the region having been adopted by the government. It was decided to give a response to the challenges posed [Tatarski: 21.06.2021].

Resolution 120 called to the development of ecologically oriented agriculture and to the introduction of new technologies. The Ministry of Planning and Investment was charged to develop the Mekong Delta Integrated Regional Plan (MDIRP) for the period up to 2030 with the perspective for 2050. Being financed with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), it has become the first plan in accordance with the new Planning Act (adopted in 2017) which created the mechanism to improve the coordination between economy sectors and provincial authorities at the regional level. This Act provides social protection of the population, their welfare, the maintenance of more balanced regional development and the improvement of the environment. Both acts targeted for the integrated and ecologically sustainable development of the Mekong Delta. The implementation of the regulations was controlled by the Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

In the scope of the planned tasks the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) recommended measures of adaptation to the changing environmental situation to regional authorities. In particular, it was acknowledged necessary to reject fixed indicators on rice production and areas of the used rice fields; to give the farmers freedom to choose cultivating cultures; to acknowledge ecologically dangerous to harvest three crops of rice and its cultivation on the territories susceptible to salinization, to avoid the shortage of fresh water; to transit to shrimps cultivation at aquafarms; to plant mangrove trees on vacant lands in the coastal area. Depending on the conditions of every region, the industrial models used in the Mekong Delta’s provinces varies.

In June 2020 the Mekong Delta Coordinating Council for 2020–2025 was established headed by Deputy Minister Trinh Dinh Dung. The Council consists of the representatives of 12 provinces and Can Tho city (the center of the Mekong Delta) and five relevant ministries. Their task is to develop coordinated resolutions to implement development models at the provincial level taking into account climate restrictions and to attract investments for their implementation.

Unfortunately, the finance shortage hampered the implementation of the adopted decisions. Vietnam is planning to borrow \$2 billion to provide for sustainable development of the Mekong Delta and to minimize the consequences of climate change [Borton: 26.10.2021]. The government is planning to attract money from the private sector, which according to the research of the International Finance Corporation must transform the problems into new opportunities for the development of renewable energy sources, ecologically oriented agriculture, green transportation and green buildings [Diji Chandrasekharan Behr: 01.10.2019]. The transition to clean development and overcoming the consequences of climate change will cost \$16,5 billion for the nearest five years [Vietnam’s Mekong Delta region plan 23.03.2021].

Limited funding and the lack of coordination between different ministries and departments are not the only causes of delaying the performance of the planned tasks. Provincial authorities which are still carrying out the projects harmful to the environment (such as the construction of the dams causing the soil erosion) hamper the Mekong Delta’s transition to sustainable development. The plan of the region development being approved, the main problem for the dwellers of the region is the adaptation to the transforming environment.

Conclusion

The Mekong Delta in Vietnam undergoes serious environmental problems aggravated with a complex of interconnected factors. The global warming consequences revealing themselves in the drought, inundations, water and soil salinization are overlapped with the changes in the environment under the impact of economic activities. The construction of hydroelectric power stations in the headwaters of the Mekong River, sand mining and the implementation of agricultural development models oriented mostly to intensify rice cultivation resulted in breaching the ecosystem sustainability and in the spread of soil erosion and water shortage, which in their turn, undermine the local economy sustainability and complicate the existence of the local population. To adapt it to new conditions of livelihoods, new production models must be developed in the framework of the transition to the Mekong Delta's complex development. This cannot be achieved by the efforts of local communities only, but with the resolution adopted at the state level.

Their implementation is delayed, so far, complicated with the shortage of financial resources and poor coordination between state departments and provincial administration. None the less, the government's acknowledgement of the necessity of a new approach to overcoming environmental and social challenges of the previous development stage multiplied with the consequences of climate change, inspires in the hope to create the conditions for the transition to sustainable development in the Mekong Delta. At the same time, we should not expect great changes in the nearest future, because this process may take a lot of time, be connected with the involvement of various interested parties in it and is mostly experimental in its nature.

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HISTORY, RELIGION AND CULTURE

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PHAN CHAU TRINH - THE OUTSTANDING VIETNAMESE REFORMER EARLY XX CENTURY

Nguyen Van Khanh¹

Abstract. Phan Chau Trinh (1872–1926) is one of the most typical reformist in Vietnam in the early twentieth century. The article analyzes his political views and the concept of national salvation he proposed. For a more complete and objective disclosure of the role of Phan Châu Trinh, archival documents, mainly collected in France, as well as proceedings of scientific seminars and conferences of recent years, were involved. In the context of the *Đổi mới* reforms carried out since 1986 and the country's course towards international integration, reference to the history of Vietnam and the activities of famous political figures such as Phan Chau Trinh, who made a huge contribution to the struggle for independence, is of particular relevance.

Keywords: Vietnam, Phan Chau Trinh, French Indochina, national salvation, national liberation movement, democratic reforms.

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Introduction

During his lifetime, Phan Chau Trinh was renowned as an author, poet, political theorist, and activist. When he died in 1926, the testimonials and the outpouring of grief displayed at commemorations held across the country confirmed his stature as one of the nation's greatest intellectuals. Yet following his death, Phan Chau Trinh's career, political writings, and their legacy for national salvation were called into question. It was argued that Phan Chau Trinh was just a reformist politician and that he "did not believe in the people's force." For some, his policy of "taking

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advantage of the French to raise people's intellectual level" was "completely an illusion" [Trần Văn Giàu et al. 1957: 218].

According to these critics, Phan Chau Trinh's conception of democracy was very limited. Commenting on Phan Chau Trinh's contribution to national salvation, many authors suggested that by requiring the French colonialists to take reform measures such as: "talent acquisition", "increase advantages - decrease disadvantages", and help the poor make a living and raise their voice, so that "people are assured to do business", Phan Chau Trinh "had fallen into the path of reformism unconsciously" [Nguyễn Khánh Toàn 1985: 122].

However, since the Renovation period, the evaluation of Phan Chau Trinh has gradually changed towards a development perspective and a more comprehensive and objective orientation thanks to new thinking. Not only political ideology but also works of literature as well as the entire life and career of Phan Chau Trinh had been studied by academicians and exposed in many scientific conferences, especially on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Phan Chau Trinh's death (2006), as well as in many events related to the Duy Tan (Renewal) movement in the first half of the twentieth century.

In 2001 and 2003, the author Le Thi Kinh (Phan Thi Minh) published two books [Lê Thị Kinh 2001, 2003] which introduced materials on Phan Chau Trinh's life and national salvation newly collected in the French archives, especially the National Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence. Based on these sources, Đà Nang Publishing House had organized and published a three volume series containing a full introduction and a complete collection of Phan Chau Trinh's writings, including many new documents about him or compiled by him when he was in France from 1911 to 1925 [Phan Châu Trinh 2005a, b, c]

Based on the above-mentioned sources, this article systematically and objectively reexamines Phan Chau Trinh's life, political theories, and legacy. It focuses on presentation of the main features of his political ideology and national salvation career, thereby contributing to the clarification of his contributions and his role in the history of nation, especially the national salvation and revival of Vietnam in the early twentieth century (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Phan Chau Trinh. *An open source photo*

Phan Chau Trinh's life and career

Phan Chau Trinh (pen name Tay Ho or Hy Ma) was born in 1872 in Tay Loc village, Tien Phuoc district, Quang Nam province. His father was Phan Van Binh, a battalion commander. His mother, Le Thi Trung, was from a family in Tien Phuoc district, Quang Nam province. His father participated in the Can Vuong (help King Ham Nghi save the country) movement and was assigned to the military, but was murdered 1887 as part of an internal struggle within the movement.

In his childhood, Phan Chau Trinh learned the Chinese classics and martial arts. In 1900, Phan Chau Trinh obtained a bachelor's degree (*Cử nhân*) at Thua Thien School. In the following year, once again he was honored as *Phó bảng* (Junior Doctor, second-rank, under Doctorate) in the National examination, together with Doctor Ngo Duc Ke and Junior Doctor Nguyen Sinh Sac, father of Nguyen Ai Quoc – Ho Chi Minh.

Having the Junior Doctor's Degree, Phan Chau Trinh was appointed to the *Thừa biện* position [承辦, Undertaker] – an official at the *Bộ Lễ* (Ministry of Ceremonies) in the Hue Court. However, the post under a corrupt government brought him neither freedom nor joy. Having worked for two years at the Ministry of Ceremonies, in 1904, he resigned and then traveled with his like-minded friends such as Huynh Thuc Khang², Tran Qui Cap, and others.

In early 1905, when they arrived in Binh Dinh province, the annual examination was held. Three of them sneaked into the exam school to write a poem in which they signed the name of the author as Dao Mong Giac. In the poem "*Chí thành thông thánh*" [志誠通聖, The Faithfulness that moves even heavenly gods], they asked the students: "All the people are servants under the yoke of power, why are you still drunk in the professional dreams? If doomed to humiliation forever, when will we escape from the cage?" [Phan Châu Trinh 2005a: 16]. The poem marks the first point at which Phan Chau Trinh publicly expressed his opposition to the monarchy and the bureaucratic system on which it rested.

Having come home from Japan in the early summer of 1906³, on 15 August 1906, Phan Chau Trinh wrote the letter "*Đầu Pháp chính phủ thư*" [A letter to the French colonial government] stating the reasons why Vietnam had to bear the yoke of foreign colonizers and sent it to Paul Beau, the Governor General of Indochina. To change the status quo of the country, he asked the French Government to implement reforms in Vietnam to make it a strong and prosperous country.

In August 1907, Phan Chau Trinh was invited to lecture at Hanoi at *Trường Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục* (The Tonkin Free School). This was a private school in Hanoi, teaching and learning according to the program of the colonial government, but the learners did not have to pay for tuition and books because the purpose of *Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục* "is broaden the people's mind without taking money".

Beside this, he also collaborated with the *Đăng cổ tùng báo* [登鼓叢報, The Newspaper of enlightenment and public voice]. In the article "Current issues" which was later reprinted by Huynh Thuc Khang in the leftist journal "*Tiếng Dân*" [People's Voice], Phan Chau Trinh set out his point of

² Huynh Thuc Khang (1876–1947) was a thinker anti-colonialist. After going out of the French colonial prison in Con Dao, he founded *Tieng Dan* newspaper. In 1926 he was elected Head of the people's representative Council in Annam (the Central Vietnam). From May to October 1946 he was the Acting President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam when Ho Chi Minh went to France.

³ This is according to Phan Chau Trinh narrated by Huynh Thuc Khang. See: [Lê Thị Kinh 2001: 154].

view of how to save the country: “Do not look for outsiders, for that is foolish; do not use violence, for that certainly leads to death”.⁴

Under the influence of his reformist thought, the Duy Tan movement from Quang Nam province began to thrive and spread to other provinces in many fields: national language schools with new learning methods were opened, trading was established, weaving started, trees were planted, people's hair was cut short, people's fashion changed to a more European style, and bad habits were tackled, as well. From March 1908, the Duy Tan movement had evolved into a movement that rebelled against forced labor and heavy taxes with increasingly drastic measures. Every day, there were dozens of demonstrations of farmers, some lasting for many days, and others seeing farmers surrounding entire districts (Tam Ky, Hoa Vang). To avoid the peasants' uprising, the French government had brutally suppressed the protests, arresting the participants.

Even though there was no concrete evidence, Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang, and Tran Qui Cap were accused of inciting rebellious farmers, so they were arrested by French authorities. In March 1908, Phan Chau Trinh was sent from Ha Noi to Hue to a trial at the court. Soon after, he was exiled to the Con Dao prison. In June 1910, due to the intervention of the French Human Rights Association, Phan Chau Trinh was released but detained in Mỹ Tho province. Having refused to be a detained prisoner, he required to be sent to France. In March 1911, Phan Chau Trinh went to France with his son Phan Chau Dat, a boy of 14 years old.

For 14 years in France (from 1911 to 1925) in France, Phan Chau Trinh continued to propagandize the idea of reform and, at the same time, he was active in the overseas Vietnamese community. Phan Chau Trinh's first activity after his arrival in France was to petition the French government to amend the trial system, especially in North and Central Vietnam. Besides, Phan Chau Trinh wrote newspapers and organized speeches to acquaint the French public with the cause of the 1908 incident in Central Vietnam. His work made the colonial government consider and intervene to reduce the number of people arrested after the anti-tax movement. In the early years of living in France, Phan Chau Trinh focused time and energy to write several important works, including “*Đông Dương Chính trị luận*” [Indochina political theory] and “*Pháp Việt Liên hiệp hậu chi tân Việt Nam*” [A New Vietnam Following the Franco-Vietnamese Alliance] [Nguyễn Quang Thắng 1992: 281–285].

In addition to the press and the writings, Phan Chau Trinh also held many talks and lectures with the participation of numerous overseas Vietnamese to express the suffering of the country under the yoke of French colonial rule, criticize the injustice of the colonial government, and encourage patriotism of Vietnam expatriates. Phan Chau Trinh played a central role in creating important Vietnamese fraternal and patriotic organizations in France. In 1912, when the patriotic association was established, Phan Chau Trinh joined the board of directors. Based on this association, in 1914, Phan Chau Trinh and some other revolutionaries such as Phan Van Truong⁵ and Khanh Ky formed the Compatriotic Association. Later, this association was handed over to Nguyen Ai Quoc.

These associations were an important base for advancing the cause of Vietnamese self-rule. In early 1919, with the help of Phan Van Truong, Phan Chau Trinh wrote an eight-point “*Bản yêu*

⁴ *Tiếng Dân*, No. 613, August 1933.

⁵ Phan Van Truong (1876–1933) was a journalist, a lawyer. Studied Law at the Sorbonne University, Paris, he was the first law doctor in Vietnam. In 1912, the Compatriots' organization (*La Fraternité des compatriotes*) was established in Paris by him as its president. In 1923, he returned to the country, together with Nguyen An Ninh founded the newspaper *La Clôche Fêlée* and then *L'Annam* to claim democratic freedoms.

sách của nhân dân Việt Nam” (The Vietnamese people’s claim) which was signed by Nguyen Ai Quoc and sent to the Versailles Conference to demand democratic freedoms and the right to self-determination for the Vietnamese people. In July 1922, when Khai Dinh King went to France, Phan Chau Trinh wrote “*Thất điều thư*” [Note on the seven guilt], a letter pointed out his seven guilts: honoring monarchism, unfair rewards and punishments, preference for prostration, extravagant lifestyle, improper attire, excessive traveling, and suspicious visits to France.

In France, opposing the rule of the feudal-colonial government, Phan Chau Trinh tenaciously and persistently continued fighting against the harsh policies of the French and the Nguyen Dynasty. He repeatedly sent petitions to the Human Rights Council, M. Moutet (Senator), A. Sarraut⁶ (Minister of the Colonies), and Jules Roux⁷ criticizing the colonial administration in Indochina, and expressing opinions on the democratic freedoms that the Vietnamese people deserve.

However, having got disheartened due to his unsuccessful activity in France, in 1920s, Phan Chau Trinh asked the French government to send him home. Not until his health became exhausted did the French government approve of his returning to his motherland in June 1925. Having returned home, despite his bad health, a few months before his death, Phan Chau Trinh was trying to deliver two public lectures titled “*Quân trị chủ nghĩa và Dân trị chủ nghĩa*” [Monarchical rule and Democratic rule], and “*Đạo đức và Luân lý Đông Tây*” [Morality and Ethics of the East and West]. In these two speeches, he continued to criticize the monarchy and to praise Western democracy, two ideas that would have a great influence on the thoughts of young people at that time.

Phan Châu Trinh's political ideals with national salvation

During the early 20th century, under the impact of the new historical context domestically and internationally with the nationalist movement of the bourgeoisie in Vietnam, two tendencies emerged and existed simultaneously: a tendency towards an anti-French uprising for national independence represented by Phan Boi Chau; and the other trend promoted by Phan Chau Trinh, which advocated for the reform of the country to improve the country’s position in order to avoid the status of foreign dominion.

Compared with those who had the idea of innovation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Phan Châu Trinh’s reform ideas had a far broader influence. It could be said that Phan Chau Trinh was the first to initiate and spread the idea of democracy and civil rights in Vietnam [Nguyễn Văn Xuân 1995: 107]. But what caused Phan Châu Trinh to develop the idea of democracy and reform? There might be many causes, but the three main reasons. *First of all*, the influence of his family, and through them, his experience of violent anti-colonial resistance. Phan Chau Trinh was born in the martial-arts family. His father participated in the Can Vương resistance movement. But despite his patriotism, he had been killed by his own comrades. More generally, the Can Vương movement was inevitably defeated in the face of French technological and military advantage. *Secondly*, his hometown – Quang Nam was located close to two commercial ports in Đà Nẵng and Hoi An, the gateways with favorable conditions for gaining new ideas from outside and expressing them. Besides, Phan Chau Trinh had lived and worked in the capital for more than two years and witnessed the evil and cowardly nature of the Hue court [Trần Văn Giàu et al. 1957: 215]. These reasons prompted Phan Chau Trinh to break away from feudalism, including violent anti-French sentiment, towards more democratic ideas.

⁶ Albert Sarraut (1872–1962) was the Governor General of Indochina twice in 1911–1914 and 1917–1919.

⁷ Jules Roux was a French officer who lived in Vietnam for many years, spoke and wrote good Vietnamese.

Before encountering books, newspapers and documents containing new ideas, Phan Chau Trinh was a Confucian scholar, understood Confucian knowledge, praised the idea of respecting the king and monarchy. During his time working within the Hue dynasty, Phan Châu Trinh read books containing Western and global ideas of democracy through “new letters” from China and Japan. As a result, he learned that the feudal examination was outdated. Since then, he had been actively promoting against feudalism, especially among the Hue royal family and bureaucrats, and advocating for democracy.

Phan Chau Trinh's political opinion reached its peak (i.e., was complete) after several years of reading new books and especially with many advanced intellectuals both in Vietnam and abroad, including the time in Guangdong (China) and Japan. This idea was clearly expressed in the letter sent to the General Governor Paul Beau, which was entitled *Đầu Pháp Chính phủ thư* (A letter to the French colonial government) [Phan Châu Trinh 2005b: 51–65]⁸. The letter sent to the General Governor of Indochina dated October 1, 1906, said: “...a country with up to 20 million population has about 10 thousand educated people, but dark and weak... for many years, the South has been under the protectorate now weakening day by day...” [Phan Chau Trinh 2005b: 53]. Having exposed the three causes of the corruption of the Vietnamese feudal Dynasty, when the people lived miserably under the Vietnamese government, which disrespected the Vietnamese people and took advantage of them, Phan Chau Trinh proposed the French government to reform policy, and create an authentic revolution for the Vietnamese people. He emphasized: “If the government is willing to change all the policies, choose the gifted persons, give them the authority, treat them well; also eliminate offences, open the way to a better life for the poor, recompense strictly on merit,... even change the law, remove examination courses, open schools, pedagogic classes to study industry and taxes, gradually reform the salary; then the people will be happy to work, officials will be willing to serve the government [Phan Châu Trinh 2005b: 64]. According to Phan Chau Trinh, to oppose feudalism and to establish democracy in Vietnam, a comprehensive reform needed to be undertaken with three goals: *Khai dân trí, chấn dân khí, hậu dân sinh* [Civil education, Civil mobilization, and Civil livelihood].

Civil education means anti-learning from the *từ chương trích cú* [bookishness] (the study which does not pay attention to the content but only picks up the cliché), the removal of examination, the removal of customs; learning the native tongue; and disseminating the scientific knowledge. He advocated for opening schools, reading poetry, books, and newspapers to enlighten the human mind. Phan Châu Trinh strongly condemned monarchism; he severely criticized paternalism and conservative traditional customs. To him, for the development of society, it was necessary to put an end to all bad habits.

Beyond the horizons of knowledge of many Confucian scholars in the same period, Phan Châu Trinh said that the root of foreign domination in Vietnam was that Vietnamese people were both economically and intellectually poor. Therefore, to overcome this situation, firstly we needed to enlighten the mind. It was necessary to use the native tongue to study practical subjects and scientific knowledge to meet the requirements of life, and it was not obligatory to study the poetry of the ancients, especially the literature of Northern feudal dynasties. Phan Chau Trinh appealed: “Our

⁸ In the letter, Phan Chau Trinh asked the French to live up to their civilising mission. He blamed them for the exploitation of the countryside by Vietnamese collaborators. He called on France to develop modern legal, educational, and economic institutions in Vietnam and industrialise the country, and to remove the remnants of the mandarin system. The letter was originally written in Chinese, then translated to Vietnamese by Ngo Duc Ke in the newspaper *Tân Dân* in 24 Mars 1949 [Phan Châu Trinh 2005b: 51–65].

compatriots, our residents who love freedom, I would like to give very precious things to all of you. This is “*Chi bằng Học*” [Nothing is better than studying]” [Phan Chau Trinh 2005b: 69]. In the context of semi-feudal colonialism in Vietnam in the early 20th century, Phan Chau Trinh's idea of educating people was really a renewal making the people change their minds to rise to a new horizon, in accordance with the development of that era [Trần Mai Ước 2013: 115].

Civil mobilization is to awake the self-reliant spirit of the people, which enlightens people about their rights and obligations, and let them escape any feudal oppression. Phan Chau Trinh's ideas on civil rights had been improved over time, especially in his years of living and working in France due to his greater exposure to the pro-democracy bourgeois. In *Thất điều thư* [Note on the seven guilts] sent to Khai Dinh King in July 1922, Phan Chau Trinh wrote: “According to European theories, what is a country? It is a union of people. What is a dynasty? Those who are authorized to consent to the opinions of the people and act in the interests of the people and the country” [Phan Châu Trinh 2005c].

This idea originated from the perspective of French intellectuals such as Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau, suggesting that power was not granted by God, but by the will of the people. According to Phan Chau Trinh, history was made by the people; democracy was due to the struggle of the people, so it was necessary to make people aware of their strength. Thus, the people could fight against the power and corruption of feudalism to create a democratic society with the supreme power of the people.

Civil livelihood is the final goal but the most important one because civil education and civil mobilization are to improve the material and spiritual life of the people. According to Phan Chau Trinh, to achieve this goal, the country must eliminate all remnants and barriers of feudalism. He stood for developing industry, setting up workshops, establishing associations to explore new wastelands, starting plantations, and trade. He proposed the program of establishing associations of the plantation, cloth weaving, merchants, and domestic good manufacturing, which aimed toward economic recovery of the country. Phan Chau Trinh was aware that to be independent of foreigners, it was necessary to revive jobs and improve the economic and financial potential of the country. To improve the people's life, the country had to do away with old customs, superstition, gambling, alcoholism; and build a healthy and modern lifestyle. Phan Chau Trinh's *civil livelihood* views fundamentally changed the perception of Vietnamese scholars and people of the specific requirements of human life at that time. That view expressed the very practical spirit of “human beings”, and exposed the “spirit of radical innovation”, as the Phan family saw it.

To implement the reform of the country and make it prosperous, Phan Chau Trinh considered it necessary to rely on the French government under the motto “France for progress”. Based on the French, enlisting the help of the French government meant innovation for the country and there was no need for foreign aid or violence against the French. This view of Phan Chau Trinh is different from that of Phan Boi Chau. While Phan Boi Chau advocated for seeking external help (first of all, from Japan, then relying on the help of the Chinese government, or even of Germany) to carry out violent attacks to fight against the colonial French and take independence, Phan Chau Trinh said: “Do not look for outsiders, for that is foolish; do not use violence, for that certainly leads to death” [Phan Chau Trinh 2005b: 69].

Explaining this difference, in a conversation with the governor of Cochinchina in 1910 in Con Dao prison, Phan Chau Trinh analyzed: “The people of Vietnam have been under despotism for over a thousand years, which means that our country did not have an independent national status, and not

only under foreign rule. It's like dealing with “a different master, but still as a servant” without any benefits. Beside this, France is globally known as a pioneer of civilization, while they are protecting our country, and we should learn from them... Now, the citizens' education level has become higher, which means that independence has come nearer day by day. But if we follow the idea of “depending on foreign power”, it is winding and twisting; if we are not independent, everyone is our enemy. Korea and Taiwan are striking examples”. Phan Châu Trinh believed that the policy of relying on the French for the reform of the country was only a “trick”, in other words, a temporary measure. He confessed: “I want to make the French believe, so I have to “rely on the French” to create mutual faith”. Also, he frankly said: “I advocate the theory of “relying on the French”, so we cannot use the means of autonomy. Autonomy is a big deal; we will die if we fail ...” [Nguyễn Quang Thắng 1992: 275].

Thus, in the context of our country's weak economy and low educational level, we cannot demand independence immediately, but first of all, we need to rely on the French government to fight against the feudal government, which has too many bad habits, customs, and a backward traditional life. At the same time, we must implement the policy of reform with the motto: *Khai dân trí, chấn dân khí, hậu dân sinh* (Civil education, civil mobilization, and civil livelihood) to develop the economy, culture, and education, so that we can improve the material and spiritual life of the people and strengthen the power of the country. It is a path, a new direction to escape the slavery of a dominant country.

But the mistake of Phan Chau Trinh and Phan Boi Chau was that they were still vague about the nature of imperialism that they wanted to rely on, to get foreign aid and support from outside to save the country. That is the misconception that the two Phan patriots were later criticized by Nguyen Ai Quoc – Ho Chi Minh, and ultimately led to their project's stalemate and failure.

Phan Chau Trinh' contribution in Vietnamese history in early 20th century

Phan Chau Trinh was the first and most prominent democracy activist in Vietnam at the beginning of the 20th century. It was known that the weak and dependent government of our country was the main cause of the Nguyen Dynasty's ruin. Therefore, he advocated the idea of democracy, resolutely opposed to monarchy, and eliminated the ideologies and habits of imperialist feudalism. Phan Chau Trinh's public proclaims against feudalism show his courage and disregard for any ruling power. He said: “I do know the suspicion of French government, the resentment of the Vietnamese dynasty but I'm not afraid of danger to study abroad, when singing, crying in the foreign country, standing in the middle of four tanks with hostile, taking the self-strength to fight like hanging by a single hair, sacrificing life as the target to let them shoot in order to hold the life in death, and no regret although being near the death” [Nguyễn Quang Thắng 1992: 271].

Regarding the idea of anti-feudalism, in the past, there were many opinions that Phan Chau Trinh only propagandized against the backwardness of feudalism and did not oppose all feudal governments, moreover, he did not want to abolish feudalism [Trần Văn Giàu et al. 1957: 241]. However, as the newly collected material shows, Phan Chau Trinh supported anti-feudalism quite strongly and comprehensively, and later, his opinion was fiercer and more radical. According to the evidence of a French secret agent Jolin, during a conversation between Phan Chau Trinh, Phạm

Quynh⁹, and Nguyen Van Vinh¹⁰ in Marseille in May 1922, Phan Chau Trinh wanted to “overthrow the dynasty to form a parliament as the leader of the country, jointly with the French government. There is no need for a king anymore. We should make the people understand their rights and the law and be free like the French”.

Phan Chau Trinh’s democratic view was further developed and reflected in his lecture on monarchism and democracy in Saigon in November 1925. According to him, democracy is the rule of law; if one wants to build a state following the model of European capitalist countries, one must follow the principle of separation of power. Phan Chau Trinh said that “the legislative, executive, and judicial powers are separate and must not belong to one authority” [Nguyễn Văn Dương 1995: 817]. According to the rule of law, when there is a violation of the law, “everyone, from the president to a countryman, is equally subject to the same law” [Nguyễn Văn Dương 1995: 816]. Phan Chau Trinh’s idea of the rule of law was borrowed from the French Third Republic [Phan Châu Trinh 2005a: 41] and he had spent many years studying that state. That was a bourgeois democracy conception. Evaluating Phan Chau Trinh’s political thought, Tran Van Giau, Vietnam’s famous historian, wrote: “The line of *civil education, civil mobilization, and civil livelihood*, and the path of anti-colonialism to regain independence of France, to establish a constitutional monarchy or a democratic republic, and to develop this country like the West, are essentially bourgeois ideologies, nothing else” [Trần Văn Giàu 1975: 120].

In the early 20th century, Vietnam was in a dark time of slavery under colonial regime. With a patriotic spirit, many Vietnamese patriots tried to find a different way to save the country. Phan Boi Chau and the Confucianists had violent thoughts, a policy of gathering forces to carry out an armed uprising to gain national independence. Phan Chau Trinh said that at that time, the national economy was backward, the level of education was low, which was not sufficient to regain independence of the French. Thus, the best strategy was to develop the power to make people rich and powerful by implementing a reform of the country under the motto “*Broaden the people’s mind, invigorate the people’s spirit, then enrich the people’s well-being*”. He said: “Without opening the people’s minds to help them become rich and powerful, there is no way to reach the goal of autonomy and education, commerce, speech is a medicine or treatment” [Nguyễn Quang Thắng 1992: 276]. By doing this, Phan Chau Trinh opened a path and a new direction to bring Vietnam out of slavery. A radical change in mentalities and action was necessary to achieve the goal of national reform. In the perspective of progress, Phan Chau Trinh’s ideas and views on civil rights, democracy, and people were revolutionary, and a great step towards the search for solutions to save Vietnam, what differs him from other scholars of the early 20th century.

Phan Chau Trinh was aware that the ultimate goal of Vietnam was to achieve independence and bring freedom and happiness to the people. However, to achieve that goal, firstly, it was necessary to awaken the sense of national self-reliance, and to save people from drowning in the confusion of absolute monarchy. Phan Chau Trinh advocated the policy of “civil education, civil mobilization, and civil livelihood” to reaffirm the sense of self-reliance and to assert that the Vietnamese can build their

⁹ Pham Quynh (1892–1945), the Editor-in-chief of “*Nam Phong*” journal (“Southern wind”) from 1917. When King Bao Dai returned to rule from France in 1932, he was appointed the Minister of Education and then the Minister of the Interior in the Nguyen Dynasty.

¹⁰ Nguyen Van Vinh (1882–1936) was a Vietnamese journalist and translator of Western literature. He founded the “*Đông Dương tạp chí*” (“Indochina journal”, 1912) and then he was the Editor-in-Chief of “*Trung Bac Tan Van*” journal.

own civilization [Trần Mai Ước 2012: 92]. It is also a way to oppose the policy of “civilization” that the French and Indochina colonial governments often propagated, which disillusioned the mind of the Vietnamese people.

Looking at the policy of violence of Phan Boi Chau as a reference system, we can regard Phan Chau Trinh’s perspective as reformism [Tôn Quang Phiệt 1958: 70]. In the context of Vietnamese society at the beginning of the 20th century, Phan Chau Trinh’s ideas of democracy, civil rights, and people’s livelihood were positive and progressive. A specific piece of evidence was that his reformist views in a short time gained support from the people, from progressive scholars to industrial workers, civil servants, and farmers. The original idea of reform in peace was rapidly transformed into people’s power, which led the forces of the people to an uprising. In the uprising, the peasants fought against the corrupt feudal colonial government, for civil rights and democracy. The reality showed that Phan Chau Trinh could not be called a reformist, or that he “did not trust the people” [Chương Thâu 1982: 87].

Conclusion

Phan Chau Trinh was an enthusiastic and incisive patriot who had the most advanced ideas among the patriotic intellectuals in Vietnam in the early 20th century. He had no fear of sacrifice or hardship and disregarded rulers in power like Phan Boi Chau. Phan Chau Trinh had been active and persistent throughout the struggle for the people and the nation. His words concerning Phan Boi Chau, are also true for himself: “Phan Boi Chau is a genius who dares to do great deeds without regrets but with strong self-confidence” and he admitted that “I (Phan Chau Trinh) am like that too”. To be more objective, one could refer to the following statement of Prof. Daniel Hémery, the leading researcher of Vietnam in France: “The great Phan Chau Trinh, in my opinion, is the most remarkable figure in the history of Vietnamese culture and politics in the 20th century, because he had identified the nation’s issues of concern (les problématiques) the most clearly, which set a long-term guide that many generations of Vietnamese can follow” [Nguyễn Ngọc 2002: 71]. Despite some limitations, and even mistakes, Phan Chau Trinh spent his life to engage and persist in fighting for the future of the nation despite prison and the threat of harsh violence. To Phan Chau Trinh, national liberation needed to go hand in hand with modernization and a rupture with traditional monarchy (Nguyễn Thế Anh 2008: 387).

As expressed in his funeral eulogy in 1926 “*Ba tác lưỡi mà gươm mà súng, nhà cầm quyền trông gió cũng gai ghê; Một ngòi lông vừa trống vừa chiêng, cửa dân chủ treo đèn thêm sáng chói*” [Without guns or swords, he needs only words to make the authorities shiver at first sight; with the pen to raise his voice, he brings hope to the process of democratization].¹¹ Thus it is that Phan Chau Trinh will forever be a star, a brilliant example on the road of reform and development of the country, for the rich and powerful nation of Vietnam.

¹¹ *Điếu văn của Phan Bội Châu* [The eulogy of Phan Boi Chau], in: *Phan Bội Châu: Complete Works*, 1: 74-75.

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VIETNAMESE RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM AS REFLECTED IN THE NOVEL “HO QUY LY” BY NGUYEN XUAN KHANH

E.O. Muralova ¹

Abstract. The article discusses the problem of syncretism of different religious doctrines as shown in the novel “Ho Quy Ly” by modern Vietnamese writer Nguyen Xuan Khanh. The novel has not been sufficiently investigated yet in either domestic or foreign literary criticism. The work focuses on the religious problems, viz. on Vietnamese religious syncretism, as reflected in the novel. The author has used works by leading Russian Sinologists and Vietnamists for theoretical ground. Methodology comprises historical and cultural as well as comparative approaches. The article analyses the interaction of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in the novel. The conclusions state the connection of spiritual crisis and political decline of the Vietnamese monarchy in the late 14th century.

Keywords: Vietnam, literature, Ho Quy Ly, religious syncretism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism.

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Introduction

One of the typical features of the Vietnamese nation is the tradition of religious syncretism. Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism belong to the main traditional trends of Vietnam. There is a special concept “three religions” (“tam giáo”) for their totality.

Taoism was perceived fragmentarily, but in various periods Buddhism and Confucianism competed with each other for supremacy and the right to be part of the state ideology. Since the 10th century, after having gained the independence of the Chinese Empire, till the first half of the 14th century Buddhism occupied leading positions, and representatives of the Buddhist Sangha actively participated in political life of Vietnam. However, since the second half of the 14th century Neo-Confucianism had come to the fore, and Confucian scholars began to occupy the chief posts at the Court. The works by such domestic Vietnamists like V.V. Zaytsev, and A.V. Nikitin [Zaitsev, Nikitin 1996], E.Yu. Knorozova [Knorozova 2020] etc.; and those by Vietnamese researchers such as historian Tran Van Giao [Trần Văn Giàu 1997] or literary critic Nguyen Dang Thuc [Nguyễn Đăng Thục 1991] describe this epoch in detail.

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Fig. 1. Symbolic depiction of the three religions ("tam giáo"). *An open source photo*

Also, the history of monarchy in Vietnam witnessed the existence of such a phenomenon as imperial religion. It was meant to support the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty and was based upon the totality of folk beliefs. This concept emerged in Sinology and was analyzed in the works by A.S. Martynov [Martynov 1987] and G.A. Tkachenko [Tkachenko 1999]; A.V. Nikitin has transferred it into Vietnamese studies [Nikitin 2001]. The concept is closely connected with Chinese natural philosophy and its political components. It consists of three main elements, i.e., the cults of Heaven, imperial ancestors and fertility, expressed in divine-natural law, granted by Heaven to Vietnamese monarchs to rule their territory; the ability of the emperor (being the Heaven's son) to maintain peace and society's normal life by his good deeds etc. [Ibid.: 251–267]

The problem of interaction of different religious doctrines, particularly Buddhism and Confucianism, is one of the cross-cutting themes in the famous historical novel “Ho Quy Ly” (“*Hồ Quý Ly*”, Hanoi, 2000) by modern Vietnamese writer Nguyen Xuan Khanh, dedicated to the great Vietnamese reformer Ho Quy Ly (1336–1407) [Nguyễn Xuân Khánh 2002] (Fig. 2). The novel has not yet been thoroughly investigated either in domestic or in foreign literary criticisms. The article discusses this religious aspect of the novel.

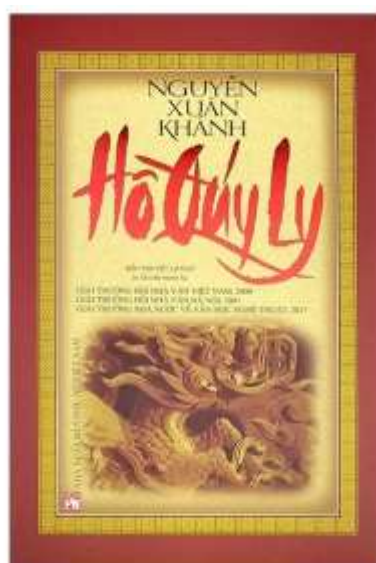


Fig. 2. Cover of Nguyen Xuan Khanh's novel “Ho Quy Ly”. *An open source photo*

Also, it is noteworthy to mention “The Tragedy of the Reformer in “Ho Quy Ly” by Nguyen Xuan Khanh”, the article by T.N. Filimonova [Filimonova 2012], analyzing the work in general and concentrating on the personality and political activity of its protagonist. In Vietnamese literary criticism such specialists like Doan Anh Duong [Đoàn Ánh Dương 2013] and Ngo Thi Tuyet Nhung have analyzed the novel in their research works [Ngô Thị Tuyết Nhung 2011]; they have not only given a general analysis of the novel, but also investigated the correlation of historical truth and literary fantasy in it.

Buddhism and Confucianism in the novel

The action in the novel develops at the end of the 14th century. This is a complicated period of Vietnam’s history. It is connected with the decline of the ruling dynasty Tran due to the clumsy rule of the last emperors and economic problems. The situation was aggravated with the tense foreign policy situation. The Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644) rising in the North and Chams in the South under the leadership of the talented chief Che Bong Nga (ruled in 1360–1390) attempted to use the instability of the Tran dynasty. So, no wonder that numerous personages of the novel were looking for the exit of the complicated situation in religious and philosophical doctrines.

The main conflict in the novel (like also in the Vietnamese history) is the rivalry between Buddhism and Confucianism. In the novel these two doctrines often oppose each other. In the period described in the novel the Buddhists lost their political influence, but the religion did not disappear from life and culture; its successors could be found among families of prominent officials. Thus, Ho Quy Ly, one of the protagonists of the novel, a senior government official (Fig. 3), a reformer, who desired to usurp the throne to bring the country out of the crisis married a deeply pious woman, a Buddhist.



Fig. 3. Ho Quy Ly. *An open source photo*

In the novel she is shown as a weak, sensitive and compassionate woman, while Ho Quy Ly is a Confucianist, strict, tough man, ready to use every means in order to achieve his goal. Two different characters are revealed even in their appearances. The official’s senior son describes them as follows: “She was tender, but weak, unlike my father, who was a stocky, strong man, with a square face and a jet-black beard. Both my mother and Nhat Chi Mai² were gracious little women” [Там же: 334].

² Nhat Chi Mai was step-mother of Ho Quy Ly’s senior son Nguyen Trung. His mother died, when he was quite a small child.

In the novel his contemporaries describe Ho Quy Ly in this way: "...he was resolute, perspicacious, he dared to stir up the world. Some people criticized him for his severity, perfidy, cunning and extreme arrogance" [Ibid.].

Curiously, some Ho Quy Ly's close relations and associates prayed to Buddha, but the official concerned Buddhism with some contempt and fear. Thus, he forbade to build Buddhist temples and pagodas in his new capital Tay Do. One of Ho Quy Ly's reforms was the forcible return of numerous Buddhist monks to the world, which later served one of the causes of the rebellion in their midst supported with folk. The rebellions' anger was directed against the ruling class. Also, this can be seen like a confrontation between Buddhism and Confucianism. The folk mostly professed Buddhism, and the representatives of the imperial family and officials in the novel adhered to the Confucian thought.

Various personages of the work emphasize the confrontation of the doctrines. Thus, Ho Quy Ly's father-in-law, old Pham cites the old saying: "Buddhism is like a shift of light in the sky (*giếng trời*), and Confucianism and Taoism are but a cave and a canyon. Buddhism is like the sun, and Confucianism and Taoism are but torches" [Ibid.: 32]. Being a famous doctor, he also compares the doctrines with drugs: "Medicine is the root of everything. Buddhism is a drug. Confucianism and Taoism are also types of drugs... There are monarchs' drugs (*vuong y*), and there are those of vassals (*bá y*)³. The former harmonizes yin-yang in the human, restores balance. This is a long and hard way, but a safe one. The latter is like a hot-tempered and severe commander, who promises quick result with his actions, but the cause of the disease is still there" [Ibid.].

Seeking for the remedy for treating either physical or spiritual diseases, people often turn to religion or philosophy. Therefore, old Pham calls them a kind of drugs. He clearly prefers Buddhism. This doctrine, like "a monarchs' drug" is meant for peace and harmony in the world, permitting treatment of this or that disease. Confucianism and Taoism are different. Their adherents try to solve the problem radically and quickly. However, Ho Quy Ly looks for "the remedy for the people". i.e., he turns to the latter.

Another (fictitious) personage, chronicler Su Van Hoa, compared the doctrines with *yin* and *yang*: Buddhism is softness, quietness, feminine, but Confucianism is hardness, haste, regularity, masculine. It is not by chance that in the moments of despair and repentance Ho Qui Ly sought for consolation in prayers at the altar of his late wife-Buddhist [Ibid.: 540].

Both doctrines in the chronicler's opinion are called to serve in favor of "the country's soul" (*hồn nước*). The latter concept is very broad including the state sovereignty, the population's welfare (*lit.* "safety, joy, satiety and warmth"⁴), culture, customs and traditions, everybody's independence. He supports the renovation idea (Ho Quy Ly is its defensor), but troubles that Confucianism will be the base of the transformations, and Buddhism will be discarded, i.e., *yang*, hardness, will be preferred. But "a hard heart is neither tolerable nor magnanimous. It will accompany severity. There will be but blood and tears in the human life. *Yang*'s implacability and haste will result in the decline. The country will be ruined and become a tasty morsel for foreigners. They are just waiting for an opportunity to invade the country and to crush it" [Ibid.]. Thus, Su Van Hoa believes that the promotion of one doctrine to the detriment of the other may lead the country to cataclysms and even to the loss of "the country's soul", its independence.

³ *Bá* is also part of the word "panacea" (*thuốc trị bá chứng*). Then, Confucianism and Daoism are universal remedies, and Buddhism, in old Pham's opinion, is acupressure.

⁴ Viet. *sự an vui no ấm*.

Negative consequences begun from the disbalance and moving towards Confucianism are obvious; they occur during the developments described in the novel. But Buddhism is something more complicated. However, it can be seen in meditative, peaceful and somewhat passive personages. One of these bright examples is the last emperor of the Tran dynasty Tran Thuan Tong (ruled in 1389–1398). For the first time the reader sees him at the age of 13, a tall, thin, handsome teen-ager. The author often emphasizes his meekness (he was not mixed up with the scandals at the Court), lack of ambition (several times Tran Thuan Tong asks the imperial preceptor not to bequeath the throne to him), his thirst for knowledge (he learned history at a low age, his best hobby was reading), disposition to melancholy and philosophizing (at the age of 14 he begins to think of transience of life).

His unwillingness to participate in quarrels and disappointment in his imperial status, dependent on the will of all-powerful Ho Quy Ly, made Tran Thuan Tong leave for religion and give up state affairs. In one of his meditations, he addresses Ho Quy Ly: “There are many who are thirsty for the throne... You [Ho Quy Ly] are my teacher and my father-in-law. Over twenty years you have worked hard for the throne. Yes, I know. And who does not? Ask anybody... Seemingly, the notorious throne is mine, but actually it is not. There are so many people near me, who held my hand, shut my mouth and did not let me bequeath the throne to you. They call it nonsense. You have providently developed the plan to bequeath the throne to my son who is your grandson. An is under three years old yet, he is baby walking, is beginning to speak, but he knows already what the throne is... Therefore, I have agreed to bequeath all the state affairs to you. Are you satisfied now? Why haven’t you let me go yet, haven’t given me back silence and peace... I desire to be dissolved in the night. I am thirsty for solitude” [Ibid.: 549].

The result of the monarch’s inertia, his desire to get rid of attachments and world’s passions shown in the novel while the dynasty and the country were on decline, was the Tran’s loss of power, which indirectly caused the loss of independence by Dai Viet⁵ for nearly 20 years (1407–1427).

The author opposes the two doctrines in the narration of the Tran dynasty fall. For much of the ruling period the dynasty was favorably disposed to Buddhism, but was overthrown by Confucian Ho Quy Ly. Such an opposition is seen even in the architecture of the two capitals: Thang Long, the Tran capital and Tay Do⁶, the future capital of Ho Quy Ly’s Empire. “At the gates of Tay Do, at the foot of Dun mount, Nguyen Trung⁷ entered quite a different world. Having ascended to the top of the Yen Tu mount⁸, the highest in the neighborhood, one feels that the soul is opening, rising; plenty of free and ample space; one can see farther. But when he stood at the foot of Dun mount on the long strait road of sand and stone and looked at the large stone citadel Tay Do, Nguyen Trung felt creeping into a chest, into a cliché. Everything in it consists of strait horizontal and vertical lines, everything is correct and adjusted to the east, west, south and north, from the standpoint of the ceremonial, relations between the emperor and his subjects, between father and his children” (Fig. 4).

⁵ Then Vietnam was called so.

⁶ Tay Do was located on the territory of current Thanh Hoa province. Ho Quy Ly was born there.

⁷ Ho Quy Ly’s senior son.

⁸ On Yen Tu Mount there located the chief pagoda of the Buddhist school Truc Lam founded by one of the Tran dynasty’s representatives.



Fig. 4. Buddha statue at Lord of the Mountain Pagoda in prov. Binh Dinh in Vietnam. *An open source photo*

“Ho Quy Ly is a Confucian scholar. Thang Long, the capital which existed throughout the rule of the Ly and Tran dynasties, professing Buddhism, experienced the influence... of that religion in its architecture. There is a lot of pagodas and lakes in the city... Ho Quy Ly sent Nguyen Trung to draw a map of Tay Do during its construction. He said: There must not be the least sign of pagodas. Pagodas easily mollify humans’ hearts. The new capital must convey a strong sense of grandeur, veneration, canonicity (*phép tắc*)» [Ibid.: 771–772]. The novel emphasizes that even imperial palaces of the two cities differ. In Thang Long the palace is a wooden light building, while in Tay Do the palace is a copy of the former, but more luxurious one, constructed of stone with the predominance of black color in the main halls.

Speaking of the religious complementarity shown in the novel, it is possible to return to the character of emperor Tran Thuan Tong. On the one hand, he is directly connected with imperial religion, being one of its chief priests and symbols, and consequently, through it, including the idea of filial obedience (such parallels as father – son, emperor – folk) also with Confucianism.

On the other hand, Tran Thuan Tong constantly comes into contact with Taoism. Thus, in the process of learning he got acquainted with the work of Ruan Ji (Viet. *Nguyễn Tịch*), a Chinese poet and philosopher who lived in Three Kingdoms period of Chinese history (220–280) and grew very fond of the poet. By the way, Ruan Ji was a representative of Taoist philosophical doctrine of *Xuanxue* (Mystic Learning) disseminated in China in the 3d – 4th centuries. It had several points of contact with Buddhism, and therefore contributed to its penetration into China. This trend was due to the political crisis of the ruling Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD); it was an attempt to reassess Orthodox Confucianism presenting it as a kind of its alternative [Kobzev 2006: 405–407].

Tran Thuan Tong got carried away with the idea to create a new Taoist school in the hope to revive the past grandeur of his dynasty and the whole country and quickly comprehended main subtleties of the doctrine. That attempt (by the way, a futile one) to resolve the crisis contrasts with more traditional ways. For instance, there was a recruitment of talented people to the state apparatus through state examinations, by that time already Confucian in their essence, which Ho Quy Ly had resorted to.

For about a half of the novel Tran Thuan Tong is accompanied with a white monkey, a pet of a Taoist monk. Once it even helped to bring the young emperor back to life when during the meditation his soul was near to leave his body forever. The vision of a lonely tiny monkey trying to warm its master mollified the latter's heart and made him think and then return into his bodily form.

Explaining his return into the world, Tran Thuan Tong addressed Buddhist karma: "Suddenly he felt pity for himself, for everybody. He could not leave yet. He was to remain and undergo everything what the Tran karma had prepared for him. The glorious Tran dynasty had rendered great services for the country. But his ancestors had already used the results of their labors, having left him in karma legacy nothing but the tragedy. In the end, the life of the last representatives of the ruling dynasty used to be like that. In the past the ancestors of the Tran dynasty prepared tragic fate for Ly Hue Tong and Ly Chieu Hoang⁹, didn't they? These thoughts made his soul sigh. Thuan Tong returned into his body to taste the fruit, having prepared for him by karma, however bitter they might be" [Ibid.: 706–707].

We can see that elements of various religious and philosophical doctrines have entangled together even in the life of one person, the emperor. Such personages in the novel are numerous enough, though Tran Thuan Tong is one of the most expressive examples.

In the work a lot of personages address the concept of "karma". Most of them are Buddhists, but still, they adhere to a certain syncretism, supporting not only Buddhist canons, but also elements of other philosophical and religious doctrines. So does Vo Chu, a Buddhist monk. Once he gave refuge and educated Pham Su On, the would-be leader of the Buddhist rebellion mentioned above, and later sheltered his son. In one of his conversations with the latter Vo Chu thinks on the individual and collective karma: "From times immemorial a country like a human being has its own karma. This collective karma of all people... preserve seeds... good wishes, elements of culture, which the people had sowed. They become desires, the soul of mountains and rivers. Then, from one life to another these desires are incarnated in sages, great and famous persons and even in kind hearts of simple inhabitants, to lead the people along the way of Dao" [Ibid.: 760]. In its turn, Dao is a Taoist concept.

Confucian scholar, chronicler Su Van Hoa, trying to guess his fate after he had criticized "*Minh Dao*" ("Thoroughfare"), one of the main works by Ho Quy Ly, also mentions karma saying that it is impossible to avoid what it had prepared. The confession he adhered to is not directly named in the novel. However, in his youth Su Van Hoa was educated by a monk who acquainted his novice not only with Buddhism, but also with Confucianism and Taoism. Then the would-be chronicler continued his education in the capital concentrating on Confucianism, to pass the examinations and get a degree.

In his attempt to find the exit out of the crisis a number of personages, Tran Thuan Tong among them, address the experience of emperor Tran Nhan Tong (ruled in 1278–1293) who founded his Buddhist school Truc Lam ("The Bamboo Grove"). The time of Tran Nhan Tong's rule is connected with the victory of Dai Viet over the Mongol/Mongol-Chinese troops in the 13th century, the increase of the regional prestige of the Empire, the work at the country's welfare as a whole. Therefore, the school's foundation is also linked in the personages' consciousness with success and prosperity. Curiously, the Truc Lam school, being a Buddhist one, absorbed elements of Confucianism, Taoism and autochthonous beliefs of the population [Torchinov 1993: 89].

⁹ *Lý Huệ Tông* (ruled in 1210–1224) and his daughter *Lý Chiêu Hoàng* (ruled in 1224–1225) were the last rulers of the Ly dynasty. *Trần Thủ Độ* (1194–1264), the Tran dynasty's general and leader, married his nephew to Lý Chiêu Hoàng, then forced Lý Huệ Tông to transfer the throne to his infant daughter; after that the throne was transferred to her husband. Thus, the Ly dynasty was overthrown. In 1226 Trần Thủ Độ, fearing possible discontent of the population and Ly's attempts to get back the power, forced the former emperor to commit suicide.

Another problem connected with religious syncretism of the Vietnamese has been raised in the novel: a certain crisis of the Confucian doctrine itself. Ho Quy Ly was one of the chief critics of Confucianism form existed at that time. He exposed his ideas in his work “Minh Dao”. This was a real work, which, unfortunately, have not survived to our time. There is a meagre information on it in some historical sources¹⁰. Particularly, the reformer spoke against the thoughtless application of the theories created in China for Chinese realities, as well as against collecting and copying ancients’ wisdom for self-reproduction of the officials’ system but not for the practical application of knowledges to improve the state’s life.

Criticizing Confucianism Ho Quy Ly was supported by a narrow circle of people such as imperial preceptor Tran Nghe Tong, Ho Quy Ly’s younger son and Nguyen Can, one of his associates. However, most officials and the Tran dynasty representatives, adherents of Orthodox Confucianism, opposed the critic and Ho Quy Ly, though he contributed to the making of the scholars’ power, having strictly regulated the state examinations for a degree and having made them purely Confucian.

Some Russian Vietnamists (A.V. Nikitin, E.Yu. Knorozova) [Nikitin 2001; Knorozova 2020: 72–88] support the idea that in traditional Vietnam studies despite the just separation of the two stages of Vietnamese thought, i.e., Buddhist and Confucian ones, mentioned above, in reality the core of ideology always was imperial religion, but other religious systems were auxiliary. Consequently, there always existed a base not coinciding with the dominant doctrine [Knorozova 2020: 75].

When transferring this point of view to the novel, it is possible to explain Ho Quy Ly’s behavior concerning Buddhism and Confucianism through the prism of imperial religion. The Vietnamese reformer was guided by how they could help to strengthen and preserve the power. Thus, his measures concerning Buddhism can be interpreted not only with his Confucian antagonism. For instance, the return of numerous Buddhist monks into the world was to increase the taxed population and to solve the state financial problem existed then. The absence of Buddhist pagodas in the new capital was the desire to support the Tran wading dynasty (mostly Buddhist one) and at the same time to prevent a new rebellion of the adherents of this religion in the city. The same causes explain why despite the above-mentioned measures, as if directed against Buddhists Ho Quy Ly permits to celebrate Buddhist feasts before the oath of allegiance to his grandson, who was destined to the would-be rulers of the country; why he does not forbade his close relations and associates to pray to Buddha etc.

From the same standpoints it is possible to explain why Ho Quy Ly, being a Confucian, criticized that doctrine, opposing the elder officials of higher ranks.

In reality he rejected neither of those doctrines, but, on the contrary, he tried to influence the situation in order that all the religious trends, in their symbiosis, could support the imperial religion, legitimating its new regime.

¹⁰ For instance, its content is briefly exposed in the chronicle “Complete Annals of Dai Viet” [Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư 1993: 467].

Conclusion

Thus, the novel presents a complicated religious situation, which once again demonstrates syncretism of Vietnamese philosophy. The novel describes the period when Buddhism took the second place, obvious then to few people, but nothing had been suggested in return. The imperial religion could not find support either in the doctrines needed to be changed, or in the ruling dynasty being in decline. Spiritual vacuum and search for the ways and means to overcome it, reflect the general crisis experienced by Dai Viet.

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CULTURAL CAPITAL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: Since recently the government of Vietnam has paid special attention to the development of cultural industries. Culture used to be the branch which could but “spend money” and exist at the expense of other branches, but now it is gradually becoming an important source of economic value creation and contribution to GDP of Vietnam. Considering culture to be capital also for Vietnam’s culture, the article sheds light on the development of five cultural industries, viz. cinema, performance arts, fine arts, advertisement and cultural tourism, showing thereby the contribution of culture to social and economic development of contemporary Vietnam.

Keywords: cultural capital, cultural industries, cinema art, performance arts, fine arts, advertisement, cultural tourism.

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Introduction

Cultural capital is the concept introduced by French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu in the 1980s. It comprehends not all the elements of culture, but only those which can be exploited, included into the economic circulation, transmitted and can participate in the creation of value, utility and income in the process of economic circulation or transmission [Bourdieu 1986: 242]. The concept of cultural capital has been furthered and promoted in many research works, at the same time being criticized and supplemented, which resulted in the emergence of numerous analytical approaches and frameworks. The interpretations vary, but it is certain that since its introduction the concept of cultural capital has significantly influenced sociology, pedagogy and cultural studies. In economics this concept was promoted by David Throsby. He writes that beside *natural* (natural resources), *material* (material basis created by humans) and *human capitals* there is *cultural capital*, the fourth main type of the capital for development [Throsby 1999: 4].

In Vietnam Tran Dinh Huou is the first to comprehend culture as capital. However, Pierre Bourdieu concentrates on cultural capital of an individual; it is formed of the capitals of a family, education and society and brings income to them, while Tran Dinh Huou focuses on the capital of society. In his opinion, cultural capital is the public domain accumulated in time, and thus determining

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typical characteristics of the people who is the bearer of this culture, and showing its ingenuity [Trần Đình Huộ 2011]. Unlike Tran Dinh Huou, who analyzes intangible culture, Tran Huu Dung has advanced and included material aspects in the concept of cultural capital, too [Trần Hữu Dũng 2002]. In his turn, Tran Thi An, though supposing cultural capital to be the public domain, yet argues that cultural capital acquires features of capital only when it is alienated from society and is a separate value which can be used and capitalized upon, for instance, to develop tourism or cultural industries [Trần Thị An 2018].

The research of cultural industries has significantly advanced abroad, particularly in the countries where they develop vividly: in the US, Great Britain, France, Japan, Korea, Taiwan etc. In Vietnam the first researches of cultural industries usually attempt to deepen the comprehension of this concept's essence and the ways to delimit cultural industries [Mai Hải Oanh 2006]; particularities and roles of cultural industries for national economic development [Nguyễn Thị Hương 2008]; theoretical and practical aspects of cultural industries' development in Vietnam [Đặng Hoài Thu, Phạm Bích Huyền 2012]; current development of cultural industries in Hanoi [Phạm Duy Đức, Vũ Thị Phương Hậu 2012] etc. Contemporary researches concentrate on the ways to attract resources, measures to develop cultural industries [Đỗ Thị Thanh Thủy 2014]; opportunities, challenges and problems of cultural industries' development in Vietnam [Từ Thị Loan 2017]; the role of cultural industries in the formation of Vietnam's cultural "soft force" [Nguyễn Thị Thu Phương 2021].

General research of cultural industries' development in Vietnam is a relatively new topic, this niche is virtually free; also, there is a perceived shortage of the analysis of cultural capital theory application to the cultural industries' development.

The definition of Vietnam's cultural capital

Vietnam's culture is a multicolored palette which has absorbed cultural values of fifty-four fraternal nations of the country. In its turn, every nation is a bearer of immense heritage and centuries-old traditions. From the standpoint of **material culture**, Vietnam is the country of "thousand years, ten thousand things"² with plenty of architectural works, towns and fortresses, imperial tombs, cultural and historical sites. They are source of cultural capital with its potential for mastery, use and development of cultural industries, first of all for tourism. For January 2022 on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites there are eight sites in Vietnam³, more than 4000 historical monuments of national importance, more than 9000 monuments protected by provinces [Bộ Văn hóa 2022]. Among them there are numerous historical monuments commemorated to national heroes, cultural figures, historical events; architectural works, archeological and landscape sites; monuments of revolution history. They can become places of interest for internal and international tourism.

Vietnam's museum system consisting of 148 institutions mostly cares for cultural heritage of the past displayed as artifacts, national values, relics, rarities, etc. Such museums as Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnam National Museum of History, Vietnam National Museum of Fine Arts, Quang Ninh Museum successfully work with documents and artifacts for excursions, research, education and popularization.

² The original expression «ngàn năm văn vật» is a widespread Vietnamese metaphor of a culturally and historically rich place (*Ed.*).

³ Among them: the Complex of Hue Monuments, Ha Long Bay, Old Town Hoi An, My Son, the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long in Hanoi, Phong Nha-Ke Bang national park, Citadel of the Ho dynasty, Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex.

As far as **intangible culture** is concerned, Vietnam, a country of “thousand years and fine stories”⁴, is a goldmine of spiritual traditions. For October 2021 14 sites in Vietnam are on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists and those for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, seven objects are enlisted into documentary heritage of UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register⁵, 396 ones into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Besides, innumerable spiritual values are manifested in literature, music, theatre, fine art, religion and rituals, festive events, traditions, customs, etc.

In the field of **music**, Vietnam being a multinational state where every nation has its own melodies and musical instruments, possesses great diversity; every region possesses its own bright sound color, such as folk singing *quan họ* in Bac Ninh province⁶; Nghe Tinh province⁷ with melodies *ví* and *giặm*⁸; in South Vietnam: chamber ensemble music and singing *đờn ca tài tử*; also, *nhã nhạc* court music of the imperial palace in Hue (Fig. 1); the cultural space of gongs (*cồng chiêng*)⁹ in the provinces of Central Highlands (Tay Nguyen); in Central Vietnam: singing *bài chòi*¹⁰; *hát xẩm*¹¹, *ca trù*¹², *hát vắn*¹³, *hát xoan*¹⁴ etc. Original local musical instruments are made of natural materials, such as various bamboo types, stones, buffalo’s horn. They are: a flute (*sáo*), a horn *tù và*, a percussion instrument *thanh la*, a slit-drum in the shape of a fish (*mõ*), drums *trống*, a plucked monochord (*đàn bầu*), tubular xilophones *đàn t’rưng* and *klông put* etc. These instruments are of great interest abroad.

Modern popular music of Vietnam basing on national traditions and absorbing western ones, actively develops a lot of trends, from *tiền chiến*¹⁵, *tình khúc*¹⁶, bolero¹⁷, “red” music¹⁸, “young”

⁴ The expression “nghìn năm văn hiến” is a Confucian metaphor of a place’s spiritual value (Ed.).

⁵ UNESCO’s Program for the Safeguarding of the World documentary heritage created in 1992 (Ed.).

⁶ Traditional singing widespread in the Red River delta. It consists of phrases sung by men and women by turns, usually in the form of questions and answers (Ed.).

⁷ This province existed till 1991. Now there are Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces instead of it. Currently the name Nghe Tinh is used as a short name of the both provinces (Ed.).

⁸ *Vi* and *giặm* are melodic reading of verses. They are often performed in everyday situations: fieldwork, boating or rocking a baby to sleep (Ed.).

⁹ Ritual music (Ed.).

¹⁰ The practice uniting music, poetry, performance, painting and literature. Usually, they distinguish the two forms: “performance *bài chòi*” and “games *bài chòi*” (Ed.).

¹¹ Currently this is a rare art. Traditionally it was widespread in North Vietnam, performed by blind musicians to their own accompaniment. Subject matters for *xẩm* were borrowed from popular Vietnamese literary works, and melodies could sometimes be borrowed from other genres or were composed specially for *xẩm* (Ed.).

¹² North Vietnamese art of rhymed melodeclamation to the accompaniment of a lute and a drum. In pre-colonial time it used to be performed at guest-nights of the elite and at the imperial court (Ed.).

¹³ Rhythmic singing accompanying Mother Goddess rituals (Ed.).

¹⁴ Ritual music and singing performed in the first spring months, usually in temples and in community houses (Ed.).

¹⁵ Literally, «before the war”. It is a common name of musical trends in Vietnam from the early 20th century to 1945 (Ed.).

¹⁶ The common name for South Vietnam's music during the Vietnamese War, generally represented with slow rock (Ed.).

¹⁷ Also, it is sometimes called “yellow music”, a popular genre in the south of Vietnam during the Vietnamese war (Ed.).

¹⁸ So called revolutionary and war songs, popular till the mid-1970s (Ed.).

music¹⁹, “light” music²⁰ to contemporary ones. Now, in Vietnam there exist virtually all the “global” musical genres: pop, rock, jazz, rhythm-n-blues, hip-hop, rap, etc.



Fig. 1. Nhã nhạc court music of the imperial palace in Hue. An open source photo

The theatre of Vietnam is based on centuries-old *traditional theatre forms*, such as *chèo*²¹, *tuồng*²², also called singing, *hát bội*, or *hát bộ*; puppet-theatre on a stage (*rối cạn*), on water (*rối nước*) etc (Fig. 2).; *high theatre forms* emerged about a hundred years ago, being a result of Western culture influence. They are *cải lương*²³, theatrical singing *ca kịch Huế*, performance of songs *ca kịch bài chòi*, Nghe Tinh theatrical folk singing *kịch hát dân ca* etc.; *foreign theatre genres*, which emerged in Vietnam in the 20th century, such as drama, ballet, opera, circus, music-hall, concert programs etc. At the same time, there exists theatre of national minorities, such as *robăm* and *kukê* of the Khmers of South Vietnam, theatres of the Chams, Hoa (Chinese) and other nations. After the country’s transition to market economy, performance arts manifest themselves still more clearly. Every year there appear hundreds of new performances of various genres. At the same time new theatre forms, such as circus, illusion show, fashion show (defile), current performance are also growing rapidly and collect big audiences and big income.

Traditions of Vietnam’s **fine arts** have their roots in time immemorial, being the first images on Dong Son bronze drums²⁴; in the course of time they witnessed their heyday in sculpture and cult architecture, palaces of the Ly, Tran and Le dynasties. They are typical in the interior of the traditional community house (*dinh*). Painting emerged later, when there appeared pictures on the silk, psychological portrait, temples’ decoration, lacquered painting, woodcarving, court painting and folk

¹⁹ Popular music of the 1950/60s originated in the south of Vietnam, based on modern French and American rhythms; also, “green” music (*Ed.*).

²⁰ Popular music of the 1980s, also formed in the south of Vietnam under the influence of contemporary (then) Western trends (*Ed.*).

²¹ Folk comic opera performed out of doors by strolling semi-professional troupes (*Ed.*).

²² Traditional dancing and musical drama performances emerged at the imperial court (*Ed.*).

²³ Literally “the reformed theatre”; a form of contemporary folk opera in Vietnam combining elements of traditional theatre *tuong*, folk songs of South Vietnam, classic music and current drama theatre (*Ed.*).

²⁴ Ritual musical instruments of pre-historic archeological culture of the Bronze Age, which existed on the Indochina Peninsula and was called after Dong Son in North Vietnam, where its traces had first been discovered (*Ed.*).

splint (regions of Dong Ho, Hang Trong, Kim Hoang etc.). By the time of the Nguyen dynasty Vietnamese fine arts had already been formed and they reflected main features of the country's feudal art. The period since the early 20th century has witnessed significant shifts in this field under the influence of Western culture. "The Golden Generation" of painters originated in l'École des beaux-arts de l'Indochine (among them there are such well-known groups as "Tri Lan Van Can"²⁵, "Phai, Sang, Lien, Nghiem"²⁶, "Pho, Thu, Luu, Dam")²⁷, led Vietnam's art to a new level having brought it nearer to the world one. In the current conditions of globalization Vietnam's contemporary art is represented with all the trends, from realism, surrealism, impressionism, abstractionism to post-modern trends, such as installation, performance-art, video-art, body-art, community-art, digital-art, etc.



Fig. 2. Puppet-theatre on water (*rối nước*). An open source photo

Also, Vietnam is known with its **holidays** and **feasts**. There are about eight thousand of them; among them more than seven thousand folk and deeply original ones [Cục Văn hóa cơ sở 2008]. Numerous large-scope colored festivities, such as rituals of the Hung Kings Commemoration Day, Huong Pagoda Festival, Thanh Giong Festival in commemoration of the legendary hero, Ba Chua Xu Temple Festival on the Sam mountain, the Phu Day feast, the Do and Tran Temples Festivals, Lim Folk Songs Festival etc., as well as current measures, such as Da Nang Fireworks Festival, Da Lat Flowers Festival, Buon Ma Thuot Coffee Festival, are important events attracting both internal and foreign tourists, also being an opportunity to represent and sell goods of local production.

²⁵ The group got its name after the painters: Nguyen Gia Tri (1908–1993), Nguyen Tuong Lan (1906–1946), To Ngoc Van (1908–1954), Tran Van Can (1910–1994) (*Ed.*).

²⁶ The group got its name after the painters: Bui Xuan Phai (1920–1988), Nguyen Sang (1923–1988), Duong Bich Lien (1924–1988), Nguyen Tu Nghiem (1922–2016) (*Ed.*).

²⁷ The group got its name after the painters: Le Pho (1907–2001), Mai Trung Thu (1906–1980), Le Thi Luu (1911–1988), Vu Cao Dam (1908–2000) (*Ed.*).

Also, Vietnam is known as the country of **traditional craft villages**. All over the country there are more than two thousand villages specialized in traditional applied arts. These are favourite products of local and foreign guests: ceramics of Bat Trang, Phu Lang, Chu Dau, Huong Canh villages; stone carvings of Non Nuoc, Ninh Van; silver of Dong Sam, Dinh Cong, Chau Khe; cast copper of Ngu Xa, Tra Duc, Dien Phuong; woodcarvings of Dong Ky, Thiet Ung, Chang Son; hand-embroideries of Quat Dong, Thanh Ha, Van Lam; cloths of Van Phuc, La Khe, etc.

Also, Vietnam is the country with promoted and refined **national cuisine**, where you can feel nuances both of Asia and of Europe. Recently, Vietnam's cuisine has announced itself worldwide having been praised by leading world chefs and cookbooks. In 2019 CNN-channel put Vietnam's cuisine in top-20 of the best world cuisines. In December 2020, "Lonely Planet", a well-known Australian tourist journal, called Vietnam the best direction for individual tourists from the standpoint of its cuisine, and commented that "among national cuisines of Southeast Asia, "the best of the best" is that of Vietnam" [Một năm vượt bão: 16.02.2021].

At the same time, national and cultural diversity of 53 national minorities of Vietnam (some of them still maintain traditional life-style), diversity of cultural forms are the inexhaustible source of the resources to be coped with and to be awarded economic value.

The use of cultural capital in the development of cultural industries in Vietnam

Traditional Vietnamese society held artistic people in contempt, despised them and thought them to idle their life away. Up to the Renovation (Doi Moi) they were considered freeloaders, who only can live at the State's expense with funds of other branches. But when the country had adopted the model of market economy, works and services in cultural field started to develop independently. Gradually culture changed its status of the branch which "can but spend" for that which "can earn", able to create economic value to become a vanguard industry.

The radical revolution in the government's attitude to the development of cultural industries was joining UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The link between the two concepts ("culture" and "industry") meant to produce a number of goods and services with "cultural" content, but of industrial scale with the purpose to create high economic value. However, the concept of "industry" focused not so much on *production processes* as on the *unification* of products and *rationalization* of their supply and distribution.

Under UNESCO guidance and proceeding from the needs of the country, Vietnam's government significantly changed its comprehension of the role and functions of culture. Formerly being the sphere of intangible values having nothing in common with commerce, culture has become the vanguard sphere of economic growth creating the base for sustainable development.

In 2016 after numerous discussions, researches and supplements the Prime-Minister of Vietnam signed *The National Strategy for the Development of Vietnamese Cultural Industries to 2020, with a Vision to 2030*, which appointed 12 main Vietnamese cultural industries: advertising; architecture; software and games; handicrafts; design; films; publishing; fashion; performance arts; fine arts; photography and exhibitions; radio and television; cultural tourism.

The strategy's temporal scope limits its focus on the development of five industries under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, i.e., tourism, performance arts, fine arts, cinema art and advertising.

Rich cultural capital combined with natural beauties, favorable climate and hospitable population became a driver of **tourism** in Vietnam. Before COVID-19 pandemics the tourist branch grew with a fascinating speed. From 2016 to 2018, the quantity of foreign guests redoubled from 8 mln to 16 mln. 2019 was the most profitable for the branch due to 85 mln internal tourists and 18 mln foreign ones. The share of this sphere in national GDP increases every year²⁸. Vietnam's tourist branch competitiveness in international ratings constantly rises. Thus, in the World Economic Forum (WEF) rating Vietnam moved up 12 positions from 75/141 line in 2015 to 63/140 line in 2019 and became one of the ten countries with the fastest growth of tourism [Năm 2019, du lịch Việt Nam: 01.01.2020].

In 2019 Vietnam was awarded the nomination of "The Leading Direction in the World Cultural Heritage Tourism" and for two years in a row it was the leading tourist direction in Asia ("World Travel Awards 2019") [Du lịch Việt Nam: 27.12.2019] (Fig. 3). The authoritative American journal "Condé Nast Traveler" (CNTraveler) has put Vietnam in the ninth position among the best twenty countries for travel in 2020 [Một năm vượt bão: 16.02.2021]. In the regions with the sites of cultural and natural heritage, such as Ha Long Bay, the complex of Hue monuments, Old Town Hoi An, Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex etc. the income from tourism is a significant share of local budget. Ethnic and cultural diversity of national minorities is beneficial for the promotion of ethnographic tourism in the mountainous regions of Tay Nguyen, Sa Pa, Ban Lak, etc. Still more popular are the travels with the purpose of visiting folk festivities, places of pilgrimage, handicraft villages, hamlets, as well as adventure tourism and business tourism in MICE form²⁹.



Fig. 3. The new attraction "Golden Bridge" near Da Nang attracts many tourists.

An open source photo

²⁸ In 2015 its share was 6,3%; in 2016 – 6,9%; in 2017 – 7,9%; in 2018 – 8,3%; in 2019 – 9,2% [Du lịch Việt Nam: 09.07.2021].

²⁹ MICE (*English*: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) is the industry field of business tourism in connection with organization and conduct of various corporate events (*Ed.*).

Performance arts are a sample how to successfully use the existing cultural capital and at the same time to create value added to works of contemporary culture and art. Vietnamese musical market and music-halls have never experienced such a gusto like now. There are more than 200 private collectives and groups, 150 clubs and about 130 public concert halls in Vietnam. Annually about 300 new programs are accepted for staging and from 2 to 4 mln designation go through preliminary check before recording concert and stage acts³⁰. There are many talented young performers. A whole galaxy of V-Pop³¹-performers has gained recognition, not second to the best K-Pop, J-Pop³² musicians like Son Tung M-TP, Jack and K-ICM, Đông Nhi, My Tam, Trinh Thang Binh, Bui Anh Tuan, Erik, Noo Phước Thịnh etc. Currently, Son Tung M-TP is a performer with literally immense quantity of fans, who has gained an incredible success during a couple of years (Fig. 4). He is on the list “30 Under 30” of “Forbes Vietnam” journal, occupies line 28 in Billboard Social 50, is the first artist of Southeast Asia, who has entered the rating Billboard Global Excl. U.S. (position 126), twice he was the winner in Billboard LyricFind Global Chart. The music to his autobiographical documentary film «Sky Tour» (2020) had line 83 in the world rating of iTunes. Son Tung M-TP’s musical clips on YouTube have gained over 100 mln views; some of them achieved a million views in seven minutes after the release.



Fig. 4. Son Tung M-TP. *An open source photo*

Also, Jack (Trinh Tran Phuong Tuan) is the event in Vietnamese music-hall. His musical compositions get the top of recommended video on YouTube Vietnam 4 hours after their publication. His single “Camelia” (Hoa hải đường) 24 hours after its release entered the top video “in trend” in seven countries, viz. Vietnam, Taiwan, Canada, Australia, Germany, India and Mexico. Also, it won the first lines of downloading in iTunes. Jack has become the first Vietnamese artist who was awarded “The Best Musical Clip” at the 25th Asian Television Awards Ceremony), and was the third among “Top 10 person with the most internet searches” for 2020.

At the same time, a number of other young talented artists have succeeded greatly along with “boy-bands” who have made the name for themselves and become a new “caste” producing a quality product and knowing how to earn. It is noteworthy that the former generation of music-hall stars gives

³⁰ The Statistics of the Department of Performance Arts of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2020.

³¹ The abbreviation for Vietnamese pop-music (*Ed.*)

³² South Korean and Japanese pop-music (*Ed.*)

up the sky to young original musicians, such as Chillies, Den Vau, Truc Nhan, SlimV, Khac Viet, Nguyen Hai Phong, Hoang Ton, Mr. Siro, Ali Hoang Duong, Only C, Duong Cam etc. There have emerged new musical trends, such as underground, inde (independent music), where Le Cat Trong Ly, Suboi, Dalab, Đen, Linh Cao, Thai Vu, Mr. A, Lynk Lee, Mr. Siro etc. successfully work. They are persons with special creative energy and passion, they do not imitate others, they create their original compositions. A lot of their songs have entered musical charts of authoritative national and international on-line resources by the number of plays.

Practice shows that the works combining typical features of national cultural capital and the best samples of human culture are certain to succeed. Cultural programs which have achieved international recognition, authority and make high profit are examples of such a combination. Just to mention performances of Vietnamese bamboo circus “My Village” («Làng tôi»), “Teh Dar”, “Motherland’s Rhythms” («Nhịp điệu quê hương»), a puppet play; the theatre of modern dances “Arabesque” [“Drought and Rain” («Hạn hán và cơn mưa»), “The Dew” («Sương sớm»)], “Jonah show”, “À Ố Show”, combining numerous elements of dances, drama, modern circus, hip-hop, fine arts, music, special effects, light, and current technologies, make the performances greatly impressive. Some classic literary works have got their second wind in new forms. Thus, the famous poem “Kieu”³³ is known as a ballet, a symphony and a film, now. As a whole, in contemporary Vietnam, commercial performance arts address to every age, to all sections of the populations of any cultural level, satisfying requirements of any audience.

Also, **fine arts** successfully use national cultural capital, enter international level and integrate into the market economy. Currently, 99 % workers of the sphere are employed in the private sector. All over the country there has been formed a system of galleries, having created great channels, educational centers and those offering works of art. Annually in Vietnam there are in average more than three hundred exhibitions, but 95 % of them are organized at the expense of private funding. There are professional curators, keepers who make an examination and selection of works of art, organize exhibitions and make projects. In the conditions of the Fourth industrial revolution a big branch of “digital art” has been forming. The internal market is rapidly developing which provides for sell and exchange of works of art; they can be done not only in antiquarian streets, shops and galleries, but also through internet, by “online auctions”.

Generations 6X, 7X, 8X of artists (mostly from Hanoi) born in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s actively express themselves, rapidly growing rich due to their skill. The number of artists in plastic arts is growing both in *painting* (oil, laquer, silk, acrylic, gouache, etc.), and *drawing* (print, poster, cartoon, caricature etc.) or *sculpture* (busts, monuments, park sculptures etc.). There has emerged a number of independent fine art associations and centers. They are popular among the youth and have chances to enter the international level, such as San Arts, Nhà Sàn Collective, Zero Station, Manzi, Quynh Gallery, New Space Arts, etc. Also, *applied arts* (industrial, fashion and commercial designs, prints, illustrations, design printing etc.) are widespread. The artists working in these spheres have special training. The annual income from the sphere of fine arts is about \$60 mln. The average income

³³ “The Tale of Kiều” is a poem by Nguyễn Du; its Russian translation was issued by the “Social Sciences” Publishing House (Hanoi, 2015) under the title (“Kieu. Lamentation of a tormented soul” (Ed.).

of a commercial organization in this sphere is about USD 1,8 mln, and the income of a skilled artist is about USD 0,018 mln annually³⁴.

Now, unique ornaments from Vietnamese Dong Son bronze drums are used in design of various best products. The images of Hanoi birds' cages, wicker baskets and musical instrument *khèn bè*, used by the population of the north mountain regions, motives of Dong Ho popular prints, ornate images of dragons, clouds from ancient bas-reliefs etc. are creatively reviewed in current fashion design and in works of art. Due to this or that design the price of the work can grow ten- or even hundredfold.

The creativity of Vietnamese artists show itself also in artistic crafts, highly evaluated by both local and foreign buyers. These are ceramics and pottery, silver, needle-work and weaving, copper casting, bamboo wicker-work; various pictures: needle-works (Fig. 5), inlays, pictures of sand, stained-glass windows, on lotus silk, on natural silk, bamboo poker-work (Xuan Lai village), Dong Ho pictures; souvenirs and decorations made of mussels, silk, paper, bronze, bamboo etc. not only create economic value, but also reflect national character.



Fig. 5. A needle-work. *An open source photo*

³⁴ Statistics for 2020 of the Department of fine arts, photograph and exhibitions of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

Vietnamese **cinema art** is another evidence of successful mastering of cultural capital for development purpose, for the transformation of “prognosticated” and “sponsored” art, generally of political content, into mass art, meeting market demands. Now in Vietnam there are more than four hundred private film studios producing 50–60 % of the total production of the national branch. Among the successful private film studios there can be mentioned Thien Ngan, HK Film, Phuong Nam, BHD, Tran Phuong. There is an increasing number of private cinema nets attracting filmgoers, such as CGV, Lotte Cinema, Platinum, BHD, Megastar, Galaxy etc. In 2013 Hollywood Reporter journal put Vietnam on the list of 13 most popular markets which had rapidly grown that year. From 2009 to 2019 in Vietnam the number of cinema halls grew more than twelvefold, and their incomes increased 13,5fold³⁵. According to the Strategy for development of Vietnamese cultural industries, by 2020 film industry was to achieve the gain indicator of \$150 mln; however, by 2019 the branch had achieved the income of \$176 mln, i.e., 20% higher than the estimates.

As far as Vietnamese cinema art is concerned, in 2009 Vietnamese films got but \$54 billion, i.e., 17,9 % of the branch’s income, but in 2019 the gains increased up to \$1 210 trillion, the share having been 30 %. Also, the quantity of domestic films grows annually: in 2009–2014 about 15–25 films in a year were produced, i.e., 15 % of the total cinema showings, but there were 42 films in 2015, 41 films in 2016, 38 films in 2017, 41 films in 2018, which is higher than indicators set with the Strategy. Some films of private film studios attracted more filmgoers than Hollywood ones shown at the same time. They had big gains; thus, “I am under 18” (“*Em chưa 18*”) gained \$175 billion, “Camellia Sisters” (“*Gái già lắm chiêu*”) gained \$165 billion, “Win My Baby Back” (“*Cua lại vợ bầu*”) gained \$192 billion, “Fury” (“*Hai Phượng*”) gained \$200 billion. “Dad, I’m Sorry” (“*Bố già*”) produced by Tran Thanh managed to gain peak \$400 billion. “Independent” cinema also has won several awards at big international film festivals: “Bi, Don’t Be Afraid!” (“*Bi đừng sợ*”), “Flapping in the Middle of Nowhere” (“*Đập cánh giữa không trung*”), “Big Father, Small Father, and Other Stories” (“*Cha và con và*”), “The Way Station” (“*Đảo của dân ngụ cư*”), “Father and Son” (“*Cha công con*”), “Song Lang”, “Summer in Closed Eyes” (“*Nhắm mắt thấy mùa hè*”), “Rom” (“*Ròm*”), “Taste” (“*Vị*”) etc. TV series (doramas) have also been greatly changed. They attract audience to screens at prime-time and contest successfully with South Korean, Chinese and American films: “Come Back Home” (“*Về nhà đi con*”), “Quynh Doll” (“*Quỳnh búp bê*”), “Life-Long Offence” (“*Cả một đời ân oán*”), “Mental Smell” (“*Hương vị tình thân*”), “11 Months, 5 Days” (“*11 tháng 5 ngày*”) etc. There has emerged a whole galaxy of young film-makers of a high skill level, great originality, whose films are greatly appreciated by professional community and warmly welcome by general public. The success of cinema art shows that only the works deeply reflecting culture, traditions, and various aspects of Vietnamese outlook can win the audience.

Advertising, a branch inseparable of culture, has also achieved breakthrough results. Any products – not only advertised ones – have a success when based on national culture, when they reflect Vietnamese mind, when they are original, new and creative. Advertising is one of the most profitable branches in contemporary consumer society. Currently in Vietnam there are more than 7 000 advertising companies providing services at different levels, such as TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, internet, external media, polygraphy etc. In 2018 the greatest income from advertising

³⁵ According to the statistics of CJ CGV Vietnam, in 2009 there were but 87 cinema halls in Vietnam, which brought the income of \$302 billion (\$13 mln), in 2019 there were 1 063 cinema halls in 204 film theatres with the income of \$4 064 billion (more than \$ 176 mln).

among TV channels, Đ4 982 billion, was gained by VTV (Vietnamese television) followed by Broadcasting company of Vinh Long province, TV of Ho Chi Minh City, Digital VTC [Đạt gần 5.000 tỷ đồng doanh thu: 22.01.2019]. In the age of Internet online-advertising attracts 43 % of Vietnamese users, mostly through social media. The income of digital advertising in Vietnam is estimated at \$663 mln, i.e., on this indicator Vietnam is ranked the 35th in the world [Năm 2018, doanh thu quảng cáo: 21.01.2019]. On the initiative of Vietnam advertising association (VAA) there has been created the Institute of Researches and Training in the sphere of advertisement to fill in the shortage of such specialists in national companies.

As a whole, currently cultural industries in Vietnam amount to 3,1 % of total GDP of the country. Vietnam's government expects that by 2030 this indicator will achieve 7 % of GDP and create a big quantity of additional jobs for the population³⁵.

Conclusion

Vietnam's culture having absorbed millennial traditions of Vietnamese civilization and total cultural diversity of the country's population, is the inexhaustible source of humanitarian resources to master and use cultural industries. Also, this is an effective way to transform culture into an internal development resource, contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction.

Also, the development of cultural industries is an important way to protect national values, forms of cultural self-expression and national cultural sovereignty, to limit foreign cultural domination. Confident support of cultural industries is also a way to balance the waves of cultural soft force of South Korea, China, Taiwan, the US, etc.

Nevertheless supporting the development of cultural industries there should be paid attention to harmonize the correlation of economic and cultural purposes; humanitarian and cultural values with commercial trends; high culture and the demand for the simplest entertainments; dissemination of mass culture and forcing the elitarian one not to harm the forward movement of national culture.

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EUPHEMIA AS A LINGUOCULTURAL PHENOMENON OF THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract. The article analyzes euphemia as a linguocultural phenomenon in the Vietnamese language. It examines the interrelationship between euphemisms and taboos. The author distinguishes five functional types of euphemisms. They are: euphemisms-word taboos used to avoid names of frightful things and phenomena; euphemisms to substitute something obscene, indecent, unpleasant; etiquette euphemisms; political euphemisms; puns (wordplay) for an intended humorous effect. There are the following large fields of euphemisms: everyday-spoken and socio-political. There have been determined euphemism formation modes which are divided into two large categories: structural (formal) and lexico-semantic ones. The article analyzes different euphemism formation modes. In the course of the study, the author has used a broad illustrative material. The research work relevance is due to the widespread usage of euphemisms in the media and communication.

Keywords: Vietnamese language, linguoculture, euphemia, euphemism, taboo, sacred animals, names.

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Introduction

Euphemia belongs to linguistic universals, being the universal socio-cultural, linguistic and communicative phenomenon in languages of the world. Linguists of different countries began to research euphemisms in the second half of the twentieth century. There were published some dictionaries of euphemisms in English-speaking countries. Such dictionaries have been issued in Russia at the beginning of the twenty-first century [Senichkina 2008, Kovshova 2007]. So far, there have been neither dictionaries of euphemisms, nor even notes on euphemisms in explanatory dictionaries in Vietnam.

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The linguistic encyclopedic dictionary gives the following definition of euphemisms: “Euphemisms are emotionally neutral words or expressions, substituting synonymous words or expressions which a speaker considers obscene, rude or tactless... Also, they substitute taboo names, archaic... and new...” [Lingvisticheskij enciklopedicheskij slovar': 890]. However, A. Baranov and D. Dobrovol'sky mention insufficient correctness of this definition, while there is a number of expressions which are not emotionally neutral, but they substitute still ruder obscene taboo analogues [Baranov 2015]. A number of researchers interpret euphemisms in a broad sense. For them euphemisms are: Latin names of diseases, used by doctors to conceal a real diagnosis from a patient, slang words and expressions and means of professional secret speech used to conceal the sense from the uninitiated, general nominations instead of concrete ones, some stock phrases, etc. [Krysin 1994]. Well-known researcher V.P. Moskvin comes out for favor of clear separation of closely-related phenomena (professional cryptolalia, disinformation) [Moskvin 2001]. In this work I share the approach to the phenomenon of euphemia as formulated by M.L. Kovshova: euphemisms are “permitted words and expressions substituting those forbidden or restricted in their usage with etiquette, ethical, legal, ideological norms and customs adopted in the given linguocultural community. Euphemisms substitute words and expressions which, in a speaker's opinion, are undesirable, do not respond to the communication purpose and can result in communicative failure” [Kovshova 2019: 36].

The researches devoted to euphemisms and taboo words are relatively few in Vietnamese linguistics. Tran Thi Hong Hanh studies linguacultural features of Vietnamese euphemisms [Trần Thị Hồng Hạnh 2015], Doan Tien Luc researches the euphemisms formation modes [Đoàn Tiến Lực 2012]. Nguyen Duc Dan in his article “Taboo and Euphemisms” determines five groups of taboo words in the Vietnamese language, as follows: undesirable, needed to be concealed; physiological excretions; culture, customs, and beliefs; taboo names [Nguyễn Đức Dân 2005: 41]. Bui Thi Ngoc Anh investigates the methods to represent taboo words in the articles of the Vietnamese language dictionary edited by Hoang Phe [Bùi Thị Ngọc Anh 2012]. In their comparative works researchers mention common features and show differences between various groups of euphemisms in Vietnamese and in a number of other languages, such as Chinese [Hoàng Thị Liễu 2015], Khmer [Đào Thị Kim Duyên 2015], English [Trương Viên 2003].

As far as I know, there has been neither comprehensive study nor system research of euphemisms in the Vietnamese language, nor by foreign researchers.

The task of this research is the analysis of euphemia features in the Vietnamese language, the ratio of taboo words and euphemisms, classification of functional types of euphemisms in the Vietnamese language, identification of modes and linguistic means for euphemisms formation, and definition of their structural and semantic features. The author used methods of structural and semantic analysis and of componential analysis, descriptive-analytical method, contextual analysis, the Internet and mass media continuous selection methodology.

Taboo words and euphemisms

It is universally recognized that the euphemia phenomenon is genetically connected with such a linguocultural sign as taboo. In ancient times taboo like a cultural universal emerged on the base of mythology. It was connected with human fear of supernatural forces, obscure natural phenomena; its expression was a strict public ban on some actions or things. Also, taboo spread on words. This was connected with human belief in a magic function of the speech, in the ability of language to directly

influence the environment. Thus, numerous cultures banned on the usage of deities', spirits' and demons' names, as well as on mentioning terrible animals, natural phenomena, diseases and death. To substitute taboo words, they used other words, namely, euphemisms.

Many peoples had euphemisms for dangerous or sacred animals, but the objects varied. Thus, the Russian language tabooed the name of "a bear", while in Vietnamese the word was "a tiger": *Ông* "ruler", *Ngài* "master", *son quân* "sovereign of mountains", *chúa tể sơn lâm* "ruler (lord) of mountains and woods", *ông ba mươi* "lord Thirty" (there are different explanations of the origin of this euphemism: the tiger came to a village for a victim on the thirtieth, darkest, night of the lunar month; on the thirtieth of December, the last day of the lunar year, there were made offerings to the tiger. Another interpretation is that emperor Gia Long declared either the punishment of thirty sticks for those who killed the tiger or the reward of thirty coins for those who caught the tiger alive). In some coastal areas of Vietnam there is the whale's cult, which, according to fishers' beliefs, is a sacred animal. There are such euphemisms for the whale, like *Cá ông* "fish-lord", *Ông Nam Hải* "sovereign of the South Sea". To name the menacing element of fire, they used the euphemism of *Bà Hỏa* "Fire Lady (Fire Goddess)": *Bà hỏa thiêu rụi hai nhà dân* "fire destructed two dwelling houses".

A lot of cultures euphemized such a frightful phenomenon like death. In the Vietnamese language there are numerous euphemisms for naming death, either: *đi* "to leave", *ra đi vĩnh viễn* "to leave forever", *từ trần* "to pass away" (to leave the world), *nhắm mắt xuôi tay* "to shut one's eyes, to stretch out one's arms", *trút hơi thở cuối cùng* "to breathe one's last", *đi vào giấc ngủ ngàn thu* "to be off to an eternal sleep", *về với tổ tiên* "to join one's ancestors", *về cõi tiên* "to go to the land of the Celestials", *quy tiên* "go to Heaven", *về nơi chín suối* "to go to the place of nine sources" (i.e., the sources of the nine greatest Chinese rivers, flowing in the underworld of the dead), etc.

One of the examples of taboo in Vietnamese culture was the taboo for the names which existed in many Oriental cultures, particularly, in Chinese one. Word taboo for names was the ban on pronouncing and writing the names of the emperor and his close relations, as well as his ancestors, particularly, his father, and the names of senior relations and persons of high ranks. For instance, as the emperor Gia Long's son's name was Nguyễn Phúc Cảnh, the word *cảnh* was tabooed. Therefore, *cây cảnh* "ornamental plant" was to be pronounced *cây kiểng*. Currently, the echoes of the ancient taboo are still lasting out: they avoid to give the ancestors' names to the babies.

Along with the development of society and language, there develop old, traditional themes of euphemization and emerge new ones. Also, there emerge new euphemisms. Thus, for example, there has emerged a current euphemism *hai vạch* "two stripes", positive pregnancy (Coronavirus) test, used for indirect naming pregnancy or the disease: *hai vạch ở tuổi 100*, two stripes (positive COVID test) at the age of 100; *ăn gì sau hai vạch?* – What to eat after the two stripes have emerged?

M.L. Kovshova writes that a current native speaker's desire "is not at all to secure oneself from the menacing forces of the fatal world; he merely knows an ethical code of cultural attitudes and uses a set of euphemisms to mitigate indecent, tactless, obscene or rude expression" [Kovshova 2007: 65].

The functional types of euphemisms

There can be seen the following functional types of euphemisms in the current Vietnamese language:

1. Euphemisms-taboo words, used to substitute the names of frightful things and phenomena (death, deadly diseases, the elements etc.): *khuất núi* “to hide behind the mountains” – to die; *bệnh thế kỷ* “the disease of the century” – AIDS.

2. Euphemisms to substitute something obscene, indecent, or unpleasant (physiological processes, natural excretions, bodily bottom, sex, vices of society): *đeo ba lô ngược* “to bear a rucksack backwards” – to be pregnant; *giải quyết nỗi buồn* “to shake the blues” – to relieve oneself.

3. Etiquette euphemisms used not to hurt the collocutor or the third person, to show tolerance (human appearance, intelligence, poverty, nomination of low status job): *không được xinh lắm* “not pretty” – nasty, ugly; *tròn trịa* “in the flesh” – thick, full-bodied; *người giúp việc nhà (gia đình)* “au pair girl” – a housekeeper, a domestic worker.

4. Political euphemisms, used to mask or deform the substance of the case: *«chưa có công ăn việc làm»* “having no job, so far” – an unemployed.

5. Euphemisms in the function of a pun (wordplay) for the intended humorous effect. For instance, such a dialogue between the lovers: – *Em hai vạch rồi anh ạ. Ngắn người một lúc, chàng trai reo lên sung sướng: – Chúc mừng em lên trung sĩ nhé. Hôm nào phải khao anh đấy!* – I have got two stripes (i.e., positive pregnancy test). – The boy, slightly flabbergasted with the news, cried happily: – My congratulations, you are a sergeant now (there are two stripes on the sergeant’s shoulder-strap). You owe me for this!

The fields of euphemizing

Numerous objects and nominative fields of euphemizing are similar in different languages (for example, death and diseases, supernatural phenomena, physical disabilities, gender relations etc.), but due to the existence of value priorities typical of a certain national culture, of different linguacultural and ethnolinguistic features, the qualitative and thematic content of euphemisms varies in different languages and reflects particularities of a certain linguistic culture. Thus, unlike Russian linguistic culture, in Vietnam middle age is not a subject of euphemizing. This is connected with the traditionally great respect for the experience and authority of the senior generation. Also, the theme of drunkenness is not relevant for euphemizing in Vietnamese. One of the specific themes in Vietnamese linguistic culture is childbearing. Traditionally after the childbirth the woman was settled out to a separate room, where the rest of family members were not allowed to enter. There was a hearth to warm the room. The woman ought to stay in bed, even hygienics being forbidden. Thus, emerged such euphemism like *nằm ổ* “to lie in the nest”, *nằm bếp* “to lie at the hearth”, to bear, to give birth. (*Chuẩn bị đi làm trở lại sau thời gian nằm ổ* – to be going to work after childbirth). Along with the development of language and society, there is the process of disappearance, change and emergence of euphemizing objects and corresponding nominations. Thus, if there used to exist traditionally positive attitude to corpulence being an indicator of prosperity and health in Vietnamese society, now obesity is evaluated negatively and often becomes a euphemizing object. Recently along with the globalization process and the spread of political correctness and tolerance tendencies, there emerge the like new euphemizing themes in different languages.

In Vietnamese linguistic culture there are two large fields of euphemizing: everyday-spoken and socio-political ones. Everyday-spoken field consists of the following euphemizing fields (themes): 1. Human anatomy and physiology, body parts nominations, the bodily bottom. For example: *chỗ ấy* “this part”, *cái ấy* “this thing”, *chỗ kín* “a private place” – genitals; *của quý* “valuables” – male genitals, *tam giác mật* “a secret triangle” – female genitals; *đèn đỏ* “the red light” – the period (*ngày đèn đỏ ở phụ nữ* – menstrual period); *có tin vui* “there is happy news” – pregnancy (*5 dấu hiệu khẳng định chị em có tin vui* – five signs of pregnancy).

2. Natural excretions: *đi WC, đi toilet* “to go to the toilet”; *bị Tào Tháo đuổi* “diarrhea” (Chinese military leader Tao Tháo is chasing somebody).

3. Sexual relations: *chuyện ấy* “this action”, *mây mưa* “clouds and rain” – sexual act; *làm tình* “to make love”.

4. Appearance, mental and physical defects and vices, mental disorders: *thâm thấp* “a little short”, *chiều cao khiêm tốn* “modest growth”, *đậm đà* “in the flesh”, *khiêm thính* “hearing impaired”.

5. Human vices, social evil, crimes: *ca ve* (from French: cavalière “she-partner”), *gái bán hoa* “a girl selling flowers” – a prostitute.

6. Financial situation, poverty, wealth: *con nhà có điều kiện* “a child from a family of conditions” – a child from a wealthy family.

7. Death, serious diseases: *đi rồi* “to leave”, *đi xa* “to leave (start) afar”, *đi đoàn tụ ông bà* “to join the ancestors” – to die.

8. Typical features, intellectual level: *chậm hiểu* “to understand slowly” – dull, stupid.

The second large group of euphemisms consists of euphemisms of the socio-political sphere. The function of these euphemisms is often masking (camouflage) of real essence of events, partial concealment of information, mitigating negative actions or events, frightful details. For example: *tình trạng thiếu việc làm* “job shortage” – unemployment; *kế hoạch hóa gia đình* “family planning” – birth control; *thủ tục đầu tiên* “primary formalities” – bribe; *văn hóa phong bì* “envelopes culture” – a custom to bribe; *điểm tụ nước* “spots of water accumulation” – the euphemism used by the administration of Ho Chi Minh City for direct nomination of floodings, flooded places and streets in the city, completely submerged after hard rains. Euphemisms are used to re-name so-called unprestigious jobs: *công nhân vệ sinh môi trường* “a worker for environmental hygiene” instead of a dustman.

The modes and linguistic means to form euphemisms

In my opinion, the modes to form euphemisms can be divided into two large categories: structural (formal) and lexico-semantic ones.

Due to typological features of the Vietnamese language, being an isolating one, **structural (formal)** euphemizing modes are very scarce in it. The following can be discerned among them: a) **graphical omission**, i.e., the use of omission points in obscene, taboo words or in reduction, deformation of the word: *đ.m.* “...your mother”, *c.* “shit”; b) **abbreviation**: *người có H* “a person with AIDS, AIDS-positive”; c) the usage of **repeat-forms** with the meaning of mitigation, incompleteness of an action or a sign: *beo beo* “in the flesh” (instead of *béo*, thick, full-bodied), *thâm thấp* “a little short” (instead of *thấp*, short).

The great majority of Vietnamese euphemisms are formed in the **lexico-semantic** mode. The means to form euphemisms in the lexico-semantic mode are the following: a) the usage of **borrowed** lexical units. First of all, Vietnamese usually uses borrowed Han-Viet lexical units for euphemisms.

Numerous Han Viet lexical units belongs to pedantic style of speech and attach the phrase an official, academic, solemn phonation. Therefore, the usage of Han Viet units instead of originally Vietnamese ones is one of the means to euphemize, for example: *nội y* “underwear”, *tử thi* “dead body, corpse”, *hạ bộ* “male genitals”, *quan ngại* “sex addict, obsessed”. Currently, English borrowed words are often used for euphemisms: *toa-lét*, *WC* “toilet”, *nuy* “nude”, *die (đai)* “to die”, *làm tình* “to make love”; b) the usage of **proper names** for euphemisms. Thus, the Vietnamese euphemism of a housekeeper, a domestic worker is the widespread word *ô-sin*. Oshin (Shin) Tanokura is the name of the protagonist of a Japanese drama, very popular in Vietnam. From her childhood Oshin had to be a domestic worker; c) the formation of **incompleteness** of a sign or an action with the negation (*không đẹp lắm* “not very pretty”, *không thông minh lắm* “not too intelligent”, *chưa được chăm chỉ* “not hard-working yet” – lazy), substitution with the word expressing the incompleteness of the action or a low degree of the quality (*kiếm thị* “a visually impaired” instead of “blind”, *đậm đà* “in the flesh” instead of “thick”); d) **pronominalization** (substitution with the pronoun): *chuyện ấy* “this action” – sexual intercourse; *chỗ ấy* “this place” – genitals. Usually, demonstrative pronouns are used instead of the forbidden, blaming nomination and mostly mask the phenomena connected with sex; e) **metaphorization** of the meaning: *đèn đỏ* “red light” – the period; *bướm* “a butterfly” – female genitals; *áo mưa* “raincoat” – a contraceptive; *bầu sữa* “milk vessel” – bosom, bust; *giấc ngủ ngàn thu* “eternal sleep” – death; f) **metonymic** transfer: *tắt thở* “to lose one’s breath” – to die; *lên giường* “to go to bed” – to have sex; g) the usage of **terminological** glossary: *bàng quang* (instead of *bóng đái* – bladder); h) the usage of the words with **diffused semantics** (certain, some etc.): *đàm phán đạt kết quả nhất định* – the negotiations brought certain results; i) **euphemistic circumlocution** – the nomination of a thing, a phenomenon, an event, or an action in a mitigated and veiled mode: *chuyến bay chưa đúng giờ* “the flight is not on time, so far”(instead of “delayed” or “canceled”); *đang ăn cơm tù rồi* “to have the prison food” – to be in prison; *buôn hương bán phấn* “to sell scent, to sell powder” – to prostitute oneself.

Conclusion

Being a universal socio-cultural, linguistic and communicative phenomenon, euphemia is widely represented in the current Vietnamese language. Genetically, euphemia is closely connected with taboo, but in current society the formation and usage of euphemisms, usually, is not connected with taboo, but is due to social and moral norms and etiquette. In Vietnamese linguistic culture there are the following large fields of euphemization: everyday-spoken and socio- political ones. Functional types of euphemisms are the following: euphemisms-taboo words, used to substitute frightful objects and phenomena; euphemisms to substitute something obscene, indecent, unpleasant; etiquette euphemisms, political euphemisms; puns (wordplay) for an intended humorous effect. The great majority of Vietnamese euphemisms are formed in lexico-semantic mode, but structural (formal) euphemizing modes are scarce due to typological features of the Vietnamese language being an isolating one. Euphemisms are widespread in the current media and in Internet-communication. Therefore, the study of the phenomenon of euphemia in the current Vietnamese language is of practical relevance and significance.

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THE VIETNAM CROSS DAYS BETWEEN MGIMO UNIVERSITY AND ST PETERSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: The article surveys a scientific conference and a scientific-practical student seminar held in Moscow and in St Petersburg in the frameworks of the “Vietnam Cross Days” that were organized by MGIMO Vietnamese Students Association, the ASEAN Centre in cooperation with the Ho Chi Minh Institute of the Saint-Petersburg State University. Russian and Vietnamese speakers discussed a wide range of issues, including bilateral relations, growth and development of Vietnam, as well as the history, culture and language of this country.

Keywords: Vietnam Cross Days, student science, Vietnam, Russia, comprehensive strategic partnership, Russian-Vietnamese relations, Southeastern Asia, Vietnam’s economy, Vietnam’s foreign policy, Vietnam’s domestic policy, Vietnam’s culture and literature.

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The traditional “7th Vietnam Day at MGIMO”, a flagship initiative of the Vietnamese community and the ASEAN Center, was held in April 2022. Its site annually unites Vietnamese students learning in Russia, Vietnamists of leading Russian schools of oriental studies, and those whose professional concerns are directly connected with the study of Vietnam and the development of Russian-Vietnamese relations. The novelty this year has been the organization of external activities, i.e., “the Vietnam Cross Days”, for the first time held at St Petersburg State University with support of the Ho Chi Minh Institute. In the course of mutual visits of student delegations to Moscow

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and St Petersburg there was held a number of scientific, as well as cultural and educational events, dedicated to Vietnamese studies in Russia and to the analysis of the role of Vietnam in the world.

On April 25, a scientific-practical student seminar was held at the Ho Chi Minh Institute at St Petersburg State University. Students-Vietnamists of St Petersburg State University, MGIMO University, the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow State Linguistic University, National Research University Higher School of Economics, and RUDN University took part in it. Students read fifteen papers which discussed issues of Vietnam history, literature, culture, economics and politics from antiquity to the present day.

Moscow delegation headed by Svetlana Glazunova, a senior teacher of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and Lao Chair at MGIMO University, consisted of thirteen students from Moscow leading institutes. Also, the participants were Valeria Vershinina, Ksenia Tabunova, MGIMO ASEAN Center experts, and Vu Thi Tra My, a graduate of MGIMO University, a member of the Association of Lawyers of Russia.

Prior to the seminar, in keeping with the tradition of the Ho Chi Minh Institute at St Petersburg State University guests jointly with teachers and university students laid flowers at the monument of President Ho Chi Minh (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Laying flowers at the monument of President Ho Chi Minh at St Petersburg State University.

Photo: The Faculty of Oriental Studies at St Petersburg State University

Piotr Moskalyov, Assistant Professor at St Petersburg State University, opened the scientific-practical seminar in the frameworks of “the Vietnam Cross Days” between MGIMO University and St Petersburg State University. He mentioned the importance of exchanging the results of studying one of the key partners of Russia in APAC to strengthen the relations between the countries.

The first author was E. Moiseyev, a third-year student of National Research University Higher School of Economics. He provided the analysis of Le Thanh Tong’s “ideal” state. Following the chronology, E. Petelina, a second-year student of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of St Petersburg University, spoke on the role of Buddhism and Confucianism in the socio-political system of medieval Vietnam in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Yu. Dokshina, a student of the Institute of Asian and African Countries at Lomonosov State University, rose the question of the Mac dynasty in Vietnamese and foreign historiography in her paper on “The History of the Mac Dynasty: The Socio-Political Aspect”. Her colleague A. Alexandrova transferred the discussion to the New Time having provided the research with the theme: “The Dai Nam Empire Infrastructure Creation in the Years of 1802–1862” (Fig. 2).

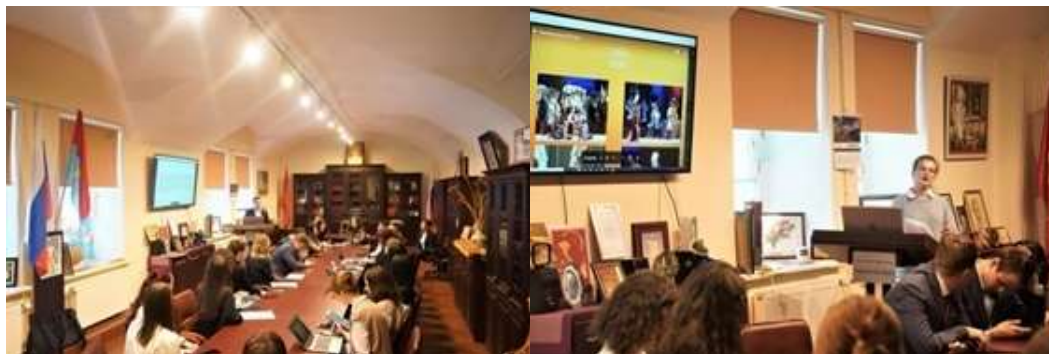


Fig. 2. “The Vietnam Cross Days” between MGIMO University and St Petersburg State University at the Ho Chi Minh Institute. *Photo: TTXVN*

Though the country has rich centuries-old history, young Vietnamists are more often attracted with problems of modern history of Vietnam. I. Trukhin examined the process of French occupation of Vietnam and its military and political consequences for the region. Pursuing the theme of the Vietnamese history in the 20th century, M. Stepanishchev compared Ngo Dinh Diem’s and Nguyen Van Thieu’s regimes in the Republic of Vietnam. P. Solovyova shared with her colleagues the results of comparative analysis of the SRV and ASEAN policy in Indochina at the end of the 1970s and 1980s. The research results of D. Ryabtseva, a second-year student of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at St Petersburg State University, with the theme: “The Renovation Policy in Vietnam as an Objective Consequence of External and Internal Political Processes” logically followed the conclusions made by her MGIMO colleagues.

Students showed their interest in issues of international cooperation. M. Levchenko, a RUDN student, presented her paper on the participation of Indochina countries in the Chinese Belt and Road initiative. Also, master students took part in the discussion on results and perspectives of Russia-Vietnam cooperation in various fields. N. Kolotova, a master student of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at St Petersburg State University presented the analysis of the current two countries’ cooperation in the digital realm. In his turn, A. Kryukov, a MGIMO master student, spoke on the RF and SRV cooperation in the sphere of agriculture. This cluster of papers provoked a lively debate touching legal, logistical and transactional issues including the one of blockchain technologies use when doing business in SEA region.

Also, young Vietnamists are interested in problems of spiritual and cultural life of the region. P. Naumkina, a second-year student of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at St Petersburg State University, spoke on the theme of ancestors’ cult and its role in beliefs of Vietnam prior to the 17th century. A. Bobylkina, a master student of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at St Petersburg State University, analyzed features of images of women at war as being shown in “Mother”, a story by Le Minh Khue. A. Kovalyova, a student of Moscow State Linguistic University, delivered a paper with the theme: “Theater in Vietnam and its Popularization in Modern Conditions”.



Fig. 3. *Left: Doctor of History, Prof. V.N. Kolotov, Director of the Ho Chi Minh Institute at St Petersburg State University. Photo: The Faculty of Oriental Studies at St Petersburg State University*

Concluding the conference Professor Vladimir Kolotov, Head of the Department of History of the Far-East Countries at St Petersburg State University, Director of the Ho Chi Minh Institute (Fig. 3) spoke on the development of Oriental studies, particularly on Vietnamese studies at St Petersburg State University. Also, he presented the activity of the Ho Chi Minh Institute at St Petersburg State University. Professor Kolotov emphasized the key role of complex study of the region for the development of efficient cooperation and cited Sun Tzu's quote: "Know yourself – know the other". In the conclusion he mentioned a high quality of student papers and paid attention to the importance to hold student seminars which unite young researchers of the centers of Vietnamese studies in Russia.

The Moscow series of events started with the research conference "Vietnam Facing the 21st Century Challenges: A New Understanding of Russia-Vietnam Relations" on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Russia and Vietnam. The conference discussions covered three sessions on Russian-Vietnamese economic relations; social, political and economic changes in Vietnam; and historic and cultural studies of Vietnam.

The Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, H.E. Mr. Gennady Bezdetko delivered opening remarks via a pre-recorded video message for the launch of the conference. In his speech he emphasized the timeliness and the importance of the meeting with the view of complex geopolitical situation in the world, he also touched upon the need for searching for new ways to foster Russia-Vietnam relations. Dr. Andrey Baykov, MGIMO Vice-Rector for Science and Research, in his welcoming remarks noted that a wide range of proposed topics to discuss and a broad representation of Russian and Vietnamese research centers at the conference reflect the diversity of Russia-Vietnam comprehensive strategic partnership (Fig. 4).

Dr. Natalia Stapran, Director of the Department for Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation and Mr. Vyacheslav Harinov, Trade Representative of the Russian Federation to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, introduced an up-to-date overview of trade and economic Russia-Vietnam relations. They noted the positive dynamics and the growth of trade turnover, as well as outlined perspective areas for cooperation considering the latest changes in Vietnamese consumer market. Dr. Valdimir Mazyrin, Head of the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies RAS and Dr. Vladimir Kolotov, Director of the Ho Chi Minh Institute, in their welcoming remarks raised the issue of Vietnamese specialists training in Russia, and touched upon the Russia-Vietnam research cooperation.



Fig. 4. Vice-rector MGIMO Andrey Baykov welcomes the conference participants. *Photo: MGIMO*

The first session was devoted to the analysis of trade and economic aspects of Russia-Vietnam comprehensive strategic partnership (Fig. 5). The session was moderated by Dr. Valeria Vershinina, Expert of the ASEAN Centre. Mr. Alexander Butko, Senior Fellow of the Center for Scientific and Analytical Information of the Institute of Oriental Studies RAS opened the discussion. In his presentation he identified new perspective areas for Russia and Vietnam cooperation in the field of nuclear energy. Taking into account the growing demand for electricity, Vietnam may reconsider its intentions regarding nuclear energy. In this regard, Russian unique technologies such as floating nuclear power plants and small nuclear power plants could be of potential interest to Vietnamese partners. Dr. Marina Hramova, Associate Professor of the Department of Demographic and Migration Policy, MGIMO University, Deputy Director of the Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS analyzed migration flows of Russian citizens to Vietnam and its impact on Vietnam's economy. She pointed out that the large Russian-speaking diaspora in Vietnam plays an important role in its economy, especially in the sphere of tourism in the southern provinces. Yet, there are still several issues and obstacles in the visa asymmetric regime that may contain the future development of bilateral relations. Mr. Trinh Quoc Ving, a master student of the School of International Relations of the Far Eastern Federal University, focused on the significant potential for cooperation between Russia's Far East and Vietnam provinces. He believes that Russian and Vietnamese regions have great potential for cooperation in the spheres of trade, construction, tourism, education and others. Though one of the key obstacles, in his view, is complex logistics and the absence of direct flights between the regions.

A RUDN bachelor student of the Department of theory and history of International Relations Ms. Maria Levchenko and MGIMO bachelor students of the School of International Economic Relations and the International Law School Mr. Nguyen Tung Son and Mr. Ha Le Thanh Trung shared their view on the Russia-Vietnam cooperation in energy sector – the foundation of bilateral relations. Ms. Maria Levchenko gave a historic overview of oil and gas exploration on the continental shelf of Vietnam by soviet specialists. The discovery of oil and gas deposits and the development of infrastructure within joint ventures such as "Vietsovpetro" had a significant impact on the industrial development and economy of Vietnam. At the same time, despite declining oil production, the joint venture "Vietsovpetro" expands its services to external organizations and partners in order to remain

profitable. Mr. Nguyen Tung Son and Mr. Ha Le Thanh Trung described potential projects in the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry. According to them, Russian companies such as “Zarubezneft” and “Novatek” have plans to construct the Ca Na LNG Power Plant and Vinh Phong offshore wind farm.



Fig. 5. At the first session of the conference at MGIMO. *Photo: Nhan Dan*

The second session was focused on Vietnam’s achievements in the social-political and economic spheres and on the threats and challenges that it faces today. The first speakers of the session, Ms. Nadezhda Kolotova, a master student of the Saint-Petersburg State University, and Mr. Ivan Hludov, MGIMO master student of the School of International Relations, paid their attention to Vietnamese foreign policy. Ms. Nadezhda Kolotova analyzed the concept of “soft power” by the case of the state committee for overseas Vietnamese under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam. In her view, the term “soft power” is relatively new for Vietnamese academic discourse, yet the committee’s broad activities and its initiatives allow to generate a positive image of the country in the international arena as well as to remain connections of overseas Vietnamese between generations and to their country of origin. Mr. Ivan Hludov reviewed France’s approach to ‘Indo-Pacific Region’, the evolution of its strategy and the role of Vietnam in it. He believes that France views itself as an Indo-Pacific power and in this regard France-Vietnam relations are becoming even more relevant than ever with France’s attempt to expand relations with ASEAN. The France-Vietnam cooperation develops most rapidly in the defense area. Both sides also achieved progress in trade and humanitarian areas. Yet, in comparison with France relations with other ASEAN member states especially with Singapore, the level of France-Vietnam relations is far below. In conclusion, the speaker stressed that with a of view growing strategic value o f Vietnam, in the near future France will enhance its cooperation and make efforts to intensify mutual dialogue.

Among the other topics discussed during the session were the most dynamically developing sectors of Vietnam’s economy, namely, auto and game industries. A bachelor student of the Far Eastern Federal University Mr. Maxim Ohotnikov started his presentation with a division of the Vietnamese auto industry into two areas. The first area is the car assembly in Vietnam of such world car brands as «Mazda», «Hyundai», «Kia» and «Toyota». The second is the Vietnam’s car industry which is presented by such companies as “Vinaxuki”, “THACO” and “Vinfast”. The Vietnamese car manufactures produce not only vans, trucks and buses but also passenger cars, electric cars and electric buses. Vietnamese car brands have great plans to enter the world auto market and to construct car factories overseas. In conclusion, he underlined that despite the country’s limited domestic market

the Vietnamese car industry is developing rapidly and has a great potential for future growth. A MGIMO master student of the School of International Relations Ms. Alexandra Urueva examined the Vietnam's state regulation of the game industry. She presented a short overview of the Vietnam game market which is characterized with predominance of Chinese and Korean PC and mobile video games. The Vietnam game market is import-oriented with the largest company "VinaGame" that produces only 5% of its own video games while others 95% are foreign-owned games that were localized for local players. Ms. Alexandra Urueva believes that the key issue for Vietnamese government today is the China's dominance in the domestic game market. On the other hand an enhanced biopolitical state monitoring is ongoing in Vietnam which aims to advance local law, and to tighten the video game licensing process and the video game censorship.

During the discussion, the participants also touched upon the environmental agenda in Vietnam. Ms. Anna Dolinina, Senior Specialist-Expert of the Department for Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, IAAS MSU postgraduate student has demonstrated in her presentation, in what manner the Vietnamese agriculture and changes in the food consumption structure has affected the environment. She noted that the increase in animal protein consumption, as well as the development of rice and coffee exports, are the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, the growth of eating out, taking into account the underdeveloped infrastructure for the collection and processing of garbage, negatively impacted the ecology of Vietnam. Nevertheless, as Ms. Anna Dolinina underlined, the country is actively developing and implementing new technologies for growing rice and meat production, by resorting to the support of foreign partners. It is also important that infrastructure for the waste collection and processing is under construction, which may further reduce environmental risks in Vietnam. Subsequently, Mr. Vadim Kuznetsov, a bachelor's student at the School of Governance and Politics at MGIMO, in-depth analyzed Vietnam's state carbon neutrality programs in his presentation. In his view, Vietnam ranks second in the world in terms of reserves of rare earth metals, which are necessary for the green energy development. Today's Vietnam has a great opportunity of becoming the world's largest exporter of this metal type after China. The country actively participates in the international climate forum's activity and has committed itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and plans to implement a significant number of renewable energy generation projects.

The final part of the discussion was devoted to the presentation by Mr. Nikita Kuznetsov, a research assistant at the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISPR FCTAS RAS). He presented the results of a sociological study on the factors influencing the choice of education abroad among Vietnamese youth. A survey showed that an average Vietnamese applicant has high requirements not only for the education level, but for the accompanying factors of studying abroad, including the life quality or the quality of care. The subsequent education programs also play an important role for education abroad development, it is also influenced by the employment after graduation and simplification of the visa regime for students studying abroad. The findings, by Mr. Nikita Kuznetsov, indicate the need for additional elaboration of the Russian strategy for exporting education to foreign markets, especially in relation to Vietnam, where interest in Russian education remains high.

Within the framework of Session 3 "History, Culture and Literature of Vietnam", the speakers discussed a wide range of topics, from the ancient history of Vietnam to the current development stages of its domestic and foreign policy. Attention was also paid to the development of the religious

tradition in Vietnam, as well as to the problems of the Vietnamese language and linguistics evolution. The session was moderated by the ASEAN Centre expert Dr. Nikita Kuklin.

The first part of the session was devoted to a remarkable academic discussion on the influence of Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism and Legalism on the formation of the Dai Viet statehood. In particular, the presentation by the 2nd year bachelor student at the Faculty of Asian and African Studies, St. Petersburg State University Ms. Elizaveta Petelina touched upon such a subject as the role of Buddhism and Confucianism in the social and political system of medieval Vietnam in the 14th–15th centuries. As a result, the session participants expressed different positions on the issue of how influential the Buddhist elites really were in the period and how much they could resist the Confucian court elites in the struggle for power in society and in the political system of the time.

This discussion was continued by the research of Mr. Evgeniy Moiseev, 3rd year bachelor student at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies, on the topic “Ideal” state of Le Thanh Tong. Mr. Evgeniy Moiseev conducted a detailed study of the internal policy of emperor Le Thanh Tong and drew attention to the fact that in his decrees and reasoning of state power, the monarch equally refers to the Legalists and Confucians heritage, which determines his sympathy, including for strict approaches to government. The speaker noted that Le Thanh Tong deliberately adapted the Legalist and Confucianist ideas to create a new system of meritocratic government, instead of the outdated systems of noble birth appointments to the state posts. It was also noted that the emperor pursued a policy of religious groups influence limiting and also banned the new temples construction for Buddhists and Taoists.

The next presentation of the session by Ms. Diana Ryabtseva, 2nd year bachelor student at the Faculty of Asian and African Studies, St. Petersburg State University, was devoted to the topic “Renovation Policy in Vietnam as an objective consequence of foreign and domestic political processes”. She noted that since the official announcement at the 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1986 of the Doi Moi renovation policy, Vietnam entered a qualitatively new stage in its development, which was determined by the transition from a system of centralized and bureaucratic management to a system of regulated market relations. The purposeful combination of economic development with the maintenance of political stability has resulted in Vietnam’s growing competitiveness and openness to world economic processes.

Further, valuable research “Reflection of politeness, hierarchy and commonality of the face in the Vietnamese linguistic culture” was presented by MSLU postgraduate student Ms. Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet, which carried out a detailed linguistic study on comparing the norms of communication behavior and the use of certain words and expressions in the Vietnamese, aimed at “saving face” concept, which has of particular importance to Vietnamese culture today. Through a survey of 90 people, she identified the most frequent expressions and their understanding from the native speaker’s point of view. It was determined that the face saving in Western and Vietnamese cultures differs in that the Vietnamese seek to strengthen the "common face" of the conversation participants, based on compromises, while, for example, the Australians try to minimize the loss of the individual face of a speaker.

The final presentation of the session by Ms. Anastasia Bobylkina, a 4th-year bachelor student at the Faculty of Asian and African Studies, St. Petersburg State University was the focus of “Images of women features in the war in the works of the Vietnamese writer Le Minh Khue”. The speaker noted that Le Minh Khue is an important figure of the Vietnamese military journalism and literature. It was also highlighted that her works are devoted to the artistic depiction of complex moral situations that arise in the conditions of war hostilities among ordinary people who find themselves in difficult

psychological cases. As part of the presentation Ms. Anastasia Bobylkina came to the conclusion that the central image of the story "Mother" - a military doctor Hien, differs from other characters by her fate, and, as a result, habits or manners, character demonstrates to the reader. She is portrayed as a "caring mother", while the rest of the characters, like female doctors or wounded soldiers serve to reveal the fullness of the heroine image, her moral choice and humanistic values.

At the end of the session, the speakers and a number of eminent experts on Vietnam, such as Dr. Maxim Syunnerberg, Associate Professor at the Department of the History of the Far East and Southeast Asia studies of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University and Associate Professor of the MSLU Department of Oriental Languages Dr. Elena Zubtsova took an active part in the academic discussion and reflected on all the presented researches and ideas.

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THE CONFERENCE ON ASEAN AT IFES RAS

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Abstract. The article is a survey of the international conference with the theme: “ASEAN on the Path of Integration: Achievements, Dilemmas, Challenges” held by IFES RAS jointly with the ASEAN Center at MGIMO University, timed for the 55th anniversary of ASEAN. More than 100 Russian and foreign specialists took part in the conference. There following themes were exposed: ASEAN foreign policy, ASEAN relations with the main strategic partners, integration processes in some countries, relevant tasks of sustainable development of ASEAN countries, legal issues, cultural dialogue and scientific discourse.

Keywords: ASEAN, SEA, US, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, integration processes, IPR, BRI, regional cooperation.

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May 25–26, 2022 the international conference with the theme: “ASEAN on the Path of Integration: Achievements, Dilemmas, Challenges” was held by IFES RAS. It was timed for a significant event, which is the 55th anniversary of the Association of SEA states (ASEAN), one of the most successful international projects of regional integration. The organizer of the conference was IFES RAS jointly with the ASEAN Center at MGIMO University assisted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia. The Ministry placed the event on the plan of ASEAN – Russia Year of Scientific and Technical Cooperation, having provided it with necessary support.

IFES tried the ASEAN format for the first time, and the distinctive feature of the conference was its scope. More than 100 Russian and foreign specialists (researchers, expert practitioners, University employees) took part in it. As usual, the following three leading centers of Oriental studies of RF were presented: Moscow, St Petersburg and Vladivostok. The papers, also delivered by researchers from ASEAN countries, Malaysia and India, were heard and discussed by the representatives of the embassies of seven ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, SRV, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore); experts of a number of the countries participated online in the

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conference jointly with a rather wide Internet audience. Also, Russian and Vietnamese mass media paid great attention to the event. The conference was cordially greeted by K.V. Babayev, IFES Director. A.A. Baykov, MGIMO University Vice-Rector for research and international cooperation, Seyla Eat, the ambassador of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Cambodia in RF, K.S. Terashkevich, the Deputy Director of the Department for international cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Opening of the conference. *Photo: MGIMO*

In the scope of the first session of the conference the participants analyzed ASEAN foreign policy in the macro-regional context. It was mentioned that the Association added actively to its positions both in the region and in the world and possesses a significant geopolitical weight. A.A. Butko, Leading Specialist of the Center of Scientific and Analytical Information of IOS RAS, developed the thesis on ASEAN growing role and its importance in the foreign policy conception of PRC and US. He exposed both the opportunities and challenges in this Triangle having emphasized that US – China confrontation is the main cause of the tension in SEA, making the achievement of the consensus in ASEAN more complicated.

E.A. Kanaev, Leading Researcher of IMEMO, scrupulously analyzed the regional agendas of PRC, implementing the mega-strategy of “the Belt and Road Initiative”, and US with its projects of the Indo-Pacific region and the recently created military-technical alliance AUKUS with the participation of Australia and Great Britain. It is acknowledged that these initiatives are not mutually synergetic; therefore, they are not able to assist the Association to strengthen its global influence, but in the perspective, they will undermine its regional positions.

V.M. Mazyrin, Chief Researcher of IFES, assessed the foreign policy priorities of ASEAN countries, slow change of the balance of forces in SEA. He mentioned a relative decrease of the US influence along with the increase of political and especially economic positions of China, as well as of EU and Japan, and middle-sized powers, such as India and the Republic of Korea, with the perspective for the increase of this tendency in this decade. At the same time, he ascertained the decrease of the RF role which is assessed as a secondary gamer by ASEAN local elites and think tanks.

Also, increasing competition for influence in the SEA region was found in the field of military-technical cooperation. Its tendencies were analyzed by M.G. Evdotyeva, Senior Researcher of IMEMO, having mentioned the increasing confrontation about arms transfers. The expert described it as market “re-formatting” in favor of chief combat systems and their components from

Western countries and their allies in East Asia. M.G. Evdotyeva concluded that for many indicators the region's arms market becomes less open and more diversified.

A separate session was devoted to ASEAN relations with the main strategic partners. V.E. Petrovsky, Chief Researcher of IFES, showed contradictions in ASEAN and China positions on the issues of regional integration and security. At the same time, he called them creators and participants of a new reality of the formation of regional integration projects and multilateral security mechanisms.

P.Yu. Tsvetov, Assistant Professor of the Diplomatic Academy of the MFA, paid attention to the ASEAN key position in the US Pacific policy having appealed to a new Indo-Pacific doctrine being for SEA a form and a matrix of "Washington's vision of international order based on rules" (Fig. 2). At the same time, he ascertained that the White House prefers economic leverage over ASEAN, though security issues are also relevant.



Fig. 2. Associate Professor of the Diplomatic Academy of the MFA P.Yu. Tsvetov speaks at the conference.
Photo: MGIMO

A.S. Korolyov, Assistant Professor of the National Research University Higher School of Economics, raised currently urgent problem of a new "turn of Russia to the East" in the context of its strategic partnership with ASEAN. Essentially, he assessed the rupture of Russia's relations with the West as a chance to give a new stimulus to Russia – ASEAN relations to prevent their skidding. The conclusion is that the narrow scope for progress in the dialogue with ASEAN, particularly in the field of economy, became much narrower along with the RF special military operation in Ukraine and Western "Draconian" sanctions.

Pankaj Jha, an outstanding scholar, Director of the Center for Security Studies at Jindal Global University, expressed his opinion of ASEAN-India interaction. He pointed to the new fields of cooperation in the Plan of actions of India and ASEAN for 2021–2025, such as: digital innovations, the fourth industrial revolution, alternative energy sources, artificial intelligence, modelling and hybrid learning, common sources data development, alternative medicine, the Ocean pollution control, sea security issues. The expert mentioned positive dynamics of the relations development, but only concentrated on several countries of the block, which are a corner-stone of India – ASEAN dialogue.

Taking into consideration the exacerbation of geopolitical contradictions at the global level, V.N. Kolotov, Director of the Ho Chi Minh Institute at St Petersburg State University, forecasted also the increasing pressure on the key countries of the region with the purpose to weaken the PRC impact.

The issue of external pressure stability of the group depends, in his opinion, on the degree of revitalization of the key parts of the East Asian segment of the Eurasian arc of instability and its impact on the positions of the ASEAN leading countries.

The third session was devoted to integration processes in some countries. E.V. Koldunova, Director of the ASEAN Center at MGIMO University, concentrated on the integration of the “new” ASEAN members (Fig. 3). The inclusion of four new participants into the Association and the transfer of power in Myanmar from the military government to a civilian one in 2010, is acknowledged a reason to speak of successes of ASEAN “engagement policy” unlike the Western stake on sanctions and interventions, including the humanitarian ones.



Fig. 3. Director of the ASEAN Center at MGIMO MFA RF E.V. Koldunova and Head of the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies of IFES RAS V.M. Mazyrin. *Photo: MGIMO*

V.V. Vershinina, an expert of the ASEAN Center at MGIMO University, exposed a complex analysis of Vietnam foreign policy towards ASEAN and observed a gradual transformation from its position of “a novice” of the Association to the position of a full member possessing now a significant potential and capabilities to influence regional processes, of a medium regional power. In her opinion, Hanoi, being the informal leader of the Indochinese “quartet”, serves an example for less developed members.

E.S. Burova, a Researcher of IFES, by means of the example of Greater Mekong Subregion illustrated the importance of subregional initiatives for the elimination of ruptures and improvement of interrelations, assistance to international coordination, promotion of sustainable development. She mentioned the key role of the water system of the region and the importance of adequate assessment of its exploitation level, showed the fragmentariness of economic planning in the countries of the Mekong basin. The expert acknowledged the inadequacy of the assessments of short-, middle-, and long-term consequences of various types of the development in Greater Mekong Subregion.

N.S. Kuklin, an expert of the ASEAN Center at MGIMO University, showed the duality of approaches to regional policy typical of Indonesia, being considered the leader of the Association. He mentioned that political decisions taken by the government of the country often go against its integration interests, due to the traditional dilemma of Indonesian diplomacy, namely, the necessity to fortify internal positions, on the one hand, and to raise regional and global authority of Indonesia, on the other.

Also, there was paid attention to Myanmar’s relations with its ASEAN partners. Their establishing is not simple and leaves a broad field for reflexing and numerous interpretations.

K.A. Efremova, Assistant Professor of MGIMO University, exposed the history and problems of this partnership.

L.M. Kuntyshev, Assistant Professor of the Military Academy of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, spoke on the results of Laos 25-years membership in ASEAN, and gave their sufficiently positive assessment. Laos deserves its place in ASEAN as a country conducting balanced policy oriented to defuse difficult situations inside the Association and supporting the ASEAN majority. Its membership in ASEAN is a support to the country and assists to solve complicated problems frequently arising in its relations with the neighboring countries.

The fourth session considered the urgent tasks of ASEAN sustainable development. R.R. Hussamov, Assistant Professor of the Financial University under the Government of the RF, spoke on the study of Vietnam strategy of sustainable development with the use of current methods of strategic analysis. He pointed to four features of the strategy realization, emphasizing the role of the state in macroeconomic management and realization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

A team of researchers of the Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS (A.S. Lukyanets, R.V. Manshin, E.M. Moiseyeva) touched the ASEAN climate and ecology agenda, important for the realization of SDGs. They mentioned high vulnerability and low adaptation potential to climate change and environmental degradation. The researchers prognose that ecological crisis in ASEAN will be perilous not only for the member countries of the Association, but also for the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

S.V. Ryazantsev, Director of the Institute for Demographic Research, and M.N. Khranova, Leading Researcher of the same Institute, described the dynamics of migration processes in the ASEAN countries in the context of current demographic changes, and pointed to the influencing factors. The authors determined the scope and forms of migration inside ASEAN (labor migration, educational migration and forced one), and presented future perspectives of their interaction in migration sphere.

N.V. Grigoryeva, Assistant Professor of the National Research University Higher School of Economics (St Petersburg), analyzed ASEAN countries' policies towards the preservation of their historical heritage, having outlined the tasks and mechanisms of this work, its increasing importance for the ASEAN identity formation. She determined the role of the institutions of the Socio-Cultural Community in this process, as well as external challenges for the ASEAN countries in terms of supporting and representing the heritage.

The papers of the fifth session touched legal issues, cultural dialogue and scientific discourse. Noor Juhaidah Binti, Senior Lecturer of Malaysian University Sains Islam, exposed the basics of biosecurity in the region and analyzed and determined alternative methods of control of this sphere in ASEAN.

D.G. Tkachenko, a teacher of MPEI, outlined legal features and perspectives of development of ASEAN. This theme was followed by Yu.O. Rachinskaya-Spivakova, a postgraduate from MGIMO University. She spoke on the nature of civil society of the ASEAN countries and their interaction with authorities. The efficient spheres of this interaction (humanitarian cooperation and meeting climate change) were shown on dealing with the consequences of disasters and protection of migrant workers' rights.

Also, S.V. Veretikhina and V.V. Khalyukin, technology experts from Russian State Social University, took part in the conference. They spoke on new high technologies being produced in Russia and assessed the possibility and perspectives of their export to the ASEAN countries.

N.V. Kolotova, a master student of St Petersburg State University, addressed the sphere of digitalization and cybersecurity. She chose the case of Vietnam to outline the issues of ASEAN – Russia cooperation in the field of digitalization and cybersecurity and analyzed the measures SRV undertakes to realize the Strategy of national digital transformation.

At the final session, G.P. Trofimchuk, Chairman of the Expert Council of the Workshop of Eurasian Ideas Fund, resumed the growing importance of ASEAN for Russia. In his opinion, the participation of RF in ASEAN affairs may either decrease or increase. The academic community is striving for the latter. The conference at IFES has improved the comprehension of the importance of the ASEAN – Russia cooperation, which should result in the spheres of trade and economy, science and technology, and education.

Summing up the work of the conference, V.M. Mazyrin, moderator of the conference, Head of the Center for Vietnam and ASEAN Studies of IFES RAS, mentioned its success and emphasized the satisfaction of participants and guests with the candid and fruitful discussion held in the scope of the conference.

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DISSERTATION DEFENSE

The defense of the dissertation for obtaining the scientific degree of candidate of economics by Doan Thi Mai (The International Banking Institute named after Anatoly Sobchak) with the theme “Scientific and Methodical Aspects of the Development of the National Health Insurance System (based on Vietnam)”

The defense of the thesis on specialty 08.00.10 “Finance, money circulation and credit” was held on April 27, 2022 at the Dissertation Council session D 999.076.02 based on the International Banking Institute named after Anatoly Sobchak (IBI) and Emperor Alexander I St Petersburg State Transport University (PGUPS).

The dissertation analyses problems of improvement of the national health insurance system being a social insurance sub-system in Vietnam. Health insurance is the strategic priority for the achievement of an important goal of the governmental policy in the sphere of public health, being the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the reduction of households’ costs on medical care out of pocket payment. Insufficient health insurance coverage and, as its consequence, the necessity of households’ additional costs on medical care are connected with a number of unresolved economic, organizing, finance, legal and other questions.

The work develops theoretical provisions, methodical and practical recommendations for modernization of health insurance systems adapted to the conditions of developing economies oriented for dealing with specific institutional, economic, finance, social, cultural-historical and other features. The applications presented in the dissertation can be used when substantiating strategies, programs and other documents oriented for modernization of health insurance system in Vietnam.

Supervisor: Plotnikov Vladimir Alexandrovich, D.Sc. (Economics), Professor of the Chair of General Economic Theory and History of Economic Thought, St Petersburg State Economic University.

Lead organization: Kazan (Volga region) Federal University.

Opponents:

Kadyrov Farit Nakipovich, D.Sc. (Economics), the Advisor to the Director of the Central Research Institute for Health Organizations and Informatics of Public Health;

Yashina Nadezhda Igorevna, D.Sc. (Economics), Professor, Head of the Chair of Finance and Credit of N.I. Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod (National Research University).

Main Publications

1. Doan, T.M. (2020) Spetsifika razvitiya sistemy meditsinskogo strakhovaniya vo V'etname [Specificity of the Development of Health Insurance System in Vietnam]. *Problemy sovremennoy ekonomiki*, 4: 144–150.
2. Doan, T.M. (2020) Urbanizatsiya i starenie naseleniya kak factory transformatsii sistemy meditsinskogo strakhovaniya vo V'etname [Urbanization and Population Ageing as Factors of the National Health Insurance Transformation in Vietnam]. *Izvestiya Yugo-Zapadnogo Gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Ekonomika. Sotsiologiya. Menedzhment*, 6: 270–285.
3. Doan, T.M., Plotnikov, V.A. (2021) Osobennosti razvitiya meditsinskogo strakhovaniya v usloviyakh pandemii [Health Insurance Development Features amid the Coronavirus Pandemic]. *Izvestiya Sankt-Peterburgskogo Gosudarstvennogo ekonomicheskogo universiteta*, 5: 54–59.
4. Pisarenko, Zh.V., Doan, T.M. (2021) Dostizhenie vseobshchego okhvata uslugami zdravookhraneniya kak tsel' social'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya V'etnama [The Achievement of the Universal Health Coverage as the Goal of Vietnam's Social and Economic Development]. *Ekonomika i upravlenie*, 27, 4 (186): 269–280.

TRIBUTE TO THE SCIENTIST

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IN MEMORY OF GERMAN VASILYEVICH KUZNETSOV

(1.09.1940 – 1.05.2022)

V.V. Bobrov¹, S.V. Filatova²

Abstract. This is an essay on life and work of one of the main specialists on Vietnam's biodiversity, who spent many years investigating tropical forests of the country, the author of over a hundred articles on the results of those investigations and of the book "Mammals of Vietnam".

Keywords: Vietnam, mammals, Russian-Vietnamese Tropical Center.

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On May 1, 2022, German Vasilyevich Kuznetsov passed away. Being among the participants of the first expeditions within the framework of Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation in 1978, he was one of the chief specialists on Vietnam's biodiversity, who made the invaluable contribution to its study (Fig. 1).

German Vasilyevich was born on September 1, 1940 in Moscow. During the World War II he spent his early childhood in evacuation in Kazakhstan, and till 1956 he lived in village Izhevskoe of Ryazan oblast. In 1956 he returned to Moscow and in 1959 entered the biological faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University. He graduated from the university in 1964. Since 1967 G.V. Kuznetsov worked in the A.N. Severtsov Institute of animal evolutionary morphology and ecology AS USSR (now A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution RAS).

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Fig. 1. German Vasilyevich Kuznetsov. *Photo: T.N. Filatova*

At the end of 1979 the Institute of animal evolutionary morphology and ecology in cooperation with the Institute of Biology of the SRV National Center of scientific investigations organized work on investigation of Vietnam's fauna and biological resources with the purpose to conduct deep and comprehensive research of fauna as an important element of tropical forests (on the history of those works see: [Bobrov 2017]). Originally all the investigations were carried out at the station Buon Luoi in Central Highlands (Tay Nguyen), Gia Lai–Kon Tum province (now Gia Lai province). German Vasilyevich took part in that expedition. The results of works were published in “Animal World of Vietnam”, a collection of articles [1982] opened with the article summarizing the results of the investigations of mammals of Vietnam, G.V. Kuznetsov was one of the article's co-authors [Sokolov et al. 1982]. Since then, German Vasilyevich participated in all those expeditions; their results were published in articles, the first list of mammals of Vietnam among them [Sokolov et al. 1986].

A new strong impetus for Soviet-Vietnamese investigations of biodiversity of Vietnam was attached with the establishment of Joint Soviet-Vietnamese (now The Joint Russian-Vietnamese Tropical Research and Technological Center (Tropcenter) (on the history of establishing and functioning of this unique organization see: [Bobrov 2020]. In 1996 Tropcenter launched a series of complex zoological and botanical expeditions; German Vasilyevich participated in all those expeditions. The result of his many years of work and consolidation of the collected data was his doctor dissertation [Kuznetsov 2003], soon followed with the monumental monograph “Mammals of Vietnam” [Kuznetsov 2006], which for many years was the manual for all mammalogists working in Vietnam, as well as for specialists on other animal groups (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Cover of “Mammals of Vietnam” (2006).

Photo: T.N. Filatova

The book contains a systematic review of more than 300 species of mammals, analyzes taxonomic diversity, the structure of mammals' fauna and their zoogeographical links. It describes the species diversity of local faunas, also, in connection with vertical zonation, examines possible ways of Vietnam's fauna formation. The book shows the impact of contemporary anthropogenic landscape transformation on Vietnam's

fauna diversity and mammals' ecology. It exposes at length the materials devoted to the impact of anthropogenic factors on resistance of various species of rodents. The results can be used for monitoring the current condition of tropical forests, what attaches a great practical value to the book.

In the early 2000s German Vasilyevich, his wife Tatyana Nikolaevna Filatova, and V.V. Bobrov, one of the authors of this essay, worked for several years in the laboratory of general and applied ecology of the Tropcenter South Department in Ho Chi Minh City. During those years we visited many regions of South Vietnam, and spend weeks and even months in the heart of tropical forests (Fig. 3). G.V. Kuznetsov published about a hundred articles on the results of those investigations, each of them was a significant contribution to Vietnam's fauna study.



Fig. 3. G.V. Kuznetsov in the tropical forest of Vietnam. *Photo: T.N. Filatova*

It is noteworthy that in one of collections of articles there was published G.V. Kuznetsov's article devoted to the greatest Vietnamese zoologist Dao Van Tien [Kuznetsov 1998], whose works served for education of several generations of Vietnamese scientists. This article shows Kuznetsov as a master of biographical genre.

In recent years, again in Russia, German Vasilyevich paid great attention to popularization. From 2009 to 2015 he published (co-authored with his wife) six articles on Vietnam's nature and fauna in "The World of Animals" popular science magazine. One of his articles describes the yellow-footed squirrel (*Callosciurus flavimanus*). Once the scientist saved such a squirrel-baby. She lived in his flat and grew quite tamed [Kuznetsov, Filatova 2010]. You can see her in the picture (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. G.V. Kuznetsov with the squirrel Masha. *Photo: T.N. Filatova*

It seems symbolic that the last article by G.V. Kuznetsov [Kuznetsov, Filatova 2015] was dedicated to Sai Gon (now Ho Chi Minh City), the city where he spent, probably, the best years of his career, closely connected with Vietnam, where he left not a particle of his heart, but a great part of it.

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