

International Perspectives in Marxism-Leninism and Vietnam's Diplomacy toward Major states since 'Doi Moi'

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Abstract

The VCP's 13th National Congress affirmed the pioneering role of foreign affairs in maintaining peace, mobilizing external resources for development, and enhancing Vietnam's global position. Since Doi Moi, the goal of building a strong Vietnam has set new demands on theoretical development, including foreign affairs theory. Achievements in this field over the past four decades are valuable assets for continuing diplomatic tasks and contributing to the Party's theoretical development. Vietnam therefore needs accurate assessment of the situation as a basis for building adaptable foreign policy to both protect and promote its role in international integration and development. Applying Marxism-Leninism's 'Internationalism' as a foundation, combined with IR theories as analytical frameworks, makes the complex world more comprehensible. Accordingly, this article analyzes international and domestic contexts, rational cooperation, international law, communication, and Vietnam's main diplomatic processes since 1986.

Keywords: *international perspectives, Doi Moi, Vietnam's diplomacy*

Introduction

Foreign policy is the sum total of the views, strategies, guidelines, determination of objectives, directions, tasks and guidelines to direct the foreign activities of that country, decisions and measures planned and implemented by the highest state apparatus with other subjects in the process of participating in international life. Foreign policy also serves as a reflection of the current national capacity, a linkage of domestic policy to maximize national interests and desires, and at the same time expresses the practical position of the country through conformity with the development trend of the world situation and international law. A country today cannot exist in isolation without paying attention to foreign policy (Dao Minh Hong, Le Hong Hiep, 2013). Today's foreign policy not only plays a pivotal role internally, but also influences other countries in the region. Therefore, properly understanding the Vietnamese foreign policy-making process becomes a basic and necessary principle of any subject studying international diplomacy.

Regarding the foreign policy-making process of Vietnam, it is the most special policy in which the ideas of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) govern and is the main influence throughout the foreign policy implementation of Vietnam and the world (Hiep, L., 2018). Specifically, at the National Party Congresses (once every 5 years), the views and guidelines will be introduced. In order to concretize that policy, the Politburo of Vietnam will have a

decisive role under the direction of the Party Central Committee, to form the fundamental guidelines and guidelines for foreign policy. After having the above framework, the Government receives comments and assigns relevant ministries, branches and agencies to conduct research and drafting. After submission to the Standing Committee of the National Assembly for appropriate amendment, these laws shall be brought to the National Assembly for approval. In addition, the Party Secretariat will monitor, contribute ideas and check the work of the masses and the implementation of the Party Resolution. The Party's foreign affairs departments will coordinate with State agencies to ensure the consistency of foreign policy and foreign policy lines. In particular, participation in this process also includes the solicitation of expert opinions and social opinions as an important part.

Thus, we can see that the unity of the political ideas of the Party and the State, as well as the social expectations of the people throughout, has become the most characteristic feature of Vietnam's foreign policy. Because Vietnam's foreign policies also come from social observation, balance and checks, but still ensure the planning is in line with the ideology of the ruling political party. In particular, the foundation for building Vietnam's foreign policy is based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's ideology. Therefore, the study of Vietnam's foreign policy cannot lack the foundation for analyzing the theoretical basis of Marxism-Leninism doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's thought. Facing the complex international context, Vietnam's diplomacy is asked to have a deep look and research for applying the suitable directions, specially towards major states.

Literature Review

The relationship between Marxist-Leninist internationalism and Vietnam's foreign policy during Đổi Mới should be understood in terms of ideological continuity and contextual adaptation. Marxism-Leninism is not, in itself, a comprehensive theory of contemporary foreign policy decision-making. Nevertheless, its materialist and dialectical approach provides a methodological reference for examining international developments as historically situated processes shaped by material conditions, political interests, and changing relationships of power. Lenin's writings on national self-determination and peaceful coexistence also offer important historical reference points for examining the relationship between national independence and international cooperation. In Vietnam, these intellectual foundations have been interpreted through the Party's political experience, Ho Chi Minh's thought, national historical traditions, and the practical requirements of national construction and defense. The analytical significance of Marxist-Leninist internationalism therefore lies not in assuming a direct or automatic relationship between doctrine and policy outcomes, but in investigating how ideological principles are interpreted and translated into political objectives and diplomatic practices (Do, 2022; Le, 2022; Palmujoki, 1997).

The first mechanism through which this relationship can be examined is the reconciliation of national independence with international cooperation. Since the Sixth National Congress in 1986, Vietnam's foreign policy has increasingly emphasized the need to create a peaceful and favorable international environment for economic development while

preserving political independence and sovereignty. This orientation indicates that international cooperation is not necessarily incompatible with national autonomy. Instead, cooperation is pursued insofar as it contributes to national development, security, and the protection of fundamental interests. The evolution of Vietnam's foreign policy consequently reflects an effort to combine continuity in political orientation with adjustments to the opportunities and constraints of the international environment. This interpretation is consistent with scholarship that explains Vietnam's expanding international role through the interaction of security concerns, domestic development, and a broader diplomatic strategy (Le Dinh Tinh, 2021).

A second mechanism concerns the relationship between ideological commitments and pragmatic engagement with states possessing different political systems. Vietnam's post-Đổi Mới diplomacy has expanded beyond its traditional socialist partners to include the United States, European countries, Japan, and other major economic and political actors. The normalization of relations with China in 1991 and the United States in 1995, followed by the expansion of economic and diplomatic cooperation with both countries, illustrates the growing importance of managing differences while identifying areas of shared interest. These developments should not be interpreted as evidence that ideology has simply disappeared from foreign policy. Rather, they indicate that ideological continuity can coexist with a differentiated assessment of external partners, in which the requirements of development, security, and sovereignty shape the practical scope of cooperation. Vietnam's cautious response to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, for example, demonstrates its effort to benefit from cooperation while avoiding an unconditional alignment that could narrow its diplomatic options (Trinh & Ho, 2024).

A third mechanism is the pursuit of strategic autonomy through diversification and multilateralization. The expansion of bilateral partnerships and participation in ASEAN and other multilateral institutions allows Vietnam to broaden its diplomatic options, mobilize resources for development, and reduce the risks associated with excessive dependence on any single external partner. This approach is particularly important for a state operating in an international environment characterized by asymmetric power relations and intensifying competition among major powers. Recent research conceptualizes Vietnam's strategic autonomy as involving not only the management of existing dependencies but also the development of alternative partnerships and stronger domestic capabilities (Chapman, 2026). From this perspective, multilateral engagement is not merely a diplomatic objective; it is also a means of strengthening Vietnam's capacity to pursue national priorities under external constraints.

A fourth mechanism concerns the use of international law, multilateral institutions, and diplomatic communication to manage differences and support a rules-based international environment. Vietnam's emphasis on the principles of the United Nations Charter, sovereign equality, peaceful settlement of disputes, and mutually beneficial cooperation provides a normative basis for its participation in regional and global institutions. These principles are particularly relevant to relations with major powers, where asymmetries of material capability may limit the effectiveness of bilateral bargaining alone. Participation in ASEAN-led

mechanisms and broader multilateral forums creates additional channels for expressing national positions, building coalitions, and seeking diplomatic support. Such practices can be examined in conjunction with Vietnam's emerging diplomatic identity and the development of a distinctive Vietnamese approach to international relations (Do, 2022; Toropchin, 2023).

Taken together, these mechanisms suggest that the relationship between Marxist-Leninist internationalism and Vietnam's foreign policy is neither one of complete doctrinal determination nor one of straightforward ideological abandonment. Instead, ideological principles provide a framework of political orientation and interpretation, while concrete diplomatic choices are shaped by the interaction of domestic priorities, material capabilities, external constraints, and changing opportunities. Vietnam's relations with China illustrate the need to combine cooperation with the defense of sovereignty; its relations with the United States and the European Union demonstrate the expansion of pragmatic engagement across political differences; and its participation in ASEAN illustrates the use of multilateral cooperation to strengthen regional stability and diplomatic agency. The analytical task is therefore to identify where ideological principles are reflected in official objectives and diplomatic practices, while also recognizing the independent influence of strategic and material considerations. This distinction provides a more nuanced explanation of both the continuity and the adaptation of Vietnam's foreign policy during the *Đổi Mới* period.

Theoretical and Practical Basis

It can be seen that Marxism-Leninism is the theory of the development of human society, not the theory of international relations, but the materialistic, dialectical, objective and comprehensive view of Marxism-Leninism gives us a worldview, a scientific methodology in the analysis and perception of today's volatile world. Moreover, the Party and State of Vietnam take Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology as the ideological foundation and guideline for the renovation and international integration. Therefore, this is the most basic basis for Vietnam to plan and implement a successful foreign policy and international integration. The 6th National Congress of the Party (1986) adopted a comprehensive renovation line, including the renovation of the field of foreign affairs, in which the foreign policy of the Party and the State in the renovation period must be based on: (1) Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought on foreign affairs; (2) the diplomatic tradition of the nation; (3) the domestic revolutionary situation and tasks and finally (4) the world and regional situation.

First, thanks to the awareness of the development of production forces, with the main driving force being the industrial revolution, international relations developed and expanded in the form of capitalism. From there, *Marx and Engels drew: (a) Using a materialistic and dialectical worldview in analyzing and evaluating the world situation. (b) Internationalization is an objective trend, associated with the development process of the capitalist economy. (c) The communist revolution is a revolution of a worldwide nature, the international solidarity of the proletariat is inevitable.* From there, Marx and Engels came to the conclusion that the dominance of the bourgeoisie around the world led to the expansion of international relations, helping to form

markets, creating transnational economic and political links between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and between the bourgeoisie and each other on a world scale. Marx considered the proletariat as a fundamental subject of international relations; considered the solidarity, unity of will and coordination of actions of the working class worldwide as a basic content and leading principle of proletarian internationalism. Therefore, rooted in the world and regional situation, the manifesto of the Communist Party issued by Marx and Engels was the slogan: "The proletariat of all countries unites".

Secondly, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, V.I. Lenin inherited and developed the ideas of Marx and Engels in the context that capitalism in the world had entered the stage of imperialism, monopolistic and interconnected corporations and regional competition began to spread globally on the following points of view: *Discovering the uneven development rules of social movement, especially in capitalist society; Supplementing and developing the view of international solidarity, giving a new type of international relations qualitatively compared to capitalist international relations.* Aware of that international situation, Lenin launched the slogan "The proletariat of all countries and oppressed peoples unite"; In addition, he also put forward his views on the right to national self-determination, equality between subjects of international relations, peaceful coexistence between countries with different political and social regimes. According to V.I. Lenin, the right of peoples to self-determination is the right to political self-determination; the right of those peoples to state separation from other national collectives is the establishment of "an independent national state". As can be seen, the right of a nation to self-determination is the right of a people to become an independent nation-state by deciding their own political institution from another people oppressing them. "Our slogan: before and now peaceful coexistence with other governments... Life itself has led us and other countries to build a long-term relationship between the agrarian government and the government of the bourgeoisie" (Nguyen Bang Tuong, 2002).

Thirdly, from the fundamental and methodological points of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, our Party has renewed its thinking, analyzed and evaluated the current situation in a comprehensive and correct manner, based on the national tradition and the revolutionary situation in the country. According to President Ho Chi Minh, "Our country is a part of the world. The situation of our country has an impact on the world, but the world also has a relationship with our country ", but must maintain independence and self-control; must be smart, must have their own measures, because " if you want people to help, you must first help yourself ". The foreign affairs conception is a front, "if you want to make the revolution victorious, you must... make more friends, less enemies". Therefore, in the last decades of the twentieth century, our Party advocated opening up for international integration, planning and implementing from economic integration first, then implementing comprehensive and deep international integration. Dialectical material thinking, a comprehensive, objective, specific, scientific way of looking at both the challenges and opportunities of the international situation is increasingly expressed by our Party.

Practical application of Marxism-Leninism in Vietnam's foreign affairs

According to historical milestones and processes, with the foundation of social doctrine, inheriting and promoting national traditions, and combining the domestic and international situation, our Party has clearly defined the goal of Vietnam's international integration as preserving peace and stability, effectively serving the cause of national construction and defense. From Resolution No. 22-NQ/TW, dated April 10, 2013 of the Party Central Committee on International Integration to the 12th Congress of the Party, the overall goal of the foreign policy in the new period is "Maintaining peace, stability, initiative and active international integration for national development. Enhance the position and prestige of Vietnam in the region and in the world". Continuing the above views, the 13th Party Congress stated: "Ensuring the highest national interest, on the basis of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, equality and mutually beneficial cooperation".

During more than 35 years of national renovation, the identification of partners and subjects, handling the relationship between partners and subjects has always been paid attention by our Party. At the 13th Congress, our Party developed and emphasized: "Consistently implement the foreign policy of independence, autonomy, peace, friendship, cooperation and development, diversification and multilateralization of foreign relations; be a friend, a reliable partner and an active and responsible member of the international community". In the new context, our Party clearly stated that Vietnam needs to promote the synergy of the great national unity bloc, combined with the strength of the times; proactively and actively implement international integration, be a partner for peace, prosperity and sustainable development, with the motto of connection, association, cooperation, reconciliation and mutual development. The 13th Party Congress launched the policy: "Actively participate in the development of principles and standards in regional and global multilateral institutions"; "Actively participate, actively contribute and enhance the role of Vietnam in building and shaping multilateral institutions and the international political and economic order".

In practice, it can be seen that the Party Congresses such as the 8th Congress (1996), the 9th Congress (2001) and the 10th Congress (2006) use the concept and increasingly deepen the content of the concept of international economic integration. At the 11th Congress of the Party (2011), the policy was to synchronously and comprehensively implement foreign affairs activities; proactively and actively integrate into the international community. And with the perception that Vietnam is a part of the world, international economic integration has been strongly implemented since the 9th Congress, then expanded to integrate into other fields, forming a policy of proactive and positive international integration. From "proactive and active international economic integration while expanding international cooperation in other fields" to "proactive and active international integration" is an important step in the development of the Party's foreign policy thinking. Especially to the 13th Congress in 2021, the Party said: "The world continues to change in the trend of multipolarity and multicentreism; big countries still cooperate and compromise, but struggle and restrain each other more fiercely. Extreme nationalism, great powerism, and pragmatism in international relations have increased. Developing countries, especially small countries, face many new

difficulties and challenges ", developing an international integration mindset takes an important new step: "proactive, active, comprehensive and deep international integration".

Most notable is the 13th Party Congress, in which our Party emphasized: "Strengthen international cooperation in defense and security, well perform the task of participating in peacekeeping of the United Nations. Actively coordinate with countries to protect national and ethnic interests; handle non-traditional security issues, create security belts to protect the Fatherland early and remotely"; at the same time, clearly state: "Promote and deepen bilateral cooperation with partners, especially strategic partners...Active, positively attend to multilateral military, security institutions due to new thinking about protect the country. In general, Vietnam in opening up for integration has shifted from the first economic integration mindset to comprehensive and deep international integration; developing new thinking on national defense in accordance with the situation. The 13th Party Congress stated: "Proactively and actively participate in multilateral defense and security mechanisms according to the new thinking on national defense".

The process of planning and making Vietnam's foreign policy from 1986-2021

Vietnam's foreign policy was formed and developed in accordance with the keys of the internationalist perspective in Marxism-Leninism on analysis based on the world, regional and domestic revolutionary situation and in harmony with Vietnam's national traditionalism, all shown through the Party Congress Documents. On that basis, Vietnam's foreign policy was planned, implemented and achieved many significant achievements in the reform period from 1986 to 2021.

Period of 1986 - 1995

This is the period of forming a renewed foreign policy (after the 6th Party Congress in 1986). At the same time, it broke the economic embargo and was politically isolated. The top task identified in the 6th Party Congress Document is to take advantage of favorable international conditions for the cause of building socialism and defending the Fatherland. Based on the analysis of the world and domestic political situation, our Party has implemented a foreign policy of *adding friends and reducing enemies; breaking the siege and embargo; expanding international relations*. Since then, developing and consolidating comprehensive cooperation with Laos and Cambodia, on the basis of respecting the independence and sovereignty of each country. Solidarity and cooperation with the Soviet Union were the cornerstones, ready to negotiate and resolve the issues of Vietnam-China relations. Expand relations with all countries with the principle of peace.

Resolution 13 of the 6th Politburo (1988) defines the task of foreign affairs moving from political-military to economic, maintaining independence, peace, national independence, respecting independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality and mutual benefit, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs when approaching the world and the region. The 6th Central Conference (1989) promoted the normalization of relations with China, improved relations with ASEAN, and the normalization of relations with the United States.

The 7th Party Congress (1991) determined the task of maintaining peace, expanding friendly and cooperative relations, and creating favorable international conditions for the construction and defense of the Fatherland. *"Vietnam wants to be friends with countries in the world community, strive for peace, independence and development."* The 3rd Central Conference of the VII Faculty (1992) outlined four main guiding principles to handle international issues: (1) ensuring genuine national interests, smoothly combining patriotism with internationalism of the working class; (2) maintaining independence and self-reliance, promoting multilateralization and diversification of foreign relations; (3) mastering both sides of cooperation and struggle in international relations; (4) participating in cooperation with countries in the region, and expanding relations with all major countries and major economic centers.

Period of 1996 - 2010

After the completion of the foreign mission until 1996, before the changes of the world situation and the domestic revolutionary task, the 8th, 9th and 10th Party Congresses of the Party from 1996 to 2010 were the stage of expanding foreign relations and international integration. At the 8th Party Congress (1996), for the first time, the task of international and regional economic integration was directed towards building an open economy, accelerating the process of regional and world economic integration. This is exactly the historical milestone for a major and cross-cutting foreign policy so far. Following the 7th Congress, the 8th Congress (1996) continued to declare on international relations: *"Vietnam wants to be a friend of all countries in the world community, striving for peace, independence and development."* At the 9th Congress (2001), the spirit of proactive international and regional economic integration was supplemented and clarified: *"Vietnam is ready to be a friend and reliable partner of countries in the international community, striving for peace, independence and development."* At the 10th Congress (2006), the view of international integration of the Party and State of Vietnam became more "proactive" and "actively involved": *"Vietnam is a reliable friend and partner of countries in the international community, actively participating in the process of international and regional cooperation...Bringing established international relations into depth, stability and sustainability."*

It can be seen that, over each period of the 8th, IX and X Party Congresses from 1996 to 2010, the process of forming Vietnam's foreign policy has become increasingly clear and is constantly expanding and developing. From "Vietnam wants to be a friend" to "ready to be a friend" and finally a positive affirmation "to be a friend, a reliable partner". From the "world community" of the 8th Congress to the "international community" of the 9th Congress, X also clearly shows how the subject participates in international relations and affirms Vietnam's position in the international arena as an independent and autonomous country.

Period of 2011 - 2021

Since 2011, the top goal of Vietnam's foreign affairs was emphasized for the first time at the 11th Party Congress in 2011 as *"for the national interests, for a strong and socialist Vietnam."* Here, the Party and State of Vietnam have clearly identified the new position and strength of the country, shifting the focus from international integration in the economic field to comprehensive international integration: *"...proactively and actively integrating*

internationally; being a friend, a reliable partner and a responsible member of the international community." Inheriting this content, the 12th Party Congress (2016) emphasized that the foreign policy goal is to *ensure the supreme interests of the nation-state*, the foreign affairs task is to *improve the effectiveness of foreign affairs activities, proactively and actively integrate internationally, resolutely and persistently fight to firmly protect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Fatherland*.

At the 12th Congress, multilateral diplomacy in international relations is extremely important, continuing to deepen cooperative relationships, improve the quality and effectiveness of multilateral foreign affairs, proactively and actively contribute to, build and shape multilateral institutions. Until the 13th Party Congress (2021), foreign affairs consistently implemented the foreign policy of independence, autonomy, peace, friendship, cooperation and development, diversification and multilateralization of foreign relations. Ensuring the highest national interest, on the basis of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and International Law,...proactively and actively integrating comprehensively and extensively into the international community; continue to *be a friend, a reliable partner and a responsible member of the international community*.

Vietnam's diplomacy towards major countries from 1986 to 2021

The United States

Since the Sixth Party Congress in 1986, foreign policy with the United States has been very focused. Starting from fragrant rice in 1784-1789 until the fierce period of the war, the diplomatic relations of Vietnam and the US are still placed as a 'comprehensive cooperation' according to President Ho Chi Minh's will. Accordingly, in the historical context of the international and regional period of 'Doi Moi', Vietnam's foreign policy with the United States is increasingly implemented according to the principles of independent, autonomous, peaceful, friendly foreign relations, cooperation and development, multilateralization, and diversification of international relations. On that basis, on July 11, 1995, Vietnam and the United States moved to normalize relations, opening a new stage of cooperation between the two countries in the spirit of "putting aside the past, overcoming differences, promoting similarities, and looking to the future". It can be seen that, along with implementing a unified foreign policy, Vietnam has successfully broken the embargo, moving towards socio-economic development and comprehensive cooperation. That is also the reason to say that this is an important and historic diplomatic period between Vietnam and the United States.

In the period 1995 – 2013, we can witness remarkable and comprehensive developments in Vietnam-US relations. The two sides emphasized the principles of a comprehensive partnership on the basis of respect for international law and the UN Charter, as well as each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political institutions. This is the first time the United States has affirmed its respect for Vietnam's political institutions. By 2015, on the occasion of twenty years of normalization of Vietnam – United States relations, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong came to the United States, marking the completion of a chapter in the history of the two sides' full normalization of relations, in the spirit of "full cooperation",

as Uncle Ho wished, and opening a new chapter of Vietnam - United States relations with more depth and comprehensive. The document of the 13th National Party Congress clearly stated: "Promote and deepen bilateral cooperation with partners, especially strategic partners, comprehensive partners and other important partners, create intertwined interests and increase trust." This policy is placed in the overall foreign policy of Vietnam: independence, self-reliance, openness, diversification, multilateralization, comprehensive and deep international integration (Communist Magazine, n.d.-a).

In addition, foreign policy with the United States is also a game of balancing Vietnam's power in international relations. Not only brings economic benefits, but also gives Vietnam a political advantage. This is thanks to a foreign policy that bridges the mistrust gap to shared interests and builds mutual trust. This is the foundation of Vietnam's diplomacy with the United States. Although today, cultural differences between the two sides still exist, especially on topics related to human rights, it can be seen that the bilateral cooperation relationship will continue to be given top priority and increasingly promoted, so that both sides can optimize the interests of the country in the complex and unpredictable developments of the international relations arena today (Le & Anton, 2018).

China

Recently, from August 18-20, 2024, we have just watched the visit of General Secretary and President To Lam to China at the invitation of General Secretary and President Xi Jinping. This special foreign activity has contributed to promoting the importance of building the Vietnam-China Community of Shared Future, which has strategic significance in Vietnam-China relations, contributing to peace, stability and development of the region and the world (Review of the Particularly Important Foreign Activity Between Vietnam and China, n.d.). Thereby, Head of the Central Committee for Foreign Affairs Le Hoai Trung said that for Vietnam, strengthening the favorable external relations to achieve the development goals set by the 13th Party Congress as well as the long-term development goals. Thereby, the two countries strengthen coordination so that they can contribute positively to regional peace and stability.

In addition, Trung also said that for China - a neighboring country, a leading developed country in the world and a major country in Asia. Therefore, good Sino-Vietnamese relations also create favorable conditions for Vietnam in the process of socio-economic development in the coming time. In particular, the process of implementing Vietnam's foreign policy towards China during the Doi Moi period from 1986 to 2021, to see the importance of properly planning and implementing foreign affairs with this country. If Vietnam normalized relations with the United States in 1995, then with China, the two countries laid the foundation for normal relations even earlier than four years - 1991. After that, the foreign policy of the two sides was determined to persistently strengthen and expand the friendship and cooperation, considering it a strategic requirement. In the spirit of "closing the past, opening the future", friendship visits and high-level talks between the two countries have taken place regularly. During the official visits, the two sides issued 6 joint communiqués, 4 statements and signed

many agreements in all fields, becoming an important legal basis to promote the comprehensive cooperation process.

Important milestones in the political relations between the two countries are reflected in the following events: Setting the framework for bilateral relations in the new century with the motto "friendly neighbors, comprehensive cooperation, long-term stability, looking towards the future" and signing the Land Border Agreement (1999); signing the Agreement on demarcation of the Gulf of Tonkin (2000); signing the Protocol on fisheries cooperation in the Gulf of Tonkin (2004); agreement to turn the relationship between the two countries into "good neighbors, good friends, good comrades, good partners" (2005); establishing the Steering Committee for bilateral cooperation between Vietnam and China (2006); elevating the relationship between the two countries to the level of "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" and completing the work of demarcation and marker planting on land (2008). Trade turnover between the two countries is increasing: despite being affected by the global financial crisis, trade turnover between the two countries still reached 21.35 billion USD(1) (in 2009), 30 billion USD (in 2010) (compared to 1991, this figure was only 37 million USD) (Communist Magazine, n.d.-a).

In particular, it must be mentioned that the crisis in bilateral relations between the two countries since the normalization of relations in 1991 was Vietnam's foreign policy strategy in May 2014. The event began with 80 Chinese vessels sailing to the deep waters of the Vietnamese Haiyang 981 (HYSY-981) drilling rig for the purpose of oil exploration and this incident created a conflict situation. Since then, Beijing has stepped up its artificial island-building activity in the South China Sea. This is the foundation for Vietnam's foreign policy to quickly strengthen relations with other powers such as the United States, Japan, and India, view economic engagement with China as an vulnerabilities, modernize its naval capabilities, and increase the level of anti-China nationalism (Le & Anton, 2018). For China, however, Vietnam pursues a balanced and cooperative relationship with China despite Beijing's assertive claims in the South China Sea. Both have signed a number of cooperation agreements related to bipartisan relations, investment, infrastructure, and culture, and a \$200 million loan from the China Development Bank to the Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam. Moreover, China is now Vietnam's largest trading partner with bilateral trade already exceeding \$58 billion (*Chính sách đối ngoại của Việt Nam và quan hệ với Trung Quốc*, n.d.).

Russian Federation

Unlike the United States and China, the relationship between Vietnam and the Russian Federation is a historical one. Until now, this relationship has been considered to play an important role in Vietnam's foreign affairs. Back in the 1920s and throughout Vietnam's struggle history, the former Russian government was *the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or Soviet Union*, whose support for weapons for Vietnam was mentioned in all anti-colonial efforts against the French and the American imperialists. Moreover, during the crisis period with China in the 1960s, Vietnam and the Soviet Union tightened their relationship as the key to national security. It is noteworthy that the 1978 Friendship and Cooperation Agreement between Vietnam and the Soviet Union put Vietnam's relations at the heart of

Soviet diplomacy. Therefore, despite many limitations in the Vietnam-China border war in 1979, the Soviet Union still had a lot of support for Vietnam and maintained it until 1991 (the collapse of the Soviet Union) (Le & Anton, 2018; *Mở Ra Chương Mới Trong Quan Hệ Việt Nam – Hoa Kỳ*, n.d.).

It can be seen that the two countries have the same socialist system, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and becoming the Russian Federation, but also the nature of Vietnam-Russia relations has changed profoundly. In the context of 1991-1993, the identification of Vietnam's diplomatic partners was still difficult. Russia has become a "both familiar and strange" partner of Vietnam. Moreover, at this time, Vietnam has adjusted its foreign policy in the direction of diversification and multilateralization, which places a top priority on improving relations with neighboring countries and countries in the region. Therefore, Vietnam-Russia relations had a partial impediment until 1994. Thanks to the two countries' efforts in creating a legal framework suitable to the new situation, the two countries signed the Treaty on Fundamental Principles in Bilateral Relations between Vietnam and the Russian Federation in June 1994. This is a legal document replacing the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Vietnam signed in 1978. Accordingly, the two sides promote relations on the principle of: respect for national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. As Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet said, "*we return to the old friendship but not in the old way, but must develop on the basis of the new relationship*" (*Tạp chí cộng sản*, n.d.-b).

Indeed, Vietnam-Russia relations then gradually flourished and went into depth, stability and inheritance. During his visit to Russia in October 2008, President Nguyen Minh Triet affirmed: "*The Government and people of Vietnam attach great importance to the development of traditional friendship and cooperation with Russia, considering Russia a loyal friend and reliable partner of Vietnam.*" Vietnam-Russia economic relations have made more and more positive progress, especially in recent years. Regarding trade, if in 2000, the two-way foreign trade turnover only reached 363,117 million USD, from 2005 to now, it has exceeded 1 billion USD; especially in 2008, it amounted to more than 1.6 billion USD (up 62.4% compared to 2007), of which Vietnam exported to Russia 671.9 million USD (up 46.4%), imported from Russia 969.6 million USD (up 75.5%). With this strong momentum, the two sides strive to bring trade turnover to 3 billion USD in 2010 and 10 billion USD in 2020. More than 40 agreements, treaties and cooperation agreements in many fields are signed, creating conditions for the strong promotion of mutually beneficial strategic partnership in depth. Diplomatic activities are actively implemented on all three channels (state diplomacy, political party diplomacy and people's diplomacy), the field of cooperation is also increasingly expanding.

In addition, in 2008, Russia had 59 projects with a total registered capital of 376.36 million USD (implementation capital of over 233 million USD), focusing on the fields of rubber planting and processing, shipping, construction materials, food processing, oil and gas. Vietnam has 11 investment projects in Russia with a total capital of over 34 million USD, focusing on the fields of food processing, apparel, footwear, and furniture production. In particular, in the first 6 months of 2009, Russia had 2 new investment projects in Vietnam with a registered capital of up to 329.8 million USD, ranked 5th out of 35 countries and territories

investing in Vietnam during this time. Other fields such as science - technology, culture - education between the two countries are also more and more exciting and effective.

ASEAN

Since 1986, the perception of foreign affairs with China and the domestic situation has changed drastically, Vietnam has turned to a foreign policy of balancing power and dealing with national security threats that is ASEAN power. In addition, Vietnam's policy of "diversification and multilateralization" also creates conditions for the national economy to recover and develop through trade and investment agreements with other ASEAN member states such as Korea, Japan, India, Australia, New Zealand and especially China, as well as is the key to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (Doc) as well as promoting the development of a Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (COC) between ASEAN and China in 2002 (Le & Anton, 2018). It can be said that joining ASEAN is a historic decision, a right and timely decision, the first breakthrough for Vietnam to integrate into the region and the world. Vietnam's foreign policy towards ASEAN is associated with the process of developing and renewing Vietnam's foreign thinking.

Since officially joining ASEAN on July 28, 1995, Vietnam's foreign policy in ASEAN has become an important part of Vietnam's foreign policy in the new period, and is clearly directed in the documents of the Party Congress. Just three years after joining ASEAN, as Chair of the Association in 1998, Vietnam drafted the Hanoi Action Plan to promote recovery from the Asian financial crisis, contributing to overcoming the development gap among member states. At the 11th Congress (January 2011), our Party continued to affirm the policy that Vietnam will "Proactively, actively and responsibly work with other countries to build a strong ASEAN Community, strengthen relations with partners, and continue to play an important role in cooperation frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region" and at the same time identify the task of "Striving with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to build Southeast Asia into a region of peace, stability, cooperation and prosperous development." Next, the 12th Party Congress (January 2016) determined the direction for cooperation in ASEAN as "proactive, active and responsible with ASEAN countries to build a strong Community," "proactively participate and promote the role in multilateral mechanisms, especially ASEAN and the United Nations." (26 Năm Việt Nam Gia Nhập ASEAN, n.d.).

In particular, 2020, marking 25 years of joining ASEAN, was also the third time to assume the chairmanship of ASEAN, Vietnam in particular and ASEAN in general at that time faced great challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, under the foreign policy of the 12th Party Congress "*promoting and creating the most favorable conditions for the construction and defense of the Fatherland*" (baohinhphu.vn, 2021), Vietnam has demonstrated the leadership and proactive role of the rotating Presidency. Under the leadership of Vietnam, ASEAN held a series of online conferences to discuss how to respond to the epidemic, such as successfully organizing two ASEAN summits 36 and 37; ASEAN Special Summit and ASEAN+3 on the COVID-19 pandemic. Many initiatives on cooperation in responding to COVID-19 and post-pandemic recovery have been announced and implemented in 2020, such

as the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund, the ASEAN Emergency Medical Supplies Reserve, the ASEAN Strategic Framework for Emergencies, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and Implementation Plan, the ASEAN Declaration on the ASEAN Travel Corridor Agreement Framework, etc., demonstrating ASEAN's comprehensive, synchronous approach of the "whole Community" nature in preventing and controlling the pandemic, adapting and gradually recovering comprehensively. (*26 Năm Việt Nam Gia Nhập ASEAN*, n.d.).

European Union (EU)

The EU is the world's most important economic and political center. The foundation for establishing diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the European Union (EU) began in 1990. This is a milestone marking Vietnam's escape from Western embargoes. So far, this diplomatic relationship has made great progress, both in the field of politics-diplomacy and trade-investment. After the European Commission Delegation was established, Vietnam and the EU signed the Framework Agreement on Cooperation in 1995, then in 2012 it was upgraded to the Vietnam-EU Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Currently, the EU is a trade partner that accounts for a large proportion of trade relations between Vietnam and Europe; at the same time, the EU is also Vietnam's leading export market (after the United States). (Bùi et al., 2023). Therefore, foreign policy with Europe is a comprehensive cooperation policy and plays an important role in the country's foreign affairs.

Based on the humanitarian foundation and the spirit of international integration of Vietnam, it was implemented in the spirit of Resolution VI of the Party Congress in December 1986, Vietnam and the EU. In particular, Vietnam and the EU share the same view on the multilateral approach, the role of international law and multilateral institutions in international relations. The two sides regularly exchange, consult and coordinate their positions on many global and regional issues of common concern, especially on peace and security, climate change response, trade liberalization based on rules, sustainable development, non-traditional security challenges. Vietnam and the EU cooperate on the frameworks of the Vietnam-EU Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which came into effect in 2016, with cooperation mechanisms in the fields of politics, economy, trade, investment, sustainable development, security-defense, rule of law and governance. In addition, there is a Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) dated August 1, 2020 and the upcoming Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA). There is also a Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Forest Law, Governance and Trade (VPA-FLEGT) in June 2019; a Framework Agreement on Defense-Security Cooperation (FPA) in October 2019; an annual human rights dialogue mechanism...It can be said that Vietnam has become one of the Asian countries with the most comprehensive and extensive relations with the EU, the only ASEAN country with all pillars of cooperation with the EU. (*Chặng Đường Quan Hệ Việt Nam - Liên Minh Châu Âu 30 Năm Qua*, n.d.).

Finally, on the basis of the world situation, there is still no stability and continuous fluctuations. The balance of power has not yet shown any inclination, while conflicts and

hotspots in the region are still tense. The United States and China have yet to create an absolute preeminence on a regional and global level. Competition between countries is more comprehensive than the previous "bipolar" state, especially in the field of science and technology. (Nguyễn, n.d.). In addition, the 12th National Party Congress (2016) of Vietnam emphasized that the foreign policy goal is to ensure the supreme interests of the nation, the foreign policy task is to improve the effectiveness of foreign affairs activities, proactively and actively integrate into the international community, resolutely and persistently fight to firmly protect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Fatherland... Therefore, Vietnam's foreign policy needs to closely follow the guidelines, be flexibly implemented, be suitable to reality and pay special attention to the major economic and political centers of the world and the region.

Conclusion

In general, the world situation continues to change according to the trend of multipolarity and multicentreism, but basically big countries and centers of economic and political power still maintain both cooperation and competition, but the aspect of "fighting and restraining each other more fiercely. Extreme nationalism, great powerism, and pragmatism in international relations have increased. The 13th National Party Congress of Vietnam also specifically assessed: "Developing countries, especially small countries, are facing many new difficulties and challenges." (Nguyễn, n.d.). Therefore, under the internationalism lens of Marxism-Leninism, shaping foreign policy must follow three principles: international communication, rational cooperation and international law. In particular, the approach must meet the analytical factors based on the world, regional and domestic revolutionary situation and in harmony with Vietnam's national traditionalism.

During the reform period (1986-2021), the period from 1986-1995, on the basis of the foreign policy, four core diplomatic principles were implemented and the top political task was to expand international relations, break the siege, embargo, shift the goal from politics to economy, but prerequisite to maintaining independence and national peace. This is the most difficult and important period in the formation and development of Vietnam's foreign policy, as this is the first stage of the 'Doi Moi' period, opening up new foreign thinking for Vietnam. By the period 1996-2010, Vietnam had diplomatic relations with 179 countries, economic and trade relations with 224 countries and territories, attracting many resources for economic and social development. This is also the period when Vietnam promotes the integration of international institutions such as AFTA, which was a founding member of ASEM 1996, hosted and organized ASEM-5 in 2004, joined APEC in 1998, APEC Summit in 2006 and was an official member of WTO in 2007.

By 2020, Vietnam will have diplomatic relations with 189 countries, of which, Vietnam will establish 3 special relations, 17 strategic partnerships, and 13 comprehensive partnerships. It can be said that these countries are all major countries, the political and economic centers of the world. Including P5, the whole G7, 13/20 G20 countries, 8/9 ASEAN countries. In addition, trade and investment relations with 224 markets in continents, more

than 500 bilateral and multilateral agreements, FDI and ODA attraction, etc. In addition, the Border Agreements and the basic principles of maritime settlement with China. On the basis of equality, mutual benefit, and facilitating the expansion and strengthening of cooperation, Vietnam has completed the signing of bilateral agreements on cooperation to resolve maritime overlapping areas with each country in the region such as Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. It can be seen that the foreign policy of resolutely and persistently fighting to firmly protect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Fatherland has been fully implemented in Vietnam's foreign policy principles during this period.

Regarding enhancing responsibility in the trend of peace and cooperation in the international and regional community, Vietnam has contributed to successfully organizing many international conferences such as the ASEM Summit, the rotating ASEAN Chairmanship in 2010 and 2020, the non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for two terms 2008-2009 and 2020-2021, solving major issues of the world and the region such as signing the DOC between ASEAN and China in 2002, signing the COC framework between ASEAN and China in 2017. It can be seen that, along with the right foreign policy, Vietnam has gradually built its position and constantly contributed its voice in the international and regional politics.

It can be seen that the normalization of relations with the United States has gradually opened the door to a comprehensive strategic partnership with the United States. From there, Vietnam was brought to a new diplomatic level, when for the first time in history, Vietnam had strategic partnerships with all the top important partners, including the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. (*Mở Ra Chương Mới Trong Quan Hệ Việt Nam – Hoa Kỳ, n.d.*). Moreover, from its experiences in the period 1986-2021, so far, Vietnam has been increasingly defining the importance, as well as the direction of its foreign policy along with the right foreign policy. Vietnam is the only country in the world that can establish and maintain a comprehensive strategic partnership at the same time with all three leading powers in the world, China, Russia and the United States, but still maintain Vietnam's independent, autonomous, diversified and multilateralized relationship. And finally, it becomes a clear demonstration of Vietnam's role and international status in the international arena.

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