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Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions

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systems, and by providing medical assistance, books, and notebooks for education. As a consequence, the living conditions of the poor have notably improved, poverty rates have decreased from 32 percent to 17.6 percent, and there are no longer households in hunger. The economic gap between areas and localities is relatively small. We are striving to build a society without poor people.

In order to overcome and prevent an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, we have successfully implemented hunger and poverty eradication policies at both national and local levels.

Although the quality of material life in general is still not very high, the government has paid much attention to building a better spiritual life for the community. Cultural institutions have been supported. Democratic regulations at the grass-roots level continually build up the people's role. Cultural villages are created that are self-managed in accordance with village traditions. The purpose of all this is to preserve national identity. We do not want our people and their culture to be eroded by the process of international integration.

We believe that the above-mentioned issues are simultaneously our solutions, our achievements, and our lessons during the international economic integration process that is essential for our development.

FURTHER THOUGHTS

A Brief History of Vietnam

Yongseok Seo

The First Wave of Global Pressure: Sinicization and Indianization

Vietnamese history is a story of the struggle to develop a sense of identity and to maintain it against external pressures. The first major external pressure to Vietnam's existence was the conquest of the Red River Delta by Han China (206 BC–AD 220) in the first century BC. Vietnam was under Chinese control for the next millennium. The Vietnamese response to Chinese rule was twofold. On the one hand, they developed a national consciousness. On the other hand, they accepted various Chinese cultural practices such as political ideologies, administrative styles, and Chinese written characters. Despite this extensive accommodation and borrowing, "there has been a significant tension between the claims of non-Chinese elements in Vietnamese life and the claims of the Chinese elements" throughout Vietnamese history (Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, 31). Paradoxically, the Sinicization process created a national consciousness in Vietnam that enabled the Vietnamese to resist Chinese political domination in later centuries. By the end of the Tang dynasty in China, there was frequent resis-

tance by a strong anti-Chinese group in Vietnam that overthrew Chinese rule in 939. Yet Chinese cultural practices persisted.

Another wave of global force hit the southern part of Vietnam during the first millennium. The Sinicization of Vietnam was limited to the Red River Delta in the north. Maritime trade with India flourished in the south, and an array of goods and ideas, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, reached Vietnam during this period. Anthropologists generally agree that the Chams, who occupied the middle part of Vietnam, are ethnically and culturally different from the Viets in the north. The Chams accommodated Indian culture and created their own civilization. As a result, while present-day Vietnam is politically one state, culturally it is divided into two areas, the northern area above eighteen degrees latitude belonging to the Chinese cultural sphere and the southern area belonging to the Indian cultural sphere.

Pressure from the West and French Colonial Rule: Westernization

A new type of external pressure reached Vietnam in the seventeenth century, when European missionaries and merchants became important factors in Vietnamese life and politics. Although foreign merchants and missionaries arrived by the early sixteenth century, neither had much impact on Vietnam before the seventeenth century. (The best known of the early missionaries was Alexandre de Rhodes, a French Jesuit who is credited with perfecting a romanized system of writing the Vietnamese language [*quoc ngu*].) Western influence became a more serious problem for Vietnam during the Nguyen dynasty (1802–1945) as European imperialists sought to exploit and secure colonies in Asia and other parts of the non-Western world.

From the middle part of the nineteenth century, Vietnam faced a formidable challenge from French colonialists. Between 1858 and 1873, the French conquered Vietnam and divided it into three parts: Cochin China, Annam, and Tonkin. France colonized Cochin China in 1867, while Annam and Tonkin were added to France's protectorate in 1883. From the beginning of colonial intrusion the Vietnamese struggled for their independence against French colonialism. French colonial rule was, for the most part, politically repressive and economically exploitative. In the political sphere, a modern French administrative system was introduced to run the new colony. The Vietnamese people had no part in it, as they were limited to the lower levels of the bureaucracy. Economically, the French exploited Vietnam for rice and rubber. Most of the rice produced in the Mekong Delta was exported to Europe in spite of serious food shortages in Vietnam.

In the midst of this harsh French colonial rule, the notion of nationalism and the modern nation-state emerged among Vietnamese intellectuals as a response to French colonialism. Many Vietnamese nationalists came from a Western-

educated middle class. They involved themselves in study groups, demonstrations, and acts of terrorism with a vision of an independent Vietnam as their goal. Nguyen That Thanh, later known as Ho Chi Minh, was one of them. Like many other East Asian nationalists of the time, Ho was greatly impressed by the Russian Revolution, while also holding mixed values of Confucianism and nationalism. After World War I, when the principle of self-determination swept over the whole of East Asia, nationalist sentiments in Vietnam strengthened even further. Despite all the insurrection and efforts, the Vietnamese nationalist movement failed to gain independence from the French. Given this failure, Vietnamese nationalists like Ho Chi Minh began to realize the need to involve the masses in a successful anti-colonial movement.

After the defeat of Japanese invaders in the Pacific War, the Vietnamese nationalistic communists under Ho quickly seized control in northern Vietnam, but they soon had to confront the returned French colonialists. Finally, Vietnam secured its independence and expelled French colonialists. However, the 1954 Geneva Conference divided Vietnam, with Ho Chi Minh's communist government ruling the north and Ngo Dinh Diem's regime, supported by the United States, ruling the south. Another two decades of bitter conflict ensued before Vietnam was unified as an independent nation. After a short period of recovery from the horrors of protracted war, in 1986 the Vietnamese government commenced an omnidirectional reform program known as the "Doi Moi." It aimed at "stepping in the general development trend and the process of gradual globalization and regionalization" (see www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/learn/history.php3). By the mid-1990s Vietnam was ready to reclaim its status as a major player in Southeast Asia.