

00D121I

LRN: 00D121I

Dunn, P
PPD-0702
TYPE: IQP
DATE: 6/2000

(HU)

TOPIC: 49

Viet Nam: A Future Tiger

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An Interactive Qualifying Project Report

Submitted to the Faculty of

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Science

By



Phong Le

Date: May 3, 2000

Approved:



Professor Patrick P. Dunn, Advisor

Preface

I am grateful for the support and guidance of my advisor, Professor Patrick P. Dunn. This is an individual research to study the changes in Vietnam. Events of the past century in Vietnam represent the constant revolution and evolution of modern history. The country has been adapting and growing and changing from feudalism to colonialism to communism, and now to “capitalist” communism.

Two students initiated this IQP. Unfortunately, the other member did not work and show progress and teamwork. Frequently, this member did not attend meeting with advisor and team meeting. From the middle of the project, C term, she completely stopped meeting. This was a most dreadful and unacceptable situation. I did try to contact and plead for her continuing cooperation, but all I received was excuses and promises. I faced tons of difficulties to continue this project. There were too much material to research, and so many ideas to analyze. Her faltering and irresponsibility caused much chaos in my schedules and in my personal activities.

She contributed some work, like introduction to pre-colonial study and Vietnam War (some of the research show irreverent to the IPQ thesis). Still she did not provide references for her quotes. Moreover, she did not registrar for the last third of the project, without explanation to the advisor or me.

This project finished its requirement. In the future, she may ask for expanding and elaborating the IQP.

Abstract

Vietnam today is on the brink of entering the “global economy.” The value structures and both economic and political policies necessary to participate in the global economy vary considerably from those of traditional Vietnam. This IQP examines 1) traditional Vietnamese economic and social values and organization, 2) the impact of French Colonial rule and the wars of liberation, 3) and the current government policies that reflect the changes in traditional Vietnamese culture, but make possible participation in the global export-based economy.

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Precolonial Vietnam

Vietnam is located in the Southeast Asia. It neighbors with Laos and Cambodia in the west, South China Sea in the east and south, and China in the north. Significantly, its northern neighbor has been having a millennium and interactive relationship with Vietnam. Throughout history, China consistently made invasions and set up domination the country. It influenced Vietnam many aspects, from culture to customs.

Trieu Da was the one of the first Chinese invaders to Vietnam. He reigned as absolute monarch under the royal name of Trieu Vu Vuong, and his new, enlarged kingdom was renamed Nam Viet. This dynasty lasted for 70 years, from 208 B.C. until the beginning of the Chinese domination. Thus began the era of Chinese domination, which lasted for some ten centuries with only brief interruptions.

From here on, the history of Vietnam is that of struggle. On seven different occasions the Vietnamese attempted to break from the Chinese. However, the people did make the most of the Chinese domination. With the coexistence of their northern neighbors, the Vietnamese adopted the way of life of the Chinese, the influence being mostly emphasized on the religion.

Traditional values of Vietnamese lifestyle were deeply affected by Confucian ethics. During thousand years the Chinese invaded and maintained control Vietnam, Vietnamese culture was permeated by their Confucian philosophical beliefs. Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam during the period of Chinese domination. Later, even with the period of national independence, 939 to 1407, the Vietnamese did not abandon the traditions of Confucianism. Thus,

it is clear that the politico-philosophic system of Confucianism- has left a profound impression on the social structure of the country.

The Confucian system of competitive examinations was adopted by the Vietnamese to determine eligibility for admission to civil and military posts. Concerning these competitions, the Annals report that they were first held in 1070, that a temple of literature dedicated to Confucius and 72 wise men was built in 1075, and that the first Vietnamese Academy was instituted in 1086, headed by Mac Hien Tich, a First Doctor of the kingdom. Started at this time, the literary competitions were held almost without interruption, even up to the beginning of the Twentieth Century, and furnished the country with competent military and civil leaders. At that time, it was thought that the requirements of a military education did not differ very much from that necessary for a ruler. "Thus, Vietnamese generals were not only military strategists, but were men of letters as well" (Thuc 72); and the orders of the day were often written in poetic form. Because of this adoption of Confucianism, the Vietnamese have the highest regard for the educated and learnt. It is of no surprise than that the leaders brought forth in this country were all of the intellectual elite.

The doctrine of Confucius is set forth in the four classical texts called Tu Thu and in the five canonical works called Ngu Kinh (Johnson 54). The origins of the world did not hold much interest for Confucius and this is why he chose to dedicate himself instead to social problems. He founded his doctrine on the basis of etiology. "As a realist he proceeded as a sculptor would, realizing that the final form can be molded only after the starting materials have been properly prepared. Thus, the stability of a regime depends on an ideal, and this ideal can have value. Only if it is based on great examples from the past" (66).

Starting with this conception, Confucius instituted the cult of the ancestors, which placed the dead relatives in the very heart of the household; since this time, the family has been required to respect this tradition, because none would dare to offend or provoke the souls of the dead. In order to comprehend the doctrine of Confucius, it is necessary to sketch the mainlines of his philosophy, which encompasses his conception of the universe, of man and his principles of government - in short, all his guiding ideas.

According to Mencius, the most distinguished of Confucius' disciples, man is inherently good; and to preserve this inherent goodness, it is only necessary to keep passions in check. If men do not live up to their potential goodness, it is because they neglect their intellect. The wise man improves himself through study, and is the master of his passions. His heirs will honor him, and his soul will have peace in the hereafter. In sum, those who do good things are rewarded and those who do evil must suffer the consequences.

It is ironic how the Vietnamese yearned to be free from Chinese domination, yet still held dear the social doctrine that the Chinese introduced with Confucianism. With this, the Vietnamese kept themselves. Confucianism is a doctrine of social hierarchies, whose effectiveness has been demonstrated by history; the status quo was maintained by the doctrine better than it could have been by the use of force (Johnson 52). Confucianism defines the attitudes that each member of the society should have by rigid rules, mainly focusing on three relationships: ruler and subject, father and son, and husband and wife (53). It also dictates a moral code for the man of virtue, *Quan Tu*, including five areas: humanity, equity, urbanity, intelligence and honesty. The man of virtue should also follow a path of moderation: exaggeration in any direction is to be avoided, and equanimity is to be cultivated. This attitude has often been mistaken by Westerners for impassiveness, placidity, or even hypocrisy. This

moral perfection may be progressively attained by traversing four essential steps: the improvement of oneself, the management of the family, the governing of the country, and finally, the pacification of the world.

As for the woman, she should in all circumstances conform to the three obediences: obedience to her father until she is married, obedience to her husband after she leaves her father's house, and obedience to her eldest son, should she be widowed. It is of no wonder that the legend of the princess and the son-in-law told earlier illustrates this code of loyalty well. Further, the model woman should possess the four essential virtues: skill with her hands, agreeable appearance, prudence in speech, and exemplary conduct (54).

As far as the distribution of wealth is concerned, Confucianism teaches that poverty is less to be feared than injustice, since the latter engenders hatred and jealousy. The principle of communal autonomy is so important in Vietnam. The customs of the village to take precedence over the laws of the King requires a special administration. Since the 15th Century, each village has been required to make an annual payment to the national treasury. Government in Vietnam during pre-colonial times was certainly following the codes of Confucianism. These laws and political organizations were developed in such a way so that all codes would be satisfied and followed.

Among the Vietnamese, the honest man is born amidst traditions and rites; as an adolescent, he seeks to improve himself through culture; and in maturity, he aims at wisdom through following the spiritual path. This pattern is not an abstract ideal but a way of life, which often leads to an attitude of tolerance and detachment. The bulk of the Vietnamese people lived for centuries in this environment of ancestral beliefs and religious doctrines.

For centuries in Vietnam, traditional family values were accomplished by the fulfillment of

traditional roles. Vietnamese valued their traditional ideal of male superiority (Mulane 104). Since the highest status in Vietnamese families is given to the man (father), he had absolute authority in the household because he provided the main source of income for the household; he was never expected to work in the kitchen or to cook. After work he returned home and relaxed. As a head of household he had the final decision in all matters, although he might consult his wife or children. Having a boy in family was a "must" because the eldest son would assume the duties of his father when he died. A family that had no son to continue the process was superstitiously thought to have disappeared forever (Phung 11).

In a patriarchal society, Vietnamese woman had limited rights and took a secondary place in family. Women were brought up according to a strict discipline, and have been traditionally less educated than men. They usually do not enter the job market outside the home. "Girls from birth were at a disadvantage"(Phung 13). Daughter is not considered necessary in heritage. Vietnamese traditional viewpoint was "If you have a son, you can say you have a descendent. But you cannot say so even if you have ten daughters" (16).

After marriage, woman became housewife and mother. She was expected to be dependent upon her husband, budgeted his income for the household, took care of children and even grandchildren, performed all household tasks. According to Muzny on page 104, divorce was legal but not common. A wife can be unhappy in her marriage; but rather than accepts divorce, the family encouraged her to sacrifice and to endure the difficulties of the marriage for the sake of her children.

Parental role in family was to define the law. Obedience and respect were the traditional virtues which Vietnamese children were taught to exhibit in the family. Discipline and physical punishment were acceptable remedies for disobedience in the Vietnamese tradition.

"Harsh discipline and beatings did not constitute abuse of a child, but its reverse: loving care, concern and attention" (Breeman 33). When parents grew old, children were expected to take care of them to compensate for the gift of birth and upbringing. The elderly (parents) were supported by married or unmarried children until they die (Johnson 26).

"Boys and girls are not free to do what they want. Girls are under strict supervision" (Nguyen). Western style courtship and romance were seen as inappropriate for unmarried children. "Virginity is cherished. Pregnancy out of wedlock is uncommon, and it is a grave disgrace to the family" (Muzny 56). For their children's marriage, parents generally made decision because they could judge better. Vietnamese parents had a high regard for education. It was considered a way for family advancement. Parents encouraged their children to study and excel in their education. Vietnamese placed a higher value on education rather than on material success. In brief, "Depending upon the family for financial support, requesting permissions for expenditures, and having parents make decisions for them characterized the traditional Vietnamese child."

Vietnamese parents consider it a most important responsibility to train their children. Because of their societal responsibilities, the parents would have to bear the disgrace brought about by the activities of children who dishonor themselves just as they share the honor and fame of their virtuous and talented children (Nguyen). This would explain the many stereotypes others may have on Asian parents exhibiting extreme pride in their children's schoolwork or activities. The Vietnamese legend of the Watermelon sums up very well this idea of parental pride and shame.

Long ago, the sixth son of King Hung Vuong the Fifth, named An-Tiem, disobeyed the King's order and was exiled to a deserted island. "The Prince had to build his own shelter, dig a

well for water, and fish and hunt animals for food. One day, he found a green fruit as big and round as a ball. He split the fruit into halves and found the inside of the fruit red. He dared not eat it because he was afraid it was poisonous.”

Days passed and the dry and sunny season came. It was so hot that all the plants were dry and the well had no water left. One day An-Tiem was so tired and thirsty that he tasted the fruit. He found out that it tasted delicious and quenched his thirst. He tried to grow the plant around his house then. Soon the whole island was covered with the green fruit.

An-Tiem carved the island's name and his own on some of the fruit and threw them into the sea. Later, seamen found the strange fruit with An-Tiem's name floating in the sea.

Soon, words about the fruit reached the continent and many merchants tried to find the way to the island. This then turned the deserted island into a busy island. The island was now crowded. Many boats came and went. An-Tiem helped anyone who wanted to settle on the island. Soon, news about that reached the King. King Hung Vuong was very proud of having a son who was brave and strong enough to overcome difficulties without anyone's help. An-Tiem was immediately summoned back to the court. He brought his fruit with him to offer the King, his father. The King gave him his crown and An-Tiem became King Hung Vuong VI. Since then the fruit which was called "dua hau", or watermelon, and has become the symbol of luck; people often offer it to relatives and friends as a New Year present. (Kim 34)

At an early age, children are taught by their parents to behave according to the principle of filial piety. The family is the school in which the child learns the respect rules in both behavior and linguistic response. Filial piety consists of loving, respecting, and obeying one's parents. Talking back or acting contrary to the wishes of one's parents is evidence of lack of filial piety. For the Vietnamese, the obligation to obey his parents does not end with coming of

age or marriage. This expectation also means solicitude and support to one's parents, especially in their old age. Vietnamese elderly people never live by themselves or in nursing homes but with one of their children, usually their eldest son. This obligation is not discontinued by the parents' death. It survives in the form of ancestral cult and the maintenance of ancestral tombs. Ancestor worship is practiced in most Vietnamese homes, even in the homes of Vietnamese people living overseas (SarDesai 81).

There are differences, however, between the Confucian family and the Vietnamese family during the time. In Vietnamese society, the father was the head of the family, however, unlike the father in traditional Chinese society, who is empowered, with absolute rights over his children and wife, the Vietnamese father shares with his wife and children collective and bilateral responsibility, legally, morally, and spiritually.

In the relationship between parents and children, as well as between husband and wife, the Vietnamese people retain much of their own custom and tradition, despite the great influence of Chinese culture and Confucian doctrine. In the eyes of the children, the Vietnamese mother has the same status as the father. She is also the embodiment of love and the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice (Nguyen).

In Vietnamese culture, the relationship between siblings was determined by the principle of seniority, which requires younger siblings to respect and obey older ones. The eldest brother is entrusted with the responsibility of substituting for the parents in case of emergency. He is considered by his siblings as their leader. Peace and love among siblings is a token of happy and virtuous family.

As with members of the immediate family, members of the extended family are bound together by a strong sense of collective responsibility and mutual obligation. The notion of

blood relationship is always present in the mind of the Vietnamese (Nguyen). In honor or in disgrace, members of the extended family will share the same fate as if they were members of the immediate family. They are expected to give one another moral and material assistance, especially in time of stress.

The notion of family ties is imprinted in the mind of the Vietnamese because of the importance of filial piety. Respect and love are demanded of young people to members of the parental generation and above. Uncles and aunts must be treated with respect as if they were one's own parents. In addition to the consciousness of blood relationships and the linguistic ties that reinforce kinship relationships and age seniority, members of the Vietnamese extended family are closely bound by the common veneration of the dead. Ancestor worship is a hyphen between the dead and the living and a strong tie between members sharing the same ancestry. Through such rites as the cleaning of the ancestral tombs and celebration of ancestral death. As we have seen earlier, the Vietnamese person has a very strong sense of spirit. They cannot see the deceased, just like the way the King did not see the magic in the crossbows, but they believe and respect the invisible presence.

The Vietnamese value system is based on four basic tenets: allegiances to the family, yearning for a good name, love of learning, and respect for other people. These tenets are closely interrelated. The most important factor in the value system of the Vietnamese is, no doubt, the family. The family is the center of the Vietnamese common man's preoccupation and the backbone of Vietnamese society. By virtue of the principle of collective and mutual responsibility, each individual strives to be the pride of his family.

Misconduct of an individual is blamed not only on himself, but also on his parents, siblings, relatives, and ancestors. Likewise, any success or fame achieved by an individual

brings honor and pride to all members of his family. The Vietnamese child is taught from early childhood to readily forget himself for the sake of his family's welfare and harmony. Central to the concept of family is the obligation of filial piety, which is considered the most essential of all virtues in Vietnamese society. The child is expected to be grateful to his parents for the debt of birth, rearing and education. He is taught to think of his parents and ancestors first, even at his own expense, to make sacrifices for his parents' sake, to love and care for them in their old age. The Vietnamese man who lacks filial piety is looked down upon and ostracized not only by his own family but also by the community.

The profound love for and attachment to the family is extended to the physical setting in which the family is located: the native village. The dearest wish of the Vietnamese common man is, as a proverb puts it, to die in his own native village and amidst his own folk "as a leaf which leaves the branch to fall down on the ground at the foot of the tree"(Forester 75). The native village is not only the place where he was born and brought up and where his parents and family live but also a place where his ancestors are buried. Many Vietnamese, especially people in the rural areas, never move out of their native villages or provinces. This deep attachment to the native village explains the lack of horizontal mobility in Vietnamese society.

The value that the Vietnamese placed on the concept of "good name," or more precisely "fragrant name" (danh thÖm), cannot be underestimated. To the Vietnamese, a good name is better than any material possession in this world. By securing a good name for himself, a man can command respect and admiration from his fellow countrymen. A rich and powerful person with a bad reputation is looked down upon, while a poor man with a good name is respected. It is believed that the best thing that a man can leave behind once he has departed from this world and by which he will be remembered is a good reputation. "After death, a tiger leaves

behind his skin, a man his reputation," says a proverb. The desire to have a good name, not only in his lifetime but also after death, betrays the deep aspiration of the Vietnamese to survive the disintegration of his corporeal frame after death in the memory of his progeny and community.

A man with a bad name will be disclaimed by his fellow countrymen and become a disgrace to his family. He will lose face, which is a terrible thing in an immobile society where almost everybody knows everybody else in the community. To acquire a good name, a man must avoid all words and actions, which damage his dignity and honor. There are three ways by which he can acquire a good name: by heroic deeds; by intellectual achievements; or by moral virtues. Leading a virtuous life is the easiest and surest path to a good name for there are few opportunities in our everyday life to be heroic and few people are endowed with exceptional intellectual qualities. The virtues most cultivated are the sense of honor, honesty, righteousness, modesty, generosity, and disdain for material gains, virtues most extolled by the Confucian doctrine. In view of the strong solidarity of the Vietnamese family, it is not surprising to know that the Vietnamese strives for a good name not only for himself but also for his parents and children.

The Vietnamese common man seems to have a great love for knowledge and learning. He seems to have particular respect and admiration for learned people. Like the virtuous man, the learned man enjoys great prestige in Vietnamese society. Often, they are the one and same man. The Vietnamese conceives that knowledge and virtues are but the two complementary aspects of the ideal man.

People associated with knowledge and learning (scholars, writers and teachers) have always been highly respected, not only by the students but also by parents and people from all walks of life.

Learning is considered more valuable than wealth and material success. Rich people who are not educated are often looked down upon by other people and they themselves feel inferior to learned people who are poor. In the traditional social system the scholar ranked first, before the farmer, artisan, and tradesman. Even nowadays, the learned man is held in high esteem and respect. The love of learning does not spring from purely disinterested motives. The lure of prestige and the prospect of improved social status are among the strongest incentives to the pursuit of knowledge. Education represents the essential stepping-stones to the social ladder and to good job opportunities. It is the prime force of vertical mobility in Vietnamese society.

The Vietnamese common man is expected to show respect to people who are senior to him in age, status, or position. At home, he should show respect to his parents, older siblings, and older relatives. This is expressed by obedience in words and action. Respect is part of the concept of filial piety.

Outside the family, respect should be paid to elderly people, teachers, clergymen, supervisors and employers, and people in high positions. Learned and virtuous people enjoy special respect and admiration. But respect is not a one-way behavior. The Vietnamese common man also expects other people to show respect to him, by virtue of his age, status, or position. Special respect is gained by leading a virtuous life, by accomplishing certain heroic deeds or by achieving a high degree of intellectuality. Respect is one of the essential factors in the value system of the Vietnamese people.

Now, we come to a close on the definition of the Vietnamese person during pre-colonial times. The Vietnamese knew who they were; they adopted philosophies from their Chinese rulers, but molded and lived by the codes uniquely. Family values were the strongest of all values, and societal consistency was the norm. Confucianism was the major influence on this value system, but other religions such as Buddhism existed as well. This will be analyzed later. Up to this point, the traditions, customs, and values of the Vietnamese are seen through legends, folklore, and historical events. There are still details about the relationship with China that still needs to be explored. However, for now, we see that the Vietnamese were people who made themselves distinct and persistent despite attempted Chinese influence.

Colonial Vietnam

In administration, the country was divided into Phu (province) which contained many Huyen (district). People lived in villages and produced rice and others agriculture products. Trading was exchange for goods in and among villages. Cash economy did not existed. The introduction of money notes by king Ho Qui Ly in the 1400s failed immediately.

On the larger scales, Vietnam had no fleet for trading like Westerners and only contacted with their direct neighbors in non-peaceful ways.

The village was the smallest, most important universe of Vietnamese. At the time, local farming was the major economic activity. Each village had a “dinh”, the temple where all social and spiritual activities were conducted. Everybody gathered at “dinh” for courting, ceremonies, religious practice and so on. Peasants lived a simple, pious and quiet life in their village. There was no systematic governing from the central king to the village. The king collected taxes and enlisted people through the head of the village (xa truong). Therefore, farmers had the joke, “Luat vua thua le lang” – “Law of the king is below a village’s rules” to condemn local corruption.

The social order still got a Confucian influence, which was “Si, Cong, Nong and finally Thuong. Si meant Nho Si (intellectuals) or Binh Si (soldiers); they were the most respected group in society. Next is Cong (skill workers), Nong (farmers) were the largest groups. The less respected ones were (Thuong) traders. From the historical points of views, we could explain that Vietnam received comprehensive Confucian beliefs that were harmoniously interpreted in Vietnam situation

The Nineteenth century for Vietnam was the turning point from being a pure traditional feudalism kingdom to being a colony like many others regions in the world to supply raw materials and new markets. The primary reasons for the French to come to Vietnam were Christianity and commerce.

Vietnamese first interacted with Westerners in the sixteenth century by the coming of European missionaries. But, wars and civil conflicts delayed their impact. “The conversion of Vietnamese to Roman Catholicism began in the seventeenth century, when French missionaries organized by the Societe des Missions Etrangeres (Society of Foreign Missions) became active in the area.” (Duiker2 10). It was flourished during Gia Long times. Nguyen Anh, King Gia Long, in the beginning 1800, “*with the help of the French, who had hoped to win commercial privileges and permission to propagate Christianity, Gia Long became king of newly united Vietnam (Duiker 22)*

Unfortunately, his successors were strong Confucian and conservative minds. They were afraid of the incidents such as the Opium War in China being inflicted by Western powers. King Tu Duc was a strong conservative in dealing with French. *During his reign, the propagation of Christianity was sternly forbidden and missionaries and their converts were persecuted. (Duiker2 26)* He set up many policies that violated the agreement between Gia Long and Napoleon III. This was the direct cause for French military campaigns to Vietnam in 1858 and the establishment of French colonialism in Indochina included Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Clearly, pre-colonial Vietnam was a time period where a struggle for identity was subtler. *Adopting and adapting* to the Chinese influence, the Vietnamese solidly established a system of values, folklore, and guidelines for everyday living. However, as time passed on,

conflict between the natives and outsiders arose once again—this time, with emphasis on French interest and inevitable colonialism. The French colonial economy focused on import and export businesses. Cities and towns began to emerge. French influence swept the country at a more local level. Education systems, life-styles, including dress and daily activities, classes, culture including literature, art, and music, and traditional values slowly, but surely altered. While dramatic for some populations, others *accepted* the change readily. There is significant evidence showing a great distinction between the rural and city citizens.

French setup the new colonial administration that totally conflicted with Vietnamese. They applied a modern governing system that crashed the old Vietnam system. Promptly, soon after controlling the colony, they introduced new Western law and taxation systems. Under the old administration systems, Confucian and Buddhism scholars developed Laws. The new laws disregard all these foundations and principal. They were developed by Western social and philosophical structure. It caused difficulties for local people and administrators, *“The features of Western jurisprudence, such as leases, contracts, special legal agents, and definite statutes have made unavailing the personal touch of family heads and notables. The natives have become confused and know not where to turn, viewing with consternation the abolition of their time-honored principles.”* (Ennis 64)

The new laws also conflicted with the tradition family system and local practices. It contradicted with many foundations like roles of a man in the family, the intricate orders of a person inside and outside family, the relationship between male and female, young and old people. They disregarded the roles of the father: *“ The family being the basis for legal practices in the Orient, the father becomes the judge for altercations arising within this unit. In all questions between*

different families the notables act as arbiters. These relationships have been destroyed with the advent of French law. (Ennis 64)

The French laws not only weakened traditional family bonds and but also stimulated individualism. They set up taxation by individual not by family in the old system. Therefore, everybody had to work to gain more personal financial resources. Also, taxes were collected in money. It strongly effected the localism practice *and* cash economy in Vietnam. *“It may well be that the most important transformation of all had to do with the penetration of a cash economy into even the most isolated hamlets of Vietnam. (Marr 4)* From rural to urban, people was beginning to work to obtain personal wealth.

In the countryside, for the first time of history, the landlord and tenants system was emerging. People worked hard to buy more lands and expanded to plantation. People understood of the power of personal wealth. *“The French have weakened this collective tie, which has resulted in the appearance of large numbers who possess no interest in serving the state, as did their ancestors, and direct their energies toward the acquisition of personal wealth.” (Ennis 71)*

The change was clearly and obviously showed in the urban centers. Middle class and intelligentsia grew very fast to work for the system. Many people come to works for small mills, mines and plantations. Commerce developed and trader class became more important in society. Many intellectual who were conservative and anti French were being left out in the race for individualism and personal wealth. *Unlike the scholar-gentry, the intelligentsia understood the Neo-Confucian classics only vaguely but were impatient to digest two millennia of European learning in a matter of a few years. The great advantage, and simultaneously the primary weakness, of these young men and women was that they stood unsteadily between two worlds*

and tried hard to envisage a third. Most of them had either grown up in villages or had meaningful rural kinship ties. Their parents still believed in ghosts, arranged marriages, and strict social harmony. However, in school, and increasingly through extracurricular means, they learned of cameras, germs, atoms, galaxies, free love, class struggle, and biological evolution.

(Marr 9)

The Colonial economy was a system to provide raw material and new markets for Western countries. The French started its exploration right after setting up the administration system in the 1900s. Export and import were a major concern. French exported rice, rubber and coal. With favorable previously uninhabited in geographic location and weather, the French built many large plantations for rice and rubber in the South regions. *“Rubber cultivation, begun very modestly before the war, now was seen by investors as the now bonanza, some 700 million francs being advanced between 1925 and 1929. To provide the physical labor, somewhere between 100,000 and 200,00 Vietnamese were deceived or dragooned into the “red earth” rubber-growing region of Cochinchina during the boom years of the 1920s.”* (Marr 6) In the North, many coalmines were built. Taxes and cash economies were a tool to obtain workforce. Many people from the North migrated to the South to work for these plantation and also hope to find new lands.

Villagers now reached the larger world, however some basic family structures continued remain. *“During the 1920s and 1930s the social ideal for most rural Vietnamese remained that of three generations under one roof, owning and tilling one’s neighbors, and being listened to respectfully in the village council.”* (Marr 25) Those who moved to the city still all came back for their ancestors graves, but knew to adapt world outside his or her village. *As a corollary of*

this economic process, the corporate character of Vietnamese villages was gradually eroded.

(Marr 4)

On the larger scale, the French established a strict monopolistic in economy. The whole market mechanisms were controlled and focused more in exports than imports. French was turning Vietnam from a traditional farming countries into a new economy where huge plantation and mines for French commerce. The new system collapsed the thousand years of tradition and localism in villages:

“Taxation, monopoly, and market mechanisms soon worked relentlessly against the interests of peasants whose output had previously met the more diverse needs of an autonomous economy, but who were now non-competitive in an imperial operation controlled from Paris.” (Marr5)

Besides, French help urban structures emerge in Vietnam. Many cities developed like Saigon, Hanoi, HaiPhong, and Danang. People were learning to adapt to modern life in cities. They wore to Western outfits, lived and worked with French colonists. The economy not only promoted the concept of personal wealth everywhere, but also evolved the individualism. Modern Vietnamese (Chu Quoc Ngu) was first developed by a priest Alexander de Rhode for the purpose of Christinity. *“ As a means of facilitating this goal, he devised the first transliteration of the Vietnamese spoken language into the Roman alphabet.” (Duiker2 24)* Later, it was fully developed into education and official language. The French imposed education in Vietnam at a moderate pace. They did not prohibit any traditional art forms and cultural activities. During French times, many art forms developed like cai luong (reformed theater), cheo (classical opera).

Entertainment broadened to all people. In literature, novel and short story evolved in styles and theme. Individualism and personal romance were introduced. There are many great

writers likes Nguyen Binh, Trinh Cong Hoan who were pioneers in spreading male and female love.

Communism and Civil conflicts

In addition to the introduction of the French, a turning point also came with the complexities of the war, between the Communists in the north and the democratic republican in the south. Like all wars, the history of the Vietnam War was a complex one and it ultimately contributed to the connection between Vietnam's changing society and culture, and the introduction of foreign influence in general.

The conflict in Vietnam which is also called the Ten Thousand-Day War was an ongoing battle from 1945 to 1975. In the 30 years of fighting, the United States would lose over 57,000 men while Vietnamese dead numbered two million (Maclear 2). The Vietnam War is very interesting because many people have wondered how and why the United States got involved in a war that really didn't seem to concern them. American involvement officially began in 1950 when the US government recognized the Bao Dai government and began sending the French aid to fight off the communist backed Viet Minh led by Ho Chi Minh (Scheer 10).

Bao Dai, anti-Communist nationalist alternative, whom the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations had backed, had failed to undercut the appeal of the Viet Minh (Scheer 11). The price of peace involved the surrendering of some portion of the country to the Communists, and the United States could not oppose this since it had not become deeply involved (Scheer 12). The United States instead placed its hopes on a "new anti-Communist nationalist alternative" and his name was Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem accepted the offer and on July 7, 1954 his government was formally organized. This started a new phase of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Senator John F. Kennedy recommended, in order to prevent the further spread of communism in Southeast Asia,

that the French grant independence to South Vietnam, support the government's army, and "whenever necessary...[make] some commitment of our manpower" (Scheer 15). The settlement at Geneva in July, 1954, did three things: 1) it ended the war; 2) divided Vietnam in half "temporarily"; and 3) called for peace and reunification of the country by election (Scheer 16). Diem's government believed in tight central control to divert the nationalist revolution from Communist objectives (Scheer 21). During the first year of the new government, Diem crushed all sources of opposition left over from the Viet Minh (Scheer 21).

By 1959, in the North, the Viet Minh had written off the possibility of the elections that they were supposed to get and turned to military means. This ended the illusory stability of the Diem regime (Scheer 46). Diem was aware that his government could not survive without the massive aid from the United States so he based his whole appeal on anti-communism (Scheer 56). But then, with the "Communist danger" the basis for assuring continued American aid, the "secure" countryside suddenly was overrun with "Communist terrorists" (Scheer 56).

Diem has been educated and lived in monastery in the United States, before coming to power. He came from feudalistic and strong religious belief family. Thus, they practiced a centralized pro-Catholic system. The family built absolute power. Diem's brothers controlled all activities and made many policies in the country. The Ngos neglected people's rights, especially pious peasants, the largest demographic population in Vietnam.

They promoted Catholic practice and Western philosophy associated with Catholicism to the rural. The Ngos harassed Buddhism who made up more than ninety per cent of the population at the time. "Catholic Republicans spurned and mistreated Buddhists and worshipping their ancestors. " (Le Ly Prologue XII) Worshipping ancestors is an essential spiritual matter to the Vietnamese. This pro-Catholic favor "Western influence," was something

very strange and incomparable to rural life. Ironically, they did not promote education for peasants to adapt the changes. This outraged the public and reminded them of the French colonial imperialism that they had fought with their life recently. Within a short period in power, the Ngos has adapted a policy that placed mistrust between their administration and the major population in their young republic.

The government replaces the traditional administration system in village and assigned local positions to a pro-government non-local officer:

“... Diem replaced elective village and municipal councils with officials appointed by his government on the basis, not of loyalty to their village interests, but of loyalty to Saigon. Where there were always tensions between the village poor and rich notables, now there was an additional antagonism between the villagers and representatives of distant conservative Saigon.” (Harrison 186) Besides these incidents, local bribe on land programs were also hurt peasant heavily. Peasants had to bribe to get land and others services. Corruption is so popular that “After his corruption is made public the corrupted official is often rewarded and promoted.” (Corrson 109) Local terrorism were considered normal: “Many abuses of council authority common in the village under the French regime became virtually routine during the Diem years.” (Trullinger 75)

The next autocratic move from Diem was the unjust and inefficient land redistribution programs. When the Communist took control of the north, millions of Catholic, landlords, and well-do people fearing of communism fled to the South. To help these people, the government seized lands of peasants who lived there many generations and distributed it to northern refugees. The incident created strong opposition among peasants.

The final incidents that led to the coup were a train of abuses, no single one of which was necessarily more important than any other, even though the dramatic Buddhist crisis is frequently cited as the final straw; it was one straw, a dramatic one. On November 1, the generals staged a coup and in the end Diem was killed (Trager 179). In the spring of 1961, the magazine press began to revise its picture of Diem's government (Scheer 66). Jerry Rose, who was an expert on Vietnam, accepted the containment policy after Diem's removal and supported the overriding necessity for stopping the spread of communism in Vietnam. He says: To sum up: one solution now for the U.S. appears to be a show of power in South Vietnam that would pave the way toward a compromising settlement. But is the risk of a power play warranted? Southeast Asia has been likened to "a set of dominos."

If South Vietnam falls; the rest of the blocks go, too. It would seem, therefore, that it is in the high interest of the U.S., as a leader and a system of government, to risk much in stabilizing that tottering block (Scheer 76-77). After Diem's government was ousted, President Johnson had to decide afresh the new ways in which the U.S. could help Vietnam. The United States continued the policy of supplying, training, and advising the Army of the Republic of Vietnam on an increasing scale (Trager 179). On August 2 and 4, 1961 North Vietnamese boats attacked the warships U.S.S. Maddox and U.S.S. C. Turner Joy in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. Johnson ordered an immediate reply, and on August 4, United States aircraft began bombing Vietnam. This operation became known as Rolling Thunder (Trager 180).

The reasons for the war and clash of north and south Vietnam were complex. Following France's defeat in the French Indochina war (1946-54), Vietnam was divided into North and South Vietnam by the Geneva Conference (1954). War soon broke out in South Vietnam as Communist-led guerrillas (the Viet Cong) tried to overthrow the South Vietnamese government.

Stated reasons why America went to war: - President John F. Kennedy decides to help the South Vietnamese government in its war against the Vietcong guerrillas. - The Truman administration believed that the United States and its allies must meet any sign of communist aggression must be met quickly and forcefully by the United States and its allies. Unstated reasons why America went to war: - From Washington's perspective, the principal threat to U.S. security and world peace was monolithic, dictatorial communism emanating from the Soviet Union. - Any communist anywhere, at home or abroad, was, by definition, an enemy of the United States. Participants in Vietnam War – North Vietnam supported by China and the Soviet Union and the non-Communist forces of South Vietnam supported by the United States. Outcome: 58,000 Americans die during this war. Vietnam became a communist country. Tremendous number of immigrants came to U.S.A. after the war.

In turn, the people all get equal shares of the supplies they need to be able to live such as a home, food, health care, and guaranteed employment. Communism is the opposite of capitalism. Capitalism is when property is owned by people or corporations, not the government. Anyway, the U.S. wanted to make all other countries of the world like the U.S. The Soviet Union being a communist country would make it harder for us to do that. We became bitter enemies against the Soviet Union. Communism and capitalism were two great world powers that struggled to get more nations to adopt their ideologies. This eventually became known as the cold war. The U.S. made a policy in 1947. It stated, "America will support, through military and economic aid, all free peoples resisting communism." So in Vietnam, the northern part of Vietnam supported communism and the southern part supported capitalism. The south contained French colonialists and that is how France was involved in this.

Ho Chi Minh was the leader of Northern Vietnam's communist country. He had hoped that we would support him but that wouldn't happen. France had been our long time allies and since we were opposed to communism, we wanted to help France fight for freedom. France had ruled Vietnam for more than a century and they had hoped to maintain that rule. Communism has long been heralded in capitalist countries as the root of all evil.

Therefore, he came to settle on the idea that no one person should have control over production of good, ownership of land, and management of funds. In that same token then, no one class should be allowed to have control over these things. He went onto comment that the exploitation of the working class must come to an end. That end could be achieved through revolution. Once this was achieved, everybody would work according to their abilities and then be paid accordingly. Soon after; however, technical innovations would create such abundance of goods that "everyone works according to his abilities and receives according to his needs."

Soon thereafter, money would have no place in society. People would be able to take what they want and would be lacking nothing. *Marx then believed that the pleasure of seeing the fruits of labor would be enough to cause man to work.* Countries and people were soon to catch on to this ideology. The most known is Vietnam. Vietnam already had a long history of peasant insurrection. Most of these uprisings though, were leaderless and highly unorganized. The motives of the rebels were vague and often confused.

A Changing Society as time goes by change is almost inevitable among a nation. Change has occurred throughout history due to specific events that have a ripple effect upon individuals. Whether the change is a result of advancing technology, social reform, or foreign influence there is little chance of preventing the effect it will have on society.

The tally is still incomplete. Some say that this war was fought for nothing. There were only losses and nothing was gained. After the war, southern Vietnam's agriculture, business and industry were devastated. The newly Communist Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia became an important South - Asian power. Today, Vietnam remains under Communist rule. The Vietnamese Communist Party is the major political party. After the Vietnam War, United States tried to punish Vietnam for the losses suffered by their country. They put trade embargo to Vietnam, therefore Vietnam could not trade with U.S. and most of its allies. Vietnam's economy was severely damaged. Communists struggled to rebuild the devastated country and had to belong to supports from communism community in the world.

Modern Vietnam

April 30, 1975, marked an important transition for Vietnam. The communists triumphed in the long and costly war. The victory brought the unification of the country. Soon after gaining control of the South, the Communist began to enforce the total communist system. It quickly failed in the new country.

In the ten years from the unification of the country, the communist party destroyed the economy. They stripped out all the economic systems that evolved from the French colonial. All economic resources were managed and outputs were planned by the central government. The market economy was destroyed. “Vo san”, state planned economy, shrank the productivity of the workers and discouraged economic development. There was no private property. Economically, everybody, worked but shared their products regardless of his /her qualification, education and experience. Many intellectual and experts frustrated with those practices fled the country, resulting in the serious scarcity of human resources to rebuild the country.

The land distribution programs were a mistake for the government. The South is the vital agriculture resource. Since colonial times, these huge and fertile fields fed the country and exported to the world market. The southern farming systems never experienced Collectivization of agriculture “ *was accomplished in the North in the late 1950s only with violence.*” (Morley

31) When implemented to the south, the program caused a cataclysm. Production fell and “*The rural social system is being transformed fundamentally, and this traumatic process has created a large and growing numbers of discontented, marginalized peasants.*” (Kolko 10)

Social classes were eliminated. There was only “giai cap cong nhan” , workers in the urban and “giai cap nong dan”, farmers and workers in the rural. In society, the party totally controlled the press. They censored all entertainment, art, education and cultural activities to support the goals of the party. Many artists were sent away to work on many reeducation camp. One of the most popular songwriters, Tring Cong Son, who wrote many antiwar songs, was among the people put in the camps. “*He was speaking reluctantly of the four years he spent planting rice and manioc amid old American and Viet Cong minefields along the Laotian border.*” (Agence France Presse Intl) The situation was the same for Southern officer and professionals who had worked for the Saigon government.

The communist built the governing systems with many disadvantages. The party lacked of qualified human resources. The war took more than three millions people in both sides. Manpower was short for manufacturing and farming. Hundred thousands of Southerners fled the country. Most of the officers were cadres who did not have any experiment besides fighting. They could not manage the large and complicated government developed since colonial days.

Moreover, the war brought the heaviest disaster for the country. The US Army dropped the largest amount of bomb, and chemical substances in history of warfare in Vietnam. The industry and infrastructure of the north was completely smashed. “*The US military used 19 million gallons of herbicides including more than 11 million gallons of Agent Orange, to destroy forest cover used by Viet Cong guerrillas*” (Mercier) These chemical not only destroyed millions

of acres of land, but also harmed the people in these areas. Many diseases and birth defects have been happening.

Besides the internal difficulties, the communists faced military confrontations with its neighbors in the late 1970s. The Chinese army attacked the northern border in 1979 and Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia. Again, the needs of manpower for rebuilding country were drafted by war. Further, the invasion led to the cessation of support from International Monetary Fund, World Bank and western countries. These international tensions deepened the economic depression. Everywhere, people were exhausted physically and psychologically. Production and other social activities were slowing down. Corruption was rampant. The country fell into hardest time economically and socially; both conservative and reform cadres began to reexamine their system to avoid further crises.

The ruling party began revising its policies in 1985. At the Sixth Congress summit in 1986, the party leaders decided to initiate the “doi moi” reform movement. They passed regulations that would allow private business, abolished internal trade barriers among provinces, and allow farmer to sell extra products to free market. Significantly, the party passed Directive 10 to terminate the collective farming system and return land to farmers. These economic measures made positive impacts. People felt more relief. Both agriculture and industrial production were increasing. Figure 4.1 is the economic growth graph from the “*IMF Approves Second Annual ESAF Loan for Vietnam*” of the IMF. We can observe the Real GDP growths of Vietnam are very high.

Vietnam: Selected Economic Indicators

	1994	1995*	1996**	1997**
	<i>(percent change)</i>			
Real GDP growth	8.8	9.5	9.5	9.5
Consumer prices (end of period)	14.5	13.1	9.0	7.0
	<i>(percent of GDP)</i>			
Government budget balance, excluding grants (deficit -)	-2.6	-1.7	-1.5	-2.5
External current account balance, excluding grants (deficit -)	-7.6	-8.0	-8.9	-8.6
	<i>(weeks of imports)</i>			
Foreign exchange reserves	9.8	10.2	11.5	12.2

Sources: Vietnamese authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

*Estimated

**Projected

Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 99/46
June 8, 1999

Figure 1.1

The IMF played an important role in pushing economic reform in Vietnam. It gave advice and supports to carry out many reforming policies. “In August 1987, with its reform program capsizing and no alternative, the Politburo accepted the IMF’s advise to eliminate subsidies, impose budget controls, adjust exchange rate and pricing system, and decentralize decision making.” (Koklo 33) IMF and World Bank lobbied for future loans and helped postpone the multibillion-dollar foreign debt. These organizations proposed efficient means to help Vietnam join the global economy. In 1989, Vietnam withdrew all of their troops from Cambodia marked a stronger relationship between them and the organizations.

In order to attract more foreign investment, the communists promoted an open-door policy. They started to legislate investment laws. State owned enterprises setup joint-venture with Western capitalists like British Petroleum, Hitachi, etc. They also allowed direct foreign investment in local private enterprises. They imposed privileges, tariffs and rules for key industries like construction, agriculture, and energy. In 1995, Vietnam became an official member of ASIAN, Association of Southeast Asian Nations. By joining the groups, Vietnam not only strengthen its politically and security cooperation in the regions but also expand its international market.

Most importantly, after the US did lift the embargo and normalize relationship with the government, Vietnam rapidly boosted its economy progress. The country increased its export-import activities, received substantial funds and loans for many organizations like IMF, World Bank and Asia Development Bank. Vietnam now can do business with many powerful American corporations like GE, IBM, Coke, and etc.

Understanding the reform required expertise human and resources, the communist party allowed professionals to join the governing system. Many of them had been sent to reeducation camp or their practice had been since unification. *“Under the Constitution of 1992 for the first time the educated elite have been admitted into the alliance of the working class and the peasantry, on which all state power is theoretically based.”*(Morley 22)

In theory, the party still strongly interpreted communism, but in reality practiced partial market capitalism. Classes gradually reemerged. Personal wealth was flourishing and social gaps widened. *“The party’s ideologues still evoke Marx, Lenin, and Ho Chi Minh devoutly, but the IMF’s inspiration has been far more decisive, and it has determined the nation’s crucial priorities.”* (Kolko 33)

Unfortunately, the rapid reform in Vietnam created many issues like the incompetence of the banking system and inexperience and inexpertise business. After more than ten years conducting the plan economy, Vietnam monetary and banking system faced a lot of troubles in managing and circulating currency. The banks inadequately provided or controlled loan practices. Most small business still used a traditional funding system “hui”. It is a credit/debit mechanism that allowed participants to borrow by biting interest payment. This system totally relies on trust, therefore fraud ‘giuc hui” usually happens and causes many mishaps. I was one of the victims during the early 1990s. Pyramid schemes also occurred a lot. One big incident was the Nuoc Hoa Thanh Huong company of "Nguyen Van Muoi Hai". Hai created a fake perfume company in Ho Chi Minh City and called for funding. Then he used money from new investors to pay for old investors. This incident is solid proof that Vietnamese did not well prepare for market economy. Government did not build sufficient regulations to prevent these schemes.

There was a serious lack of economic experts and qualify managers for businesses. Most of businesses (state owned enterprises or private ones) did not have an advanced accounting system. The universities did not have enough business faculty and. Computer system and high tech equipment were scarcity. *“Today Vietnam’s education system “must react and adapt to support the rapid pace of development,” warned the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in a recent study.”*(Hiebert 181)

Similar to others developing countries in the world, rapid growth of the economy usually caused many imbalances and social chaos, especially in Vietnam. Converting from a fractured agricultural communist system to dynamic free market system forced the society to confront thousands of social issues.

After decades living under the harsh control of the communism system, the people, especially the young generation, faced a deep culture shock. They were quickly influenced by Western cultures. *“Hedonism and pleasure-seeking among younger people in the cities - night clubs, rock music, Coke and fast motorcycles and all of the symptoms of alienation and confusion – are rampant.”* (Kolko 79) A gap between the values of the older generation and the newer generation arose. Also there is a stark difference between the cities and the rural areas. The cities represented the new Vietnam, one that promoted individualism and individual profit and individual struggle. Traditional family structure is changed. There is a decrease in number of three-generation families. Modern Vietnamese female is more financial and social independent, and she is no longer a pious housewife as in Confucian belief. In the family, the trend of divorce was increasing. *“One sign of this strain is divorce. The incidence of family breakup, frowned on in traditional society and during socialism, is rising. In 1993 roughly 30,000 couple—three times the 1975 level—applied for divorce, according to Vu Khac Xuong, chief administer of the People’s Supreme Court in Hanoi.”* (Hiebert 169)

Currently, Senator John McCain is in Vietnam this fourth week of April to help improve relation between the two countries. Also, the delegation of prominent American business leaders who served in the Vietnam War are visiting the country to provide economic advice, business expertise, and educational resources to a country struggling to join the global economy. Among them are Christos Cotsakos, CEO of online broking firm E+Trade Group, Marshall Carter, CEO and chairman of asset and investment management firm State Street Corp, James Kimsey, founding chief executive officer of America Online and Nathan Kantor, president of Winstar Communications. They also visited Ho Chi Minh city and met many students and discussed them with about global business and how Vietnam join the trend. Most of them are post war

generation and largest work force today. They advised students on computer, Internet, modern economy.

Vietnam communists are preparing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of unification of the country. They come back to visit the old battlefields, which were being changed to rice fields. Everybody looks for the better future for Vietnam. On the trip to Vietnam in April, "*U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen told reporters en route to Ho Chi Minh City. "They see the trend of globalization and they are looking at the United States in a very positive way."*" (CNN) CNN network is televising a series of world view programs about Vietnam. Richard Blyston, CNN reporter is conducting these reports during he last week of April 2000. He has interviewed many people from difference generations and professions. Most of them want to leave the unpleasant past and focus on building a better life. They feel more relief, economically, socially and politically.

With the improvement in relationship with the US and the world, Vietnam is no longer left out in the global economy. The communist party needs to actively and aggressive reform not only the economy, but also society and politics so that Vietnam will be more democratic and prosperous environment. That will encourage foreigner investment.

Change is inevitable in Vietnam. The country experienced many historical transformations and adaptations from feudalism to colonialism to communism in the twentieth century. The quarter of the century ago, the communist began a drastically and completely transform the new unified nation. Unfortunately, they won a victory to unite the country but failed to build prosperity. Many internal difficulties and external influences have forced them to reform (doi moi) to transform Vietnam from one of the poorest nation to a of the fast growing one in the Far East. The party continues this momentum to push the country forward as a tiger of Asia.

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