Vietnam’s Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-U.S. Competition: Providing Equity to the Major Powers While Pursuing Proactive International Integration

Carlyle A. Thayer Presentation to International Conference on Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics, and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy
The Dorothy Borg Research Project
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Introduction

• One-party state
• Mono-organizational socialism
• Đổ Mớ - Renovation and Opening Up
• Explosion of organizational activity
• NGOs, Community-based Organizations and “civil society”
• Political Civil Society
1. Foreign Policy Framework

1. Independence and Self-Reliance
2. Multilateralization and Diversification of External Relations
3. Struggle and Cooperation
4. Proactive International Integration
2. Domestic Factors

Sources of Political Legitimacy
- Patriotism and nationalism
- Legal-rational
- Performance

Elite Factionalism

New Domestic Actors
- Retired officials
- Political and religious activists, bloggers
3. Key Issues Driving Foreign Policy

- Responding to public opinion
- Democracy, human rights and religious freedom
  - Bloc 8406 and the APEC Summit 2006
- Environmental concerns over resource extraction – bauxite mining
- Territorial disputes in the South China Sea
  - HD 981 Crisis 2014 and violent anti-China riots
4. Providing Equity to the Major Powers

**Strategic Partnerships**

- Russia (2001)
- Japan (2006)
- India (2007)
- China (2008)
  - Comprehensive strategic cooperative partner
- United States (2013)
  - Comprehensive partnership
Providing Equity to the Major Powers

- Russia 2001
- USA 2013
- India 2006
- Viet Nam 2007
- China 2008
5. Proactive International Integration

- Membership in multilateral organizations
- “Proactive, active international integration”
  - 11\textsuperscript{th} National Party Congress (2011)
  - Politburo Resolution No 22 (April 2013)
- Trans Pacific Partnership
- ASEAN-centric multilateral associations
  - Strategic partnerships with ASEAN members
6. Implications for the United States

Convergence of Interests

- Strengthening ASEAN
- Maritime Security & Rule of Law – UNCLOS
- Nuclear non-proliferation
- Countering violent extremism
- Mitigating climate change
- Vietnam’s stability and development
Implications for the United States

But Not Congruent Interests

- Market economy status
- Democracy, human rights, religious freedom
  - Threat of peaceful evolution
- “Three no’s” defense policy
- Relations with Russia
- Access to Cam Ranh Bay
Đinh Thể Huynh and John Kerry
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