

Pro-China or Pro-USA? Choices for Vietnam National Economic and Security Strategy

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Abstract: Despite being governed by one party, the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP, Party), there are many political options for national economic development and national security of Vietnam. But predominantly there are two opposing political camps within Party. One represents pro-China orientation and the second represents pro-USA orientation as USA and China are the two biggest political and economic powerhouses in the world and that will remain for decades. Naturally, pro-USA and pro-China stance guarantee different interests for the Party and for Vietnamese nation. The article will analyse the advantages and disadvantages in each of these political options and proposes solutions to keep the strategic balance between them for the purpose of internal stability and sustainable development.

Keywords: National interest, Vietnam, China, USA, economic strategy, security strategy.

1. Introduction

Whether there are or aren't pro-USA and pro-China factions within Vietnam Communist Party (Party) it is the same thing we've learned in the real life and on social network. But no one knows it exactly except the people in the highest ranks of the Party. At each National Congress, when the Party convened to elect the leader, public opinion is stirring about the struggle for power between the pro-China and pro-USA faction. Together with the meetings of Executive Central Committee, public opinion is tentative that the pro-China faction is at the upper hand, at times suggesting that the pro-USA side is looking to overturn the chess situation. Indeed, on the social networks, there is enough speculation about some politicians who are more pro-China and other who are more pro-USA. It is believed that people expect from a true leader to be for the people, to do something for the country, not only for the sake of the Party. The aim of this article is to investigate the advantages and disadvantages in each of these mentioned political options and to propose solutions to keep the strategic balance between them for the purpose of internal stability and sustainable development.

2. National Security's Theoretical Framework

According to contemporary dictionaries, most often, security is defined as a state of certainty of an individual, a group of individuals or a whole nation to counter the crisis situation. Security is usually seen as a freedom from or resilience against potential harm (or other unwanted change) from external forces. Beneficiaries of security may be persons and social groups, objects and institutions, ecosystems, and any other entity or phenomenon vulnerable to unwanted change by its environment. Security mostly refers to the protection from hostile forces, but it has a wide range of other senses, for example, it could be understood as: the absence of harm; the presence of essential goods (energy security), the resilience against potential damage; the secrecy and privacy; and finally, a state of mind (emotional security) (NSW, 2018). The most general definition of security is provided by the Dictionary of Social Sciences issued by UNESCO in which according to Daniel Lerner, in the most literal sense, security is virtually identical with certainty (safety) and it means no physical threat (or danger) or full protection against it (Gould & Kolb, 1964).

Often, in various studies in the field of social sciences, security is presented as the ability to survive, independence, identity or certainty of development. In security analyses, the occurrence of two negative phenomena, that are challenge and threat, is considered. Challenges are understood as the emergence of new situations in which there are urgent needs requiring the formulation of responses and taking appropriate measures to ensure a certain state of security. They can turn into threats, the real dangers to the security. Threats can be a reflection of the real state of affairs or exaggerated ideas. They may refer to the assessment of a certain state at a specific historical moment (current threat) or refer to an extrapolation of anticipated developments and accompanying adverse, unwanted changes (potential threats) (Rotfeld, 1990). According

to Swiss scholar Daniel Frei, the state of security only occurs when there is no real threat (objective factor) and no sense of threat (subjective factor)(Jemiolo & Dawidczyk, 2008).

According to Morton Berkowitz, national security can be the most suitably defined as its ability to protect its internal values against external threats. Ensuring acceptable level of national security is one of the main functions of government and each country has its own national security (management) system and national security strategy (Jokubauskas, 2017; Korycki, 2017; Pluta, 2017; Grosset & Anszczak, 2015). The proper functioning of national security system including law enforcement services, training and research institutes, rescues services responsible for security and (local) government bodies involved in such activities, depends to a large extent on their interdependency and their proper exchange of information (Maciejczyk, 2017; Grosset & Anszczak, 2015). National security remains closely related to international security, which can be considered both at the regional and global level. United Nations experts in the study on the concept of security have defined international security as a state in which nations believe that they are not threatened by military attack, pressure or economic compulsion (sanction), and are therefore capable of freedom of development and progress. They further argue that international security is the result and the sum of security of all countries, the members of the international community. Accordingly, international security cannot be provided without a full international cooperation between countries and involvement of international organizations and individual citizens (Avdeev et al, 2017).

There is no doubt, therefore, that security is the supreme need of people and social groups and at the same time the most important goal (Stanczyk, 1996). It aims to satisfy the most important needs of survival, stability, sustainability and predictability of development, well-being and finally human happiness. Multan claims that security can be defined not only as a specific goal, but also as a succession. This means that we are not aware of what it is until we are threatened by its loss (Multan, 1991). It is assumed that national security consists of relations and links between all of its constituent elements (Klimkiewicz, 1980). A common feature of most security definitions is to describe it as a process. Security is not a given state of affairs but a continuous social process in which operating entities try to improve the mechanisms that ensure their sense of security. All components of this process, more or less measurable, having the character of both dependent and independent variables, are subject to numerous changes conditioned by the internal situation of a nation, its regional and international development (Jemiolo, 2016b; Kukulka, 1982).

Globalization shapes processes that take place in all spheres of human activity, including economy and security. Economy and security are areas of basic importance for human functioning in the contemporary world, mutually penetrating and dependent on each other. Security and the idea of partnership for peace are one of many aspects and it is treated as a guarantor of sustainable competitiveness of enterprises and sustainable development of economies (Makštutis, 2012; Krysinski, 2016; Dukaczewski, 2015). Globalization is not a new phenomenon, but it has gained significance only thanks to the development of technology, which enabled the exchange of information in real time and the movement of people and goods globally in a short time. It means an extensive network of economic and informational connections linking different parts of the world (Brown et al, 2000; Tien, 2017a; Tien, 2017b). Globalization is inextricably linked to the development of humanity. In pursuit of development, faster communication, better technologies, man has managed to minimize the differences between societies of different countries, at the same time created common ground for mutual cultural exchange. The globalization process cannot be reversed, we are surrounded by it and we live with it. Although the globalization process has been going on for several decades, it has been particularly intense in recent years (Tien, 2019; Tien & Minh, 2019; Tien & Anh, 2019c). Governmental institutions that are responsible for ensuring security should be able to limit the negative effects of globalization on the social and economic spheres. It is necessary to take action to ensure social and economic security not only at the national level, but also at international and supranational level. Governments conclude agreements on economic cooperation, join military and economic alliances. It is in these agreements and alliances that clauses on mutual cooperation in the field of security are included. Because globalization is a transnational phenomenon, security activities also have transnational features. Globalization means a process of growing interconnectedness between societies leading to events in one part of the world increasingly affecting people and societies in remote locations (Baylis & Smith, 2008; Tien & Anh, 2019a). Globalization is multidimensional and asymmetrical. Multidimensionality consists in including various spheres of human activity in these processes: political, economic, social, technological, cultural, ecology and security issues which are closely related to each other and potentially affect each other (Guliyeva et al, 2018). Asymmetry depends on a different rate of change in individual fields and on the emergence of opposite benefits and phenomena, e.g. qualified immigrants accelerate the development of the host country, at the same time weaken the development of the country of origin, environmentally burdensome production releases the country of origin from it, but accelerates the degradation of the country to which it has been moved; taxes of transnational enterprises are paid in the home country (Telep & Telep, 2017a).

The most important economic benefits for many countries due to globalization include the inflow of foreign capital (FDI), access to information, modern technologies, expanding the market offer of products, increasing the pressure for modernization and increasing the efficiency of economic activity, return on investment, creating new jobs, boosting exports, participation in the international division of labour, economic growth, raising the standard of living, civilization advancement. Globalization forces many companies to become more competitive and can be a way to develop poorly developed countries as it can fuel social, political and economic changes (Mical, 2008; Tien, 2019). In the socio-cultural sphere, the main benefits of globalization processes are: increasing access to diversified cultural offer, growing intercultural exchange, openness to cultural diversity, awareness of its sensitivity, blurring the boundaries between what is national and what is foreign, creating similar cultural products in different societies, strengthening its both orientation towards standardization and orientation towards customization (Czaja, 2004; Tien, 2019a). At the same time, these processes have a positive effect on intercultural communication, the opportunity to get to know each other better and understand different customs. Positive consequences of globalization in the political sphere are (Tien et al, 2019b; Tien et al, 2019c): dissemination of democratic institutions and procedures, gradual universalization of human rights, unification of international collaboration, cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes, growing formalization and institutionalization of international relations, striving for regional and international integration, strengthening and empowering communities, greater access to various sources of information, greater opportunities to publicize their own problems and interests, bigger influence on power, self-organization thanks to modern means of communication and the dispersal of power (Kaczmarek, 2014).

As stated above, ensuring security is one of main functions of government and in that area one has to deal with a wide range of threats and challenges constituting real concerns for the whole society, especially for the social groups and individuals (Jokubauskas, 2017; Ruža et al, 2016). Security issues researched in literature and practices are presented as multidimensional problems of multiple levels (Štiglic, 2017; Kabát et al, 2017). Security issues should not be confined to economic, social, energy and environmental aspects and their interaction (Lankauskienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). Additionally, security research is generally presented as a problem of two levels. First level is focused on individuals and social groups while the second level deals with the security issues in a national level. Research on both levels, however, is very often concentrated on the life or health threat in direct connection with conventional war conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, political or social persecution and natural disasters. Nevertheless, such understanding security does not comply with the present reality. There exists a wide range of scientific studies proving that the present understanding of security consists of several dimensions which might not be directly linked to actual traditional war activities. The human security in a broad sense could be jeopardized also by unfair economic, trade and social practices or abuse of political power by governmental bodies, corruption scandals in national economies, and discrimination of minorities or ethnic groups, drugs trafficking and black markets (Kabát et al, 2017). In last few decades, the understanding of security has been changing. New areas emerged which may influence security facets were not urgent earlier. Now those facets can endanger individual persons or even nations. Breaches of cyber security, separatist attacks or intense cyber wars are becoming more usual than conventional wars in physical space. Violations of cyber security may cause great damage, ruin businesses or even temporarily paralyze full-fledged functioning of single countries or regions (Štitalis et al, 2016). Table 1 presents the most important issues of security that could impact all of us, enterprises and organizations, government and society, groups and individual citizens, regardless of the nationality. These security issues well researched in the literature of military science and divided clearly into two main categories (unconventional and conventional) at international and regional level (i.e. for ASEAN bloc as a whole) (table 1) could be, for the needs of national security analysis, adopted (regrouped) into other categories (external and internal) (table 2) at the national level (i.e. for Vietnam's economy, society and politics) (Tien & Dung, 2019; Tien & Anh, 2019b). External security issues, in contrary to internal ones, mean that they are out of the reach and out of the full control of government of single country. Thus, cross-regional cooperation and coordination is needed and intergovernmental mechanisms should be formed to find measures to cope with them. In this study, we are focusing on political instability as one of internal issues of security in Vietnam's politics, over which Vietnamese government and Party have full control and their choice, both at the level of society (and individual) and the level of government and Party, despite of its ambiguity, is independent and far from influence of external forces. However, in this section we are presenting and describing concisely all security issues categorized as conventional and unconventional, external and internal in order to have full panorama and understanding on the nature and specific of security issues at different level of analysis before delving deeply into one very specific issue of internal security: political instability.

Table 1. Security issues and concerns - framework for global & regional security analysis

| Conventional security issues | Unconventional security issues |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Asymmetry of interests (of developed and developing countries) | The rise of crypto-currency |
| Illegal migration | Cyber-threats: -Information warfare |
| Global terrorism, extremism and Nationalism | Cyber-threats: -Cyber-terrorism |
| National defense spending | Cyber-threats: -Cyber-crime |
| Regional conflicts and territorial disputes | Cyber-threats: -Cyber-espionage |
| Trade and currency warfare (protectionism) | |
| Energy and environmental concerns | |

Source: Author’s literature synthesis

Table 2. Security issues and concerns - framework for national security analysis

| External security issues | Internal security issues |
|---|--|
| Climate change and natural disaster | Internal asymmetry of social interests |
| Energy and natural resources disputes | Political instability |
| Territorial (land, sea water and air space) disputes | Corruption scandals |
| Sustainable economic growth and global trade warfare consequences (protectionism) | |

Source: Author’s proposal

Asymmetry of interest

Currently, the geopolitics presupposes that majority of novel technologies are devised and designed in developed countries with their subsequent transfer to developing countries for the benefit of developed countries first (Guliyeva et al, 2018). In other dimensions of asymmetry of interest, it depends on a different rate of change in individual fields and on the emergence of opposite benefits and phenomena, e.g. qualified immigrants accelerate the development of the host country (case of USA) at the same time weaken the development of the country of origin; in international investment the environmentally burdensome production releases the country of origin from it, but accelerates the degradation of the country to which it has been moved; the phenomenon of price transferring due to the fact that the income taxes of transnational enterprises are paid in home country, not where business and production activities are taking place (Telep & Telep, 2017a).

Illegal migration

Illegal migration towards developed countries in the world such as USA and Europe, regardless of the reason and purpose, is not a recent phenomenon (Jemiolo, 2016a). It has been lasting, with diverse intensity, for centuries, even its main tracks and destinations remained almost the same. There are routes that are crowded with massive illegal migrants and due to border tightening of local authorities become empty a few months later. The adaptability of migratory routes, detecting, tracking and detailing them are a significant challenge and the analysis and appropriate use of information on migratory routes are essential for this purpose (Besenyő, 2016).

Global terrorism, extremism and nationalism

The connection between illegal migration and terrorism on a global scale is in the focal point of security dilemmas since the beginning of the flow of illegal migration and since the main terrorist attacks occurring across developed world in particular. The basic question is whether the terrorist organizations are able and will embed terrorists among illegal migrants (Kis-benedek, 2016). The tendency of steady growth of relative number national crimes, crimes of terrorist nature and strengthening extremist orientation is constantly noted across the world (Avdeev et al, 2017; Kaukas, 2013; Teivāns-Treinovskis & Jefimovs 2012; Malkiewicz, 2014). Increasing terrorist acts have mobilized democratic nations to counteract this phenomenon at many levels. Essential elements of cross-border cooperation should be anti-terrorist operations, crisis management and military cooperation (Telep & Telep, 2017b). The ground of terrorism embraces diverse factors that affect its development: demography, poverty, social stratification, political systems, historic perspective or religious situation (Telep & Telep, 2016; Rytel & Rytel, 2016).

National defense spending

To stabilize national defence spending is one of the decisive prerequisites of a long-term maintenance and development of national defence capabilities and security (Holcner & Olejníček, 2017). Facing global and regional conflicts and tensions posing threats to the national security, all countries in the world,

especially the so far biggest spenders, are increasing military spending on arm procurements (Bem, 2015a&b). That leads to the armament race and the war crater policy among traditional and newly emerged military powerhouses, endangering world peace and security.

Regional conflict and territorial disputes

The intensification of conflicts and territorial disputes, the rising importance of regional powers is interesting for diverse scientists, including political and military analysts, due to the changing national values in a global world and due to the power separation between key players in the international stage (Ciosek & Orłowska, 2016). Regional military powerhouses become more assertive nations to claim disputed territories (Norkevičius, 2014). To solve regional territorial disputes and conflicts soft security instruments such as multilateral bodies and institutions or international practices are needed which rely mainly on sharing, congruence and development of values of initiators and participants of security governance (Stanczyk, 2011). A combination of soft security instruments with normative hard means (economic sanctions) is seen as a possibility to gradually reduce regional tension and lead to sustainable security and development (Čepėnaitė & Kavaliūnaitė, 2013).

Trade and currency warfare

In globalizing and integrating economically world, free trade and exchange of goods and services are the most important values for international business community. To ensure the global sustainable development and economic growth, all countries should put an end to protectionism. However, in contemporary world, protectionism is increasingly a rising trend towards putting national economic interests first and above the global interests, leading to dangerous trade war and currency manipulation, laying ground for conflicts of interest between global economic powers, between them and the smaller countries (Tien et al, 2019a; Tien & Anh, 2019c).

Energy and environmental concerns

Energy shortage and environmental issues are the most concerns of enterprises operating in global business environment as they impact the living and business condition of the current generation and cause great consequence for the future generation of mankind (Vasiliūnaitė, 2014). Due to the shortage and depletion of conventional sources of energy such as coal, oil and gas, to guarantee long-term energy and environmental security the world tends towards sustainable source of energy such as electricity generated by ocean tides, solar and wind power to protect the environment and planet (Tien et al, 2019d).

Cryptocurrency

The rise of technology based crypto-currencies is envisaged as the substitute of the U.S. dollar which has been the world most dominating currency for the last several decades (Guliyeva, 2018). The risks of crypto-currencies functioning are related with their extreme volatility, fragility, still low level of acceptability and their legal background. Despite the improved efficiency of usage these risks are the reasons to put them far from mainstream use in international transactions as secured and trustworthy instruments of payment (Tien, 2018).

Information warfare, cyber-terrorism, cyber-crime, cyber-espionage

With changing global security situation shifting towards Internet cyberspace, the increase in external threats and the emergence of new ones such as: cyber-attacks, non-conventional warfare models, etc., countries in the world must feel concerned regarding consolidation of their own security (Novikovas et al, 2017). Violations of cyber security may cause greater damage, ruin businesses or even temporarily paralyze full-fledged functioning of individual countries or regions (Štītīlis et al, 2016). Given the global nature of cyber threats, assurance of a cyber-security policy is very important at national and international level. Cyber-threats follow primarily the global links in a cyberspace in terms of critical infrastructure of the state and intergovernmental objects in the fast evolving international security environment (Stanczyk, 2011; Białoskorski, 2012).

3. Methodology of Research

The security science is seen as much broader than military science as it includes also non-military issues of the international, regional, supranational, national security and individual safety. Security science is an independent and original research discipline that strives to obtain a comprehensive, coherent panorama (multi-aspect, multi-dimensional, multi-perspective) of the reality from point of view of satisfying individual and collective need for security. The development of methodology for research in security science is just both separate and, as well, being at the intersection of other well rounded sciences, such as political science, psychology or sociology. Security science in the classification of sciences is a scientific discipline that belongs to the field of social science. Moreover, due to the specific objects, subjects and methods of research, and also due to the type of research statements (hypotheses) formulated and practical directives, security science is considered as an interdisciplinary science. We are assuming a fairly obvious statement that scientific methods appropriate for security science are, amongst those very popular in the social science,

methods of empirical research and comparative analysis. These methods need a verification of research hypotheses or require searching for answers to the research questions formulated by scholars (Kuc, 2015).

As a result, many scientific papers are empirically investigating security issues and concerns, typical for the economic and military powerhouses in the world. Those security issues are divided into two aforementioned groups: conventional and unconventional. In contemporary world, we are observing the rise in importance of unconventional security issues, their scope and range need to be paid more attention. Nonetheless, it doesn't mean that the conventional security issues are decreasing in their importance and become less influential. For diminutive countries that are less influential and less paid attention by the world community, at least at the moment, such as Vietnam and many of the other ASEAN states, the impact and the significance of unconventional security issues are less obvious and the division of security issues into such category might be unjustified. In case of those countries, the division of security issues into internal and external ones seems to be convincing and as such we are observing the rise in importance of internal security issues, their frequency and intensity rather than the external security issues originating from outside as a result of a political game of superpowers both in the region and across the globe. Having that in mind, in this present article we relate to the Vietnam's unique historical and geo-political context in order to draw comprehensive implications and propose some viable solutions for ensuring security of the people, social security and political existence (Dana and Dana, 2003; Dana, 2010; Dana, 1994). We are carrying out extensive comparative study between advantages and disadvantages of ambiguous, ambidextrous choice of Vietnam in its national security strategy, concerning the two following critical aspects:

- 1) National identity – geopolitical and existential security;
- 2) Socio-macroeconomic security.

The result of carried out comparative study is served:

- 1) To find out an answer to the interesting question introduced in the title of this article: “Pro-China or Pro-USA? – choices for Vietnam in its national security strategy”;
- 2) To propose some solutions to keep strategic balance between the two opposing political thoughts in Vietnam's politics.

4. Overview of Vietnam's National Security Strategy

National security is the need to maintain the existence of a nation or, more specifically, a regime at a certain period of time through the use of economic power, foreign diplomacy, and deployment of military and political power within the country. National security is also the stability and sustainable development of the social system within which emphasizes independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and other important interests of a nation (NSSO, 2019). National security refers to the well-being of a country, without any disturbance within, without being disturbed, harassed, or threatened by other nations (NSW, 2018).

For more than 20 years of renewal, the Party and State have been transformed both in their minds, perceptions and in the practice of leadership and have directed the entire people to successfully fulfil the task of protecting the national security, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity of the country. Under the leadership of the Party, Vietnam has promoted economic development, maintained political security, social order and safety; consolidated people's confidence in the cause of reforms; created a favourable international environment and broadened external relations; strengthened the country's position in the world (Truong, 2011).

On the basis of assessing the world situation, the region and the country, the Party has set out right policies and solutions, mobilizing all internal possible resources to achieve socio-economic and political goals. At the same time, the Party took advantage of the sympathy and support of friends and partners in the world to firmly defend national security against any changes in the political and security situation in the world. The Party and State have also upheld the view of promoting the national security through unification of the great national unity bloc, the whole political system and strived to build people's armed force, strong both politically and ideologically and streamlined towards score elite and step by step modernization to effectively protect national security. It is necessary to attach the national defence tasks to the national security tasks, together with the economic strength and external relations to create a comprehensive defence position of the country to struggle against all the conspiracies, such as the “peaceful evolution” and the rebellion of hostile forces. At the same time, the Party and State have timely prevented, quelled the disturbances, political riots, and invalidated all the activities of domestic and foreign reactionary forces using religious beliefs, ethnical background, national and human rights issues to destabilize internal situation; did not allow external and hostile forces to intervene and interfere in domestic issues and functioning of a country; prevented the activities of political opportunists desiring to form opposition political organizations in any form. All of that are to ensure national security in economic, political, cultural, social, defence, security and foreign affairs domains (Truong, 2011).

The protection of national security in context of international economic integration when Vietnam is a member of the WTO stands in front of new requirements. Besides many opportunities and advantages, many

risks and challenges also arise. For Vietnam, the biggest challenge remains the issue of international competition as the competitiveness of the economy and domestic enterprises at present remains significantly low. Thus, Vietnam will lose out in the “game”, easily become backward technology consumption market and this has a bad impact on the cause of strengthening national defence and guaranteeing national security (Truong, 2011).

In socio-cultural terms, it is the introduction of many pragmatic, morally unhealthy lifestyle and culture into the country which, without good people’s education and effective preventive measures, will ruin traditional values and cultural identity. The downside of globalization and economic integration is also the emergence and deepening of social issues, such as unemployment, widening the gap between rich and poor, international smuggling and cross-border trafficking, corruption, transnational crime, environmental degradation and industrial diseases (Truong, 2011).

On the front of defence and security, it is the conflict between the economic interests and the requirements of enhancing national security and defence potential, the exploitation of openness, cooperation and investment to harm the national security and national defence capability through building up opposition forces, conducting illegal propaganda, distorting the Party’s regime and the State. More dangerously, hostile forces will take advantage of the so-called protection of “democracy”, “human rights”, “religious cause” to bribe, incite ethnic minorities, causing general insecurity, political instability and social disorder, creating pretext to violently overthrow current political system combined with armed intervention, if needed (Truong, 2011).

The risks and challenges to security in the above mentioned political, economic, cultural, social, military and defence fields, if not forecasted, detected and stopped in time, not only will have bad impacts on the national socio-economic security, but could cause unpredictable impact on national existential security and on the cause of building and defending the Fatherland of the Vietnamese people.

5. Pro-USA Strategy–Main Gains and Losses

5.1. Overview of Vietnam-US relationship

After twenty years of break since the end of the war in 1975, the US President Bill Clinton formally normalized diplomatic relations with Vietnam on 11 July 1995 and upgraded the liaison office to the embassy located in Hanoi. Vietnam has its embassy in Washington D.C., one consulate general in San Francisco, California, and one in New York City. The US also has a consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City and plans to open one more in Da Nang City (USVW, 2018).

Diplomatic relations between the US and Vietnam have become more profound and diverse in the years of political normalization. The two countries have frequently expanded their political exchanges, dialogue on human rights and regional security. The two countries signed the Bilateral Trade Agreement in July 2000, which entered into force in December 2001. In November 2007, the US approved the Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status for Vietnam (USVRW, 2018). From 25 to 27 July 2013, President Truong Tan Sang paid an official visit to the US at the invitation of President Obama. During the visit, the two leaders agreed to upgrade Vietnam-US relations to a level of comprehensive partnership. From 7 to 11 July, 2015, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong visited the US at the invitation of President Barack Obama on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of US-Vietnam diplomatic relations and 40 year since the end of Vietnam War. This is also the first official trip to Washington by General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam. On 23 May 2016, President Barack Obama officially lifted the ban on the sale of mass destruction weapons to Vietnam in talks with Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang. This opened a good and warm relationship between the two former enemies. On 29-31 May 2017, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc led Vietnamese delegation to visit US at the invitation of President Donald Trump. On 11-12 November 2017, the US President Donald Trump had a state level visit to Vietnam. This is the first US president to visit Vietnam in the first year of his office term.

5.2. Benefits of Vietnam due to relationship with the US

Military issues

Both countries have mutual visits of the state military delegations. The US has assisted Vietnam in defence upgrades. In 2013, the US lifted a ban on the export of non-lethal weapons to Vietnam. By 2016, the US officially lifted the ban on lethal weapons export to Vietnam. The US also has transferred to Vietnam a large USCGC Morgenthau (WHEC 722) coastguard ship which has been withdrawn from US Coast Guard Force (USVRW, 2018).

South China Sea and sovereignty

Ambassador David Shear said the US has a national interest in peace and stability in the South China Sea as well as in maritime security and freedom of navigation. The US is concerned about the threat of using forces in the region and the US actively support diplomatic process between the countries directly involved in the disputes (Shear, 2011). Secretary of State Hillary Clinton claims that the US has its national

interest in the South China Sea and that China's sovereignty claims in the South China Sea exceed that of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (SCS, 2018). These statements have made China dissatisfied and Chinese media have published many articles aiming at criticizing American intervention in South China Sea. In case of China setting the Hai Yang 981 oil rig in South China Sea in May 2014, the US Congress has issued a resolution condemning China (Tri, 2014).

Humanitarian assistance and the healing of war consequences

Through non-governmental organizations, the US often provides humanitarian assistance to Vietnam in the field of health and education. The US and Vietnam have also negotiated to overcome and heal the consequences of the Vietnam War. Vietnam actively helps to find missing American servicemen. Vietnam continues to support victims of the Agent Orange incident to sue US' chemical companies to compensate for the damage. The US government has denied responsibility to these victims and said the link between dioxin-related disabilities and Agent Orange has not yet been scientifically substantiated. However, in May 2007, the US Congress allocated a budget of \$ 3 million to remedy the effects of Agent Orange and the environment at some of the hottest spots, and in 2009 the budget increased to \$ 6 million (Thai, 2017; USV, 2018).

Financial and technological assistance

The US also has offered many economic aids and technology transfers to Vietnam. In March 2015, the US Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City signed a non-refundable aid grant of nearly \$ 1 billion to Vietnam to carry out a feasibility study program for the 300MW wind power plant. Also within the framework of the 15-year US government assistance program, US Agency for International Development (USAID) will implement 75 projects in areas such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare and especially clean and renewable energy (Bao, 2015).

Trade

When bilateral trade agreement signed in 2001 entered into force, trade exchange between the two countries was enhanced, combined with large-scale US investment flows into Vietnam. In 2006, the US exported \$ 1.1 billion worth of goods to Vietnam and imported \$ 8.6 billion from Vietnam. The common interest between the two sides continues to be expanded through: increased exchange of delegations at all levels and the maintenance of dialogue mechanisms; promoting economic growth through enhanced trade and investment relations; deepening cooperation on education, science, technology, healthcare, national security and defence, foreign diplomacy, human rights, humanity and the settlement of war consequences (Thu, 2018).

The deepening of the relationship between Vietnam and US has contributed positively to the international community's efforts to maintain peace, stability, cooperation and respect for international law in the region, building a rule-based region, as well as coordinating efforts in coping with common global and regional challenges that include climate change, sustainable development, global health, acting against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the sale of wildlife. In that regard, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to abiding by the Charter of the United Nations, respect for international law and respect for the political institutions, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each country. The US and Vietnam simultaneously agree to promote and build the ASEAN community and cooperate with the international community to cope with global challenges. The two sides agreed in the coming time to actively cooperate to strengthen the comprehensive partnership between Vietnam and US (Ha, 2018).

Political - diplomatic relations

The two sides pledged to continue the exchange of delegations at all levels, especially high-level delegations, to enhance dialogue between the two state agencies. At the same time, the two sides intend to expand the high-level annual dialogue between the two Foreign Ministries to discuss measures to promote comprehensive partnership and other issues of mutual concern. The two sides agreed that strengthening the mutual trust is a key to building a solid, healthy and long-lasting friendship and cooperation.

Economic relations

The two countries are determined to promote economic cooperation, including trade, investment, science and technology, human resources training and response to climate change. Both sides agreed that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would be strategically and economically important, enhancing trade and investment between the two countries, boosting economic growth and creating jobs. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate the early adoption and implementation of this high-standard agreement, including commitments on investment, business support and development, intellectual property, textiles and clothing, service, labour and environment. During the office term of the President Barack Obama, the US was committed to assisting Vietnam to effectively implement and meet the high standards of the TPP Agreement through its technical assistance and capacity building programs. Both sides ensure comprehensive economic growth, creating opportunities for all people motivated by creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and sustainable economic development. The two sides also emphasized that development cooperation continues to be a

driving force of bilateral relations. They agreed to promote bilateral trade and investment, continue to promote market access for each country's industrial, marine and agricultural products. The US and Vietnam agree to cooperate in a comprehensive and coherent manner through the promotion of the bilateral Working Group related to Vietnam's wish to be recognized as a market economy. The two sides welcomed the completion of important economic arrangements such as: Vietjet Air to purchase 100 Boeing 737 MAX aircrafts and Pratt & Whitney engines, a memorandum of understanding on wind power cooperation between GE and Vietnam Ministry of Trade and Industry (VUS, 2018).

5.3. Disadvantages of Vietnam due to relationship with US

The first disadvantage is that Vietnam has not yet built a civilized society and institutions professional enough to be able to interact favourably with US companies. In Vietnam, the legal and institutional environment along with many macro regulations are not enough sophisticated and professional. The greatest manifestation of unprofessionalism is the State's too direct intervention in business life. This is what all US companies are not able to tolerate and have no experience to be with (Nguyen, 2016).

Second, Vietnam does not understand American politics. Vietnam always thinks that the US intervene in its all internal affairs, but Vietnam does not understand that the US government has even absolutely no substantial influence on political aesthetics and taste of American people. Sometimes, due to misconceptions, Vietnamese people misunderstand Americans and do the things they cannot support and tolerate. All the so far US presidents want Vietnam engaged in their political games. Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, all of them want to have Vietnam under their political influence. Because of that, they have had a half of century presence in the South of Vietnam. This development is a matter of fact and the fact that the US wants Vietnam to be a political card in its hand is no longer a formidable secret (Nguyen, 2016). The fatigue of Vietnam War makes a long period of time for which US politicians did not want to talk about Vietnam. They did not want to talk about Vietnam, as a girl who does not want to mention an indigo stain in her body, but they still care about Vietnam. But Vietnam does not understand US politics, so Vietnam does a lot of meaningless things to actively support US political life. That is, by relatively subjective actions and prejudices, Vietnam does not provide politically favourable support to the US so that the US could have supportive policies toward Vietnam in return. It is Vietnam's very important Achilles heel in building strong relationships with US and the Western world (Nguyen, 2016). The world is politically diverse. Vietnamese have the right to preserve their past political traditions. This is the natural right in political life. But while we preserve political traditions, we must foster the modern state of international life. It is said that the US does not respect Vietnamese culture and politics, but Vietnam also disrespects the cultural and political life of the US. Vietnam want to have good relations with US, so attention should be paid to the US' political and cultural customs and habits, as well as if the US wants to have good relations with Vietnam, certain contradictory cultural and political characteristics must be accepted (Nguyen, 2016).

Third, Vietnamese overall infrastructure is in a so underdeveloped state that it is almost impossible to perform professional operations, i.e. in the field of logistics and terms of human resource development. Moreover, there are bad information systems, inadequate risk control systems, for example in the financial and in the real estate market. That makes foreign investors fear and lose credibility in Vietnamese financial market and institutions. Many people think that international investment funds have not come to Vietnam but in reality they have actually come here for more than 20 years. They came here with a purpose to help local financial institutions become more professional. Pouring in the investment capital is important but more critical is building a solid and high standard infrastructure for this capital to work and generate profit. This is the most fundamental concern and the most sustainable way of development (Nguyen, 2016).

6. Pro-China Strategy – Main Gains and Losses

6.1. Overview of Vietnam-China relationship

The relationship between Vietnam and China is a hot topic in Vietnam's more than 4,000 years of history, no matter what era or political regime. The relation between two neighbouring countries having common land border and interest in South China Sea, with history of continual engagement in cultural and historical interaction, as well as involvement in multiple wars is extremely complex and sensitive. This relationship is simply expressed by words of both cooperation and confrontation (Hoang, 2014).

The history of Vietnam in the last two millennia cannot be accurately explained if it is not linked to political relations with China. From the end of the II century B.C. to the first half of the X century A.C. Vietnam suffered direct domination by China for thousand years until its independence. For one thousand years, until the French colonial rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, Vietnam had established a tributary relationship, maintaining a friendly political relationship while simultaneously adopting Chinese culture in the Chinese-style world order. This is a historic time when Vietnam was no longer a dependent district in Chinese empire. The history of Sino-Vietnamese relations during this period

was a history of conflicts, compromises and their institutionalization. Vietnam showed two-sided foreign policy. On the one hand, Vietnam recognizes China's world order, sends its diplomatic missions to China for vassalage and ordains and, on the other hand, maintains its own independence (Tran, 2012).

Originating from the geographic location and the historical and cultural correlations of the two countries, it can be said that the economic relation between Vietnam and China is an indispensable part of ongoing then overall relationship, important for China and more important for Vietnam. But the economic relationship between the two countries has only begun to develop strongly in the early XXI century. Earlier, in the period from the beginning of X century to the end of XX century the economic relation between Vietnam and China has been formed unclearly and not really developed. In particular, then Vietnam has applied the principle of loosening policy, free trade and exchange of goods. At the same time, with the policy of boosting export to meet the demand of import essential goods for production and war preparation, Vietnam has also signed many import and export contracts with China. It can be seen that the import and export activities during this period mainly focused on the task of exchanging goods and receiving aid from China. But the war was long-lasting, so the economy of the two countries is unstable and not really in good shape, this has made the economic relationship between Vietnam and China not strong as expected (Tuyen, 2018).

Since the beginning of the XXI century, peace has been restored after the country is united, and after many attempts to stabilize the economy and politics, relations between the two countries began to flourish. Vietnam is increasingly in deep relationship with China in almost all fields, particularly in economics and politics. It can be said that the relationship between the two countries has grown stronger and stronger and is becoming an important part of the foreign policy of both countries.

The relationship between Vietnam and China in 2017 is marked by high-level diplomatic ties with regular visits of high-level leaders of two Parties and two countries. 2017 is the first year when both General Secretary of the two Parties, President of the two countries paid mutual visits. From the beginning of 2017, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong made a formal visit to China. In May 2017, President Tran Dai Quang paid a state level visit to China and attended the international OBOR forum (One Belt, One Road). In November 2017, General Secretary and President of China Xi Jin Ping paid a state level visit to Vietnam and attended the APEC Summit in Da Nang City. At the same time, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc held talks with China's Prime Minister Li Ke Qiang in Manila (11/2017) and in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (1/2018) (Dang, 2018).

Chinese Communist Party's General Secretary and President Xi Jin Ping visited Vietnam shortly after the 19th Communist Party Congress showed that the Party, State of China, General Secretary, President Xi Jin Ping attach great importance to Vietnam and the relationship between Vietnam and China in China's overall foreign policy. This is also the result of the Vietnam's foreign policy of independence, sovereignty and peace, especially in implementing good relations with major countries, important partners and neighbouring countries. The visit has been well prepared by the two sides, taking into account the overall situation of the Vietnam-China relationship and the success of the bilateral relations. The reception was very respectful and friendly, in line with the characteristics of the traditional relationship and similarity of Vietnamese-Chinese culture, both in terms of the welcome of the two countries and the people the new developments of the relationship between China and Vietnam. The deepest point is that at all the meetings during the visits the leaders of the two sides, sincere but straightforward, open exchanges have taken place, referring to all the issues important for in the two Parties and two countries (Dang, 2018).

6.2. Benefits of Vietnam due to relationship with China

Political issues

Since the normalization of relations in 1991, in general, relations between Vietnam and China have rapidly recovered. In 2008, the two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership. High-level contacts are maintained in various forms, contributing to increasing political trust, promoting cooperation and creating conditions for the two sides to gradually settle disputes and differences. The two countries have signed many agreements and cooperation documents, laying the legal basis for long-term cooperation. Cooperation between the two parties was also strengthened. The two sides maintained the exchange of delegations and established mechanisms for cooperation between Party committees; held 10 seminars on political theory between the two Parties. The two sides set up the Steering Committee for Bilateral Cooperation (2006) to coordinate the overall aspects of mutual cooperation. Relations between important fields such as diplomacy, security and defence have also been strengthened. The two sides continue to effectively implement cooperation agreements between the two Foreign Ministries (2002), two Ministries of Public Security (2003) and two Ministries of Defence (2003) (Nguyen, 2015). Inter-provincial relations are strengthened in a number of ways, including the Joint Working Committee between several Northern provinces of Vietnam and Guangxi province (China), the Joint Working Group between several Northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam and Yunnan province (China); the meeting to review the situation of

cooperation between ministries, branches and localities of Vietnam with Guangdong province (China), the Economic Corridor Cooperation meeting in 4 main Northern provinces of Vietnam and Kunming province (China) (CVR, 2018). Exchanges between the people and the younger generation of the two countries are carried out regularly. The Vietnam-China Youth Festival was held twice in Guangxi (2010, 2013); the Vietnam-China People's Friendship Association took place twice (2010, 2013), the Vietnam-China People's Forum took place 6 times, the Vietnam-China Youth Friendship Meeting took place 14 times (CVR, 2018).

Economy, trade and investment

Since the normalization of relations, Vietnam-China trade has increased by more than 1,800 times, from only \$ 32 million in 1991 to nearly \$ 60 billion in 2014. Since 2004 China has been the largest trade partner of Vietnam. Bilateral trade turnover in 2014 reached \$ 58.78 billion, of which Vietnam exported \$ 14.91 billion and imported \$ 43.87 billion (respectively 17.16%, 12.70% and 18.76% increase over the same period of 2013) (CVR, 2018). In terms of investment, by the end of February 2015, China had 1109 projects in Vietnam with a total registered capital of \$ 7.99 billion, ranking 9 out of 101 countries and territories (CVR, 2018). In order to strengthen the major investment projects in infrastructure and cooperation in the field of banking and finance, especially cooperation in preventing the impact of the international monetary and financial crisis, in each country the two sides are promoting the establishment of a Working Group on Infrastructure Cooperation and Working Group on Monetary Cooperation (CVR, 2018).

Education, culture, sports and tourism

In terms of education, there are more than 13,500 overseas Vietnamese students studying in Chinese universities and over 4,000 Chinese students studying in Vietnam (CVR, 2018). In terms of culture and sports, the two sides were actively implementing the Vietnam-China Cultural Agreement during the 2013-2015 period in order to promote the establishment of the national cultural centre in other country, strengthen cooperation in the fields of cultural and human resources exchange. Each year, the two sides exchanged many artistic performances, cultural and sport events, contributing to strengthening the friendship between people of two countries. The two sides also effectively implemented the Agreement on Cooperation in Physical Training and Sports where China helps Vietnam in training talented athletes. In terms of tourism and travel, over the years, Chinese tourists have been leading the international tourist market to Vietnam with 1.95 million arrivals in 2014, while about one million Vietnamese visitors travelled to China this time (CVR, 2018).

Border and territorial disputes

After the normalization of relations, the two sides signed the Agreement on Basic Principles for Resolving Territorial Border Issues (1993) and conducted negotiations on three issues: land border, demarcation Gulf of Tonkin and South China Sea issues. To date, two of the three issues left by history have been resolved.

On the land border, after signing the land border agreement (1999), on 31 December 2008, the two sides completed the landmarks demarcation process along the shared land border. This is a historic event in the relations between Vietnam and China when the first time the two countries have a complete land border, clearly expressed in legal documents, facilitating the exchange of friendship and development of economic and trade cooperation. In July 2010, the documents on Vietnam - China border management of land is the Protocol on demarcation of landmarks, the Agreement on border management regulations and the border gate agreement and regulations on management of the main border start to take effect. Up to now, the two sides are negotiating to sign a free-of-charge fishing vessel agreement at many river mouths and a cooperation agreement on the protection and exploitation of waterfall tourism resources (CVR, 2018).

On the Tonkin Gulf, the two sides signed the Tonkin Gulf Declaration (2000), the Tonkin Gulf Fisheries Cooperation Agreement (2000) and the Tonkin Gulf Fisheries Cooperation Agreement (2004). Up to now, these documents have been implemented relatively smoothly. The management of fishing activity and protection of resources gradually goes into order, minimizing conflicts that may arise. The two sides also carried out well joint investigations of fishery resources in the Common Fishery Zone and joint patrols between the two navies in the Tonkin Gulf (CVR, 2018).

On the issue of the South China Sea, the two sides signed the Agreement on Fundamental Principles for Addressing the Sea-China Issue (2011) as the basis for solving the South China Sea disputes. Accordingly, the two sides agreed to peacefully settle the South China Sea issue on the basis of international law, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 and the spirit of the DOC. On the basis of this agreement, the two sides set up a specialized level negotiation mechanism in the area outside the Gulf of Tonkin and a specialist level negotiation mechanism for cooperation in less sensitive areas. Up to now, after negotiation rounds, the two sides have achieved some results including the consensus of establishing a joint technical survey team for development cooperation in the area outside the Gulf of Tonkin. The selected 03 projects in the less sensitive field of marine research and pilot implementation includes: Project on Cooperation in Exchange and Research on Management of Marine Environment and Islands in the Tonkin

Gulf between Vietnam and China; Project for Comparative Studies of Holocene Sediments in the Red River Delta and the Chang Jiang River Delta; Vietnam-China Joint Project on Marine and Coastal Search and Rescue (CVR, 2018). In the process of finding a long-term and fundamental solution that both sides can accept, the two sides have set up and put into operation the Working Group on Maritime Cooperation for Development within the framework of the government level delegation on Vietnam-China border (2013) to study and discuss solutions that are transitory and do not affect the positions and policies of each party, including the issues of mutual cooperation and development. In the multilateral framework, ASEAN (including Vietnam) and China signed the Declaration on the Conduct of parties in the South China Sea (DOC), the DOC guidelines and the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on the occasion of 10th anniversary of the DOC. ASEAN is ready and is actively promoting negotiations with China on the development of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) (CVR, 2018).

6.3. Disadvantages of Vietnam due to relationship with China

At present, the biggest obstacle in the Vietnam-China relationship is related to the issues in the South China Sea. China's declaration of U-shaped line, China's introduction of the oil rig Hai Yang981 deep into the exclusive economic zone, continental shelf of Vietnam, continues to affirm its presence in the South China Sea to the realization of the U-shaped line, the construction of artificial islands, not only makes the situation in the South China Sea seriously tense, but also cause international anxiety and concerns.

In the economic sphere, the trade deficit is on the rise, posing alarming challenge for Vietnam. Vietnam's trade deficit, mainly due to the import of auxiliary materials, components and machinery from China, has increased sharply to \$ 4.4 billion in 2006; \$ 11.5 billion in 2009; \$ 12.7 billion in 2011; \$ 16.4 billion in 2012; and \$ 23.7 billion in 2013. Vietnam's trade deficit with China in the first seven months of 2015 increased \$ 4.5 billion over the same period in 2014. Trade deficit was estimated at \$ 2.16 billion per month (CVR, 2018). The trade deficit with China plus together with quality unchecked imported items into Vietnam from China will have negative effects on the Vietnamese economy, and thus long-term impact on the bilateral economic relationship between Vietnam and China.

7. In a Search for a Balance between Pro-USA Strategy and Pro-China Strategy

Vietnam understands that the US and China are mutually dependent partners. This partnership is the most important and the most complex in the world. In the past, Vietnam has suffered a lot from these two countries, and now they can significantly add troubles to the life of Vietnamese people. However, Vietnam is quite an experienced country, and its leadership is aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of cooperation with both the US and China. Vietnam has made the most of the advantages of partnership and acted very carefully to avoid the unnecessary complexity and tension.

The strength of the pro-USA strategy is that it will solve the security problem of Vietnam when being in a close alliance with the US. But the great weakness of this strategy is that Vietnam will have, to some certain extent, limited freedom and room in the planning and implementation process of its national policy. This will be harmful when the US asks Vietnam to do what they practically want but the interests of the two countries do not coincide or even conflict with each other (Ngo, 2017).

In contrast, the strength of a pro-China strategy is likely to persuade the US to abandon its ambition to overthrow the communist regime in Vietnam because if Chinese intervention could persuade America not to intervene in North Korea, it will also work in case of Vietnam. Moreover, in a certain sense, it can be said that moving closer to China will help Vietnam relieve pressure in the South China Sea, at least in the short run. However, as well as the great pro-USA strategy, the great weakness of pro-China strategy is that Vietnam will also have limited room in planning and implementation of its national policy. This will be harmful for Vietnam when China asks Vietnam to conform to its national or nationalistic interest, but the interests of Vietnam and Vietnamese people are not always at the crossroad with those of China and Chinese people. That is while seeking a strategic balance between the two world economic and political powers with complicated and uncomfortable past experiences, first and foremost, Vietnam is primarily seeking to protect its own national interests.

8. Solutions to Retain Strategic Balance in Current Geopolitical Context of the Region

In front of the changing world and new developments in the region, with a strategic vision, the XII Vietnam National Congress of Communist Party put forward the forecast: "The multi-polar, multi-centred world is going to develop faster. The major countries as strategic regulators have to cooperate, compromise, compete, and strongly influence the world order and regions. In this context, competition between countries in the world and the regions for the own benefits and interest continues to evolve in a very complex way. Strategic competition adjustment between the US and China is and will change the world. This affects small and medium sized countries. Proper assessing the relationship and strategic competition between the two

superpowers is very important for small countries, including Vietnam, to minimize the risk, strengthen the own benefits and national interests in the region and all over the world (Bui, 2018).

Firstly, balancing the benefits of relations with major countries is a principle, one of Vietnam's strategic directions and guidelines, but Vietnam also needs to properly assess the position and role of each of them in different periods, stages of development to find out optimal solutions. Additionally, it is necessary to create a lot of cooperation, intertwine and tie the benefits with these great powers to ensure national interests and at the same time avoid becoming a "puppet" for major countries to bargain with each other for their own benefits. On top of that, Vietnam should actively seek common interests to enlist the approval, support, friendly from these large countries.

Second, Vietnam should continue to focus on maintaining the current multilateral foreign policy, amongst others, actively promoting the integration process, building and strengthening the role of ASEAN. While ASEAN is a good mechanism for Vietnam to win diplomatic support from other countries and improve its position, it should be recognized that the way in which ASEAN works still can be improved to operate more smoothly and efficiently. In addition, in foreign policy, Vietnam should avoid falling into too much dependence on any other country for its national security and defence, as policies of countries fluctuate in time and space and it is very risky and unreasonable to bet on one partner. Therefore, the optimal path for Vietnam will still be to promote relations with the US and China and actively cooperate with all other potential partners inside and outside the region to protect the core national interests. To do this effectively, Vietnam should actively implement the international commitments that Vietnam has agreed to; strictly comply with international agreements that Vietnam participates; actively contribute to the building and making effective use of international rules and regulations; regularly take part in all activities of regional and international community; be a pioneer in proposing initiatives and cooperation mechanisms on the principle of mutual benefit; consolidate and enhance its role in the regional and international arena; actively contribute to the development for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in the world.

Third, Vietnam has a very important geo-political position in China-US strategic competition in the region, which should be studied, evaluated, accurately forecasted to propose adequate policy planning for government, State and Party. Vietnam and all other ASEAN members are at the centre, the fork of two big oceans: the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, so the new policy of US and China on Asia involves recognizing the importance of Vietnam and all other ASEAN members. Vietnam is facing many advantages and challenges. In terms of the perceived advantages, it is the ability of cooperation between the administration of President Trump and Vietnam in the spirit of cooperation for mutual benefits is very great. The prospect of cooperation in politics, economics, culture, society, security and defence with the US will continue to develop even Vietnam may be a focal point in the US foreign policy, especially in US policy towards South China Sea. In terms of challenges and difficulties, in the trade relations between Vietnam and US, Vietnam has experienced in recent years a trade surplus, exporting a lot to the US, so Vietnam must also prepare in advance for the possibility of the US to impose protectionism policy measures, placing many trade barriers on Vietnam goods and services to protect the interests of US consumers.

Fourth, Vietnam should continue to implement a consistent policy towards building a strategic partnership with key world players, especially in the economic field, respecting the political stability and cooperation on security for mutual and global benefit.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1. Theoretical contribution

First and foremost, the article gives full understanding of complex essence (military and non-military nature) and multiple definitions of national security in the context of the ongoing globalization process. National security could be defined by its specific goals, by using succession approach and be regarded as a process conditioned by global or national context, condition and situation.

Secondly, the article present a detailed overview of contemporary security issues, related concepts and notions (such as challenge, current threat and potential threat, real threat and sense of threat), their multidimensional (social, cultural, technological, economic, political, diplomatic and military character), multi-perspective (internal, external), multifaceted (conventional and unconventional) and multi-level (global, regional supranational, national, social groups, families and individuals) character. All of that are based on a sound and solid literature review of relevant, multiple sources of world class security related scientific journals.

Thirdly, when it comes to the research methodology on security issues, the article proposes to borrow from disciplines of social sciences. However, security science should preserve both its originality (to have own distinctive specifics and to be separated from other scientific disciplines) and multidisciplinary character (to be at the crossroad of well-rounded traditional political science, sociology, psychology, etc.)

Fourthly, in terms of framework of research on security issues, at the global and regional level of security analysis the article proposes their classification into conventional and unconventional issues, at the national level – external and internal issues, accordingly. The article provides justification for those classifications and highlights the critical importance of unconventional issues at the global level and, respectively, internal issues at the national level.

Finally, as globalization shapes processes that take place in all spheres of human activity, including economy and security, those are areas of basic importance for human functioning in the contemporary world, mutually penetrating and dependent on each other. The article attaches important role of national government in retaining global benefits and security for its citizens and enterprises, at the same time limiting all possible negative consequences. As a result, for the need of conducting comparative study between pro-USA and pro-China orientation, a comprehensive research scheme mentioned in the research methodology section (part 3) was adopted that embraces two parallel aspects of security issues: 1) humanitarian and socio-macroeconomic security; 2) national identity embracing geo-political and existential security. The first one is associated with general economic power and influence, trade and investment, bilateral relations in other fields while the second one is related with geo-political identity (“to be or not to be” in the region and in the world), geo-strategic position and general geo-military capability of each studied political orientation: pro-USA or pro-China.

9.2. Practical contribution and recommendation

The article addresses a very interesting topic of security science and security issues (strategic choices in national security policy and their mutual counterbalance) of Vietnam, a still quite diminutive country in regional and global political stage but rising in power in terms of economic growth and social development. The article’s conducted comparative study between pro-China and pro-USA political stances and options and national security strategies is based on strong relevant empirical materials to support arguments of many hypotheses formulated and statements declared. As a basis for further detailed analysis, at the start, the article gives an overview over Vietnam’s national security strategy. Before discussing comprehensively the advantages (also called main gains) and the disadvantages (also called main losses) of the mentioned contrastive and opposing strategies (options, stances, orientations) overviews of Vietnam-US and Vietnam-China relationship have been introduced as the background for further analysis. In this most important section of the article, we are screening and balancing the most important advantages and disadvantages in Vietnam-US and Vietnam-China relationships concerning a wide range of issues, from economic, trade, investment, social and humanitarian issues to the issues related with national identity and security, geo-political and geo-strategic position, diplomatic and military capability of both sides in the equation. In fact, we have two equations to consider: Vietnam-USA and Vietnam-China. As a result, we compare the net advantages in Vietnam-USA and Vietnam-China relationships and propose an optimal balancing strategy based on “something for something” exchanges and diversifications that should be the most sustainable for Vietnam in contemporary world. This analysis is carried out in the section 7. The next and also the final section, section 8, puts forward several solutions/propositions to retain sustainable strategic balance between those extreme orientations in Vietnam’s politics, society, community and also in the economy by point out the right standpoint to be placed somewhere between them that the Party, States, Government, the society and people should take to guarantee optimal but not necessary maximal multi-aspect and multidimensional security of the nation.

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