CHAPTER – VI

REUNIFICATION OF TWO VIETNAMS
(21 JANUARY 1976 TO 24 JUNE 1976)
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Introduction

After the liberation of South Vietnam from the hands of the Americans, there was gradual preparation towards reunification of South and North Vietnams. It was suggested that the Military Administration Committee would be gradually replaced by the Revolutionary Committees and election for a new National Assembly in South Vietnam would follow. Thus the form of government would gradually change from the military to civilian administration and then the merger between the two civilian administrations would be possible. However, till then democracy with basic freedoms, private business and neutral foreign policy would continue in South Vietnam. This government would gradually familiarize itself with the system of government in North Vietnam for the ultimate merger between the two segments of Vietnam.

Obstacles to Reunification

The plan of reunification of two Vietnams was initially deferred for the next five years to come. The reasons behind this were not far to seek. Saigon was to change its style of life. The attitudes and manners of its people were to change gradually. Besides, the military administration in Saigon was to be replaced with civilian rule through the People's Revolutionary Committees. Elections were to be held. Acute unemployment situation was to be addressed. With all such obstacles to reunification, the period started with a slow progress towards reunification. Hence, both sides applied for the U.N. membership separately. The reason behind this delay was that both sides were to recover from the devastations of the war and to improve their economy and self-sufficiency considerably before the merger.

However, the delay in the merger was not to be for five years as expected officially. On 21 November 1975 both sides agreed that they would hold elections in the first half of 1976. This would pave the way for a unified socialist country and twenty-one years of separation between the two sides would end. There
would be a common National Election Council to conduct elections for the common National Assembly. This reunification would eliminate all counter-revolutionary forces, bring about stability of social order, ensure people's security, eradicate the vestiges of feudal land-lordism and comprador bourgeoisie and negate influence of decadent and reactionary culture left behind by Saigon regime. Thus reunification process was to be expedited to accomplish tasks which could not be performed by a separate independent South Vietnam. On 3 December 1975 Laos established People's Democratic Republic replacing the coalition government and this development had its impact on Vietnam. On 5 January 1976 the constitution of Democratic State of Cambodia was promulgated, which also influenced Vietnam. Meanwhile, internal reconstruction work in South Vietnam continued with the help of the North Vietnamese volunteers. Ultimately on 21 January 1976 the military administrative set up in Saigon was replaced by the civilian rule and a fifteen-member People's Revolutionary Committee took over the administration.

This Revolutionary Committee took over the administration from the Military Committee which was controlling the city from 1 May 1975. The Chairman of the People's Revolutionary Committee was Vo Van Kiet who replaced General Tran Van Tra of the Military Committee.¹

At this stage, the biggest obstacles to reunification were the mounting domestic problems weighing heavily on both Vietnams. Both of them had hardly been able to come out of the devastations of three decades of war. Besides, both of them were facing the problems left over by the bigger powers such as the U.S., France, Japan, China and the Soviet Union due to their long and painful involvement in Vietnamese affairs. Hence the reunification of both the countries was taking its own time.²

Even after more than eight months of independent rule, there were still many problems such as shortage of food and fuel, unemployment of two million

¹ *Asian Recorder*, vol. XXII, no. 12, 18-24 May 1976, p. 13074; and "The date for making two Vietnams into one", *The Economist*, vol. 257, no. 6898, 8 November 1975, pp. 51-52.

people, drug addiction, prostitution and hooliganism as the remnants of the American regime. However, such problems were getting under control day by day.\(^3\)

Another trouble which stood as a stumbling bloc to gradual reunification was the question of American war crimes. Senator McGovern visited South Vietnam in the meantime and remarked that some U.S. war crimes had been committed by the present Government. Many people had also been jailed on ground of being threats to the new government. He insisted on a full accountability for of 834 missing Americans. South Vietnamese government assured that they would find out whereabouts of these missing persons as soon as possible. There were many more unresolved issues which also needed immediate attention.\(^4\)

However, Senator McGovern was of the opinion that a new era was gradually ushering in South Vietnam. People were quite better off under the present government than they were before. Besides, people both in North and South Vietnams were quite eager to establish relationship with the U.S.. He hoped that after Vietnamese elections in April 1976, a single government and a joint national assembly would be set up. Gradually the relations between the U.S. and Vietnam would be normalized.\(^5\)

More dangerous were the obstacles of non-stop bombardments and occasional flare-ups in the battlefield and inside the hinterland. On 14 February 1976 a counter revolutionary plot was foiled at Vinh Son Church. Afterwards, it was found out that the reactionaries belonged to the "popular and military

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movement for the restoration of the country.” They were recruited from among
the remnants of the American puppet forces.⁶

On 25 February U.S. war planes bombarded Western Cambodia (Sem
Reap) area and killed fifteen persons and wounded forty others. North Vietnam
condemned such an intervention again in the region. But U.S. government denied
its involvement in the bombardment and described the news as ‘ridiculous’.⁷ No
one knew to which country those aeroplanes belonged. Some thought that these
planes might have been Vietnamese planes attacking Combadian war ships
because Combadian war ships had attacked Thai fishing boats in the Gulf of
Thailand on 20 February 1976 and had ruined one of them.⁸

Meanwhile, on 24 February 1976, ASEAN conference ended in Bali with the
signing of treaty of a cooperation and concord. North Vietnam objected to it
because the creation of ASEAN was a part of U.S.’s “schemes of intervention and
aggression” against governments in Southeast Asia. Further North Vietnam
corroborated its statement by mentioning that during the third Indo-China war,
some members of ASEAN nations had sent their troops to invade Vietnam. It was
alleged that they were being used by U.S. imperialists to continue their neo-
colonialist policy in Southeast Asia in collusion with Japan.⁹

Among the internal problems of independent South Vietnam was the
problem of resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons between 1965 to
1975. Their number amounted to approximately ten million i.e. more than half
the total population. This problem was another big obstacle to reunification. The
rehabilitation programme hoped to build about 500 villages to settle the displaced
persons, as they had run away from the country-side and tried to settle down in
cities, making themselves unemployed, unproductive and thereby reducing the

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national production level also. Both the areas of new economy and old parental villages were considered for their resettlement.\(^{10}\)

Apart from that, formation of experimental cooperatives in rural areas became another method of social adjustment. One article in *Hoc Tap* discussed plans to set up "large-scale state operated farms" and "agricultural-industrial cooperatives" where conditions were appropriate to generate awareness among farmers in a "gradual, positive and steady manner of the value of cooperation".\(^{11}\)

Wherever possible, work exchange teams, the first step in the collectivization process, were to be formed. As time went on, plans for the countryside became more specific. In his report to the Fourth Party Congress, Le Duan formally announced that the socialist transformation of the countryside in the South must be completed during the period of the ongoing Five Year Plan.\(^{12}\)

In effect, the regime was determined to gradually move towards socialism in the South, while for the time being tolerating a significant degree of private capitalism in most sectors of the economy. The press described the South Vietnamese economy as being, in the foreseeable future, divided into five separate sectors: state owned, collective, joint private-state enterprises, private capitalism and individual. The continued existence of capitalist elements in the economy was no major danger to the regime, said one commentator because of the strength of the socialist system in the North.\(^{13}\)

The cautious approach being followed in the South unquestionably reflected the intention of the regime at this early stage to minimise disruption to

\(^{10}\) *Asian Recorder*, vol. XXII, no. 18, 29 April-5 May 1976, p. 13144. For details of other aspects of reunification, see I. Ivokov, "Vietnam : Reunification on a socialist basis", *New Times*, no. 48, November 1975, pp. 4-6.

\(^{11}\) Ho Liem, "A number of matters concerning the social revolution in our country in the new stage", *Hoc Tap*, vol. XXI, no. 239, November 1975.


\(^{13}\) Ho Liem, n. 11.
the economy and to avoid arousing unnecessary hostility to the new government among the masses. Focus was on resolving the issues of most immediate importance - maintaining production levels and finding employment for the millions of unemployed. Here the new regime had moved decisively, if not always effectively. The government's strategy to end the unemployment problem was the formation of "new economic areas" - regions set aside in under-populated rural areas for the resettlement of the millions of refugees now living in the major cities. These areas did not appear to be limited in geography or production characteristics and had been formed in the delta and along the coast, as well as in the central plateau. Selected by the regime for their productive potential, and given initial on-the-spot preparation by cadres, they had then been settled by certain categories of citizens persuaded to volunteer for resettlement. Such new settlers were provided with rice, housing materials and farming tools for land reclamation.

There had been persistent complaints in the press that many citizens felt that only unreliable elements were being sent and that selection for resettlement was considered as punishment. The government insisted, however, that selection was based on economic realities and not on the basis of politics, race, or religion. It was conceded that the new areas were not always thoroughly organized and that some had been poorly selected and prepared. Whatever might be the initial difficulties of the areas, the programme continued to be actively promoted. Figures indicated that over half a million had already left the cities for such areas. Plans were announced at the Fourth Vietnam Workers' Party Congress calling for the eventual resettlement of over a million people and one authoritative source mentioned the possibility of up to two million in the South alone. It was clear that these areas were considered to be the focus of an extensive programme, not only to redistribute population in the South, but to make them the focus of large-scale economic development for the nation as a whole.

14 Nhan Dan, 20 November 1975.
16 There was some indication that some groups such as the Overseas Chinese community in Cholon had been singled out for special attention, See Bao Tan Viet Hoi, 2 June 1976.
Apart from improvement in the economy, the major factor determining the pace of political and social reforms in South Vietnam was the degree of success in inculcating socialist ideals among the masses. At the most primary level, of course, acceptance or at least tolerance of the government was a necessity if political and social order was to be established. Beyond the issue of control, the communist government, it was thought, must be able to obtain support of the population for the principle of socialist ownership if reform in the productive process could be achieved. Hanoi appeared to be aware that the problem would be extremely complex, perhaps more so than it was twenty years ago in the North. In the two decades since the Geneva Conference, the population of South Vietnam had ample time to absorb the individualist values of Western capitalist culture. In the words of a communist observer, South Vietnam had become “a corrupt and parasitic society”, characterised by false nationalism, reactionary theories, selfish individualism, a decadent life style, cowboys, superstition and drug addicts. It would not be, therefore, easy to reverse the trend and create the ideological and cultural basis for the new “socialist man”.

In a broad sense, the regime moved directly to change the general tenor of society. In Saigon, it cracked down on prostitutes, drugs, unruly teenage gangs and other excrescences of the “Americanized” old society. In the long run, hopes for change in the national psyche arose primarily on the indoctrination of socialist ideology. Here the regime had attempted to achieve a rapid changeover to the new order. Newspapers and the radio were highly controlled and reflected the views of the new government. Schools, revamped to represent revolutionary ideas, had been reopened, often within a few weeks, with new books shipped in from the North and with a new system of education based on Northern practice. The new curriculum had not in all respects been successful in eradicating the dregs of bourgeois ideology. Press reports commented bluntly that many students continued to reflect the influence of Western individualist democracy and failed to appreciate the revolutionary ideas represented by newly imported stories and songs.18

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Lack of proper normalized relationship with various nations including the US was another obstacle to reunion of two Vietnams. South Vietnam had a good relationship with the U.S.. But North Vietnam did not have any. On 14 April 1976 the U.S. showed a gesture towards normalizing relations with North Vietnam. On the contrary, North Vietnam termed it as "a ruse, a merchandise offered by the Ford-Kissinger administration to the home market in this election year". Thus it was rejected as an election stunt. Secondly, North Vietnam objected to this gesture as the U.S. had already denied post-war reconstruction aid to North Vietnam. Hence there was no reason why this overture should have been taken seriously.

Apart from all these reasons, the different styles of living, separate cultures and traditions and differences in the very nature of society were a very big stumbling bloc towards reunification. As both the segments had remained disunited for a lengthy period out of its two thousand years of history, they had developed separate cultures, societies, living standards, religion, etc. which had gone much deeper into the very body fabric of the nation. This was thus a major stumbling bloc, which was gradually getting evaporated day by day after the U.S. left the area.

While there were sporadic signs to indicate that it was not always easy to maintain the resistance towards reunification ethic, Hanoi’s policies, all things considered, were remarkably effective. With wartime conditions, there would be - indeed, incipient signs already existed - a slackening of revolutionary momentum. The Minister of Culture, Hoang Minh Giam voiced this concern when he conceded that the Marxist-Leninist view "has not fully penetrated the style of life in our nation".

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22 Hoang Minh Giam, “Improving the nature of the party and endeavouring to build and develop a Vietnamese national socialist culture worthy of the fatherland, worthy of the age,” Hoc Tap, vol. XXII, no. 246, June 1976.

250
certain breathing space to the population in the aftermath of a long and exhausting war. Press comments mentioned the need to stimulate a rise in the standard of living and cautioned against an excessive concern for capital investment, as opposed to consumption. Current policy in South Vietnam was itself an indication of the willingness of the regime to subordinate its ultimate goals to the need to mobilise popular support for its policies. In the long run, however, the regime clearly intended to keep the pressure on, to maintain and even increase the pace of development in Vietnam. But in peacetime conditions, such a heavy stress on personal self-sacrifice was not easy to maintain. With the war over, the regime was forced to turn increasingly to ideological emulation campaigns to “party rectification” campaigns and to use the “socialist ethic” as an incentive for social service.23

Even then the assimilation of the South was difficult and complex. The long period of independence and the resultant growth of regional sentiment, made it a tricky matter for Hanoi to persuade the population in the South that reunification was not simply a euphemism for Northern domination. The first steps required that the regime had had a reasonable degree of success. Southern delegates accepted the plans for joint elections and national reunification without visible demur and the transition to a unified state appeared to have taken place without a hitch. The presence of new rulers in the South had presented same serious problems – the press was full of comments about untrained cadres “not understanding the class struggle in a new situation”, bureaucratism, isolation from the masses, bossism, mandarinism, rightism (not seeing the urgency for consolidation of the people’s government), threatening the masses and various other problems generally seen in a society in transition to socialism. Regional differences were occasionally mentioned, alongwith contempt in South Vietnam for the “peasants” from the North and failure of PAVN units to understand local attitudes and sensitivities. Reading between the lines, it was clear that relations between the local population and its new leaders were not ideal in all aspects.24

Still, these were predictable problems, and hardly an indication that the regime would encounter major obstacles in setting South Vietnam along the road previously followed in the North. All signs indicated that the new government was already firmly in control of the situation in many areas. Resistance was scattered and although there were signs of fairly broad dissatisfaction with present conditions, there were few indications that it might lead to widespread resistance. Groups potentially hostile towards the new order – Catholics, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai and mountain people – were being treated with circumspection, and collaborator elements were appearing to ease the transition to a new united front.25 Most important, the regime was according high priority to solving the severe problems in the economy and had appeared to recognise the danger in an over dogmatic approach. The ambitious targets in all fields (technology, production and production relations) announced in conjunction with the new Five Year Plan might not be achieved, but if present trends continued, the new Vietnam seemed likely to make steady headway towards its economic and social goals.

There appeared little doubt that if the regime had its way, the new Vietnam would be socialist in form and content. To the party leadership in Hanoi, there was a great potential in the decision taken over fifty years ago to embrace Marxist – Leninist ideology. With its persuasive historical world-view, its centralized organizational structure and its extraordinary capability in "social engineering", Marxism-Leninism had a strong appeal to intellectuals throughout Asia as a useful vehicle for the modernisation of backward societies. To the communist leadership in Hanoi, with its own passionate desire to develop Vietnam and make it an important factor on the world stage, Marxist-Leninist doctrine appeared as a vehicle for nation-building.

On the other hand, communism in Vietnam had always been, first and foremost, an outgrowth of nationalism. Marxism, in that sense, was instrumental rather than of consummatory importance in Vietnam, and it was thought that if

ever Marxist ideology were to appear impractical as a developmental tool, it would be considered expendable. For the foreseeable future, it was highly unlikely that the national leadership would question the relevance of Marxist-Leninist doctrine in building a new Vietnam. As in the Soviet Union, however, the material and technological aspects of national development appeared to predominate over the Maoist concern for “spiritual remoulding”. Hanoi, in its efforts to put doctrine into practice, had always appeared, above all, to be eminently practical.

In short, it was improbable that Mao Tse-tung’s version of “permanent revolution” would find much of an echo in Vietnam. Nor were antagonistic contradictions between ideological and nation-building goals likely to emerge within the leadership in Vietnam, at least for the foreseeable future. Hanoi appeared to view the ideological squabbling in Peking as a luxury that a small and backward nation like Vietnam could simply not afford. While some tension over policy undoubtedly existed in high party councils, the mainstream of the movement was in agreement with the assumption of Le Duan that the two goals were fundamentally compatible.

If such was the case, the demands of nation-building inevitably acquired priority. And the Vietnamese concluded - what was determined in Moscow long ago-that ideology was the means and the national wealth and power were the ends.

**Process of Gradual Merger**

Meanwhile, the reunification of both Vietnams became quite imminent by the announcement of elections scheduled on 25 April 1976. The country had remained permanently divided since 1946 when the first Indo-China war started. In fact, with the announcement of elections, it was hoped that one government would be in place to run the affairs of the country. It would formulate policies subject to the approval of the joint assembly. A new name to the unified country
would be given. A new flag would be finalized. For conducting elections, census in South Vietnam was conducted.\(^\text{26}\)

Meanwhile, Cambodia elected a new National Assembly on 20 March 1976. Accordingly the democratic, independent and neutral Kampuchea was established. Prince Norodom Sihanouk resigned as head of state on 5 April 1976 and Khieu Samphan took over as Prime Minister of Kampuchea.\(^\text{27}\)

This incident had its impact on Vietnam. There was a sea-change in the Sino-Soviet, Sino-US and Sino-Hanoi-US-USSR relations in the region.

Firstly, contrary to Peking’s professed alarm over Soviet plans to dominate the region, the Soviet Union was the least capable of the major powers to exert influence in Southeast Asia. Non-communist Southeast Asia tended to view the Soviet Union as an outsider and gave Soviet views less weight than the views of China, the U.S. and Japan. The non-communist Southeast Asians were all the more concerned with China than with the Soviet Union, even if they did not have normal relations with Peking. This is because China had links with the large overseas Chinese communities in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. It had ties with communist insurgencies in Burma, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia, and it supported the policies of Thailand and the Philippines.

Soviet influence on communist parties in Southeast Asia, in contrast, was virtually nonexistent. The communist parties of Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Burma were clearly oriented towards China. Historically, the Soviet Union had no liaison with the communist parties in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia because of Vietnamese insistence that they could handle relations with these parties without Soviet interference.

But while Soviet and Vietnamese interests coincided in opposing Chinese influence in Southeast Asia, they differed on other matters of importance to the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders wanted Vietnam to integrate its economy with the


\(^{27}\) Lacouture, n. 21, p. 573.
Soviet bloc, and the Vietnamese finally joined the Soviet-oriented economic organization, COMECON, in June, having been an observer for several years. But Vietnam was determined to establish diplomatic relations with the U.S. in order to lessen its dependence on the Soviet Union as well as to tackle US-Chinese collaboration against Hanoi. The Vietnamese already had extensive economic relations with France and Japan as well as with the World Bank, despite Soviet opposition to ties with capitalist states and institutions that reduced Vietnamese reliance on Moscow. The USSR felt that in the future, Vietnam’s economy would probably be more oriented toward capitalist, particularly American, sources of money, technology and spare parts, which would substantially weaken the Soviet relationship with Vietnam. And Vietnam, which never supported the Soviet proposal for an "Asian Collective Security System", could be expected to soften its objections to the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia as its relations with the U.S. improved.

Immediately after the Cambodian take-over, hectic activity was seen on the election front in Vietnam. On 25 April 1976 general elections were held for a common National Assembly which would unite the two halves of Vietnam into a single nation. The Assembly would have 492 members. It would have the task of carrying out the re-unification of the country. It would appoint state organs and draw up a new constitution. Southern part would have 243 representatives and Northern part would have 249. Saigon city would have 33 representatives and Hanoi would have 21 representatives. Hanoi would be declared as the capital of unified Vietnam.28

Candidates for the new National Assembly included a broad, carefully chosen group, ranging from high level party and government officials and several communist generals to workers, peasants, intellectuals ethnic minorities and even several Catholic priests.

In typical communist fashion, there were no opposition candidates. All opponents of the new government in the South had been excluded from running and several categories of people including former South Vietnamese officials and

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officers, civil servants and members of the South's defunct political parties, were not allowed to vote. However, a number of political personalities and military officers of the former Thieu regime were among the candidates in the South. They were selected after having undergone “reeducation” courses and recovering their rights as citizens.

The list of candidates in South Vietnam was headed by Pham Hung, the fourth-ranking member of the Politburo of the Vietnamese Workers’ Party (VWP), who, as the communists admitted publicly for the first time, had headed their war effort in the South for years as chief of the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN). The publicised leaders of the National Liberation Front, Nguyen Huu Tho and Huynh Tan Phat as well as Nguyen Thi Binh, Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, were all candidates for the Assembly.

Other candidates included Vo Van Kiet, the head of the Saigon People’s Revolutionary Committee, and Senior Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra, the head of the Military Management Committee that ran Saigon until recently. Several former opponents of the old Thieu regime, members of the so-called Third Force were also candidates, including Ngo Ba Thanh, the head of the Women’s Movement for the Right of Life and Huynh Tan Man, former head of the Saigon Students Association.

In North Vietnam, the list of candidates was headed by the country’s top leaders such as President Ton Doc Thang, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, First Secretary of the VWP Le Duan and Truong Chinh, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the 5th National Assembly. Also included in the list were a number of economic managers, technicians and scientific workers, several representatives of Buddhist sects and non-Vietnamese tribesmen. Candidates were forbidden to make speeches and campaigning was limited to the distribution of official posters bearing the candidates’ photographs and brief outlines of their “revolutionary achievements.”

The 492 deputies elected to the all-Vietnam National Assembly included 80 workers (16.26%), 100 peasants (20.33%), 6 handicraftsmen (1.22%), 54 military personnel (10.97%), 141 political cadres (28.65%), 98 intellectuals (19.92%) and 13 religious representatives (2.64%). Among these deputies were 129 women (26.22%), 127 young people (27.84%), 72 members of non-Vietnamese ethnic minorities (14.63%) and 5 labour and armed forces heroes (0.06%).

The election thus ended a period of foreign domination and war that started with the French invasion of the part now called Da Nang in 1858. The election results were out on 28 April. It elected all the party leaders of Vietnam Workers' Party, previously known as the Indo-Chinese Communist Party.

The Assembly took upon the task of adopting a new constitution; framing laws for organization of the state; maintaining law and order; defending socialist property and the legitimate interests of the citizens; and strengthening the nation's defence. It was also authorized to take decision on the name of the new state, the national flag, the national anthem, the national emblem and the capital city. It was also required to adopt a five-year plan for Vietnam to run from 1976 to 1981 and yearly plans as well. Besides, it would maintain relations with the government and the constituencies.

On 12 May General Giap gave a call to strengthen the Vietnamese army so as to pave way for a well-nurtured independent Vietnam. Meanwhile, American forces had already withdrawn from Vietnam but their withdrawal could only

complete on 20 July 1976. By then the US sold out all its war material and disengaged itself totally from Vietnamese soil. At home inside Vietnam, the historic day of 24 June 1976 came with lots of pomp and ceremony. That day the reunified nation of Vietnam held its first session of the 492-member National Assembly at Hanoi. It was announced on the opening day that the country would be re-united and known in future as the “Socialist Republic of Vietnam”. Its flag would be that of the North-red with a golden star. The hymn of the Marching Army originally composed in 1945 as the marching song of the Vietminh would be the national anthem of the reunified Vietnam.

At the opening session of the National Assembly, the military band struck up “Song of the Marching Troops” (the national anthem of the DRV) and “Liberation of the South” (the song of the Viet Cong in the South). Then a funeral march was played in memory of those killed in the war to “liberate” South Vietnam. After that, the National Assembly took up important business to establish both the substance and the symbols of the newly united nation.

As proposed by the 36-member Presidium, the new National Assembly agreed to the following:

The reunified country of Vietnam takes the name of the “Socialist Republic of Vietnam” (SRV), thereby replacing the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The national flag of the SRV is the old DRV flag consisting of a five-pointed yellow (gold) star in a field of red. The national emblem is the slightly modified former DRV emblem, consisting of two sheaves of ripe rice symmetrically disposed in a circular arc with gold ears of corn on lightly yellow ground, symbol of agriculture; a gold cogwheel at the crossing of the two sheaves, symbol of industry; a vermilion band binding together the cogwheel and the two sheaves bearing the word “Cong Hoa Xa Hoi Chu Nghia Vietnam” (Socialist Republic of Vietnam) in gold letters; and a middle part with a gold star on vermilion ground representing the national flag. The capital of the SRV is

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Hanoi. The national anthem of the SRV is the old North Vietnamese national anthem, the song “Tien Quan Ca” (the Marching Troops).\textsuperscript{37}

The National Assembly then declared the nation formally reunified. “At this moment, 8:30 A.M., Hanoi time, on July 2, 1976, the Vietnamese nation is officially considered as a unified country from Cao Lang to Cao Mau”\textsuperscript{38} (Cao Lang is the northernmost point of North Vietnam and Cao Mau is the southernmost peninsula in the South).

Later the National Assembly agreed to adopt a few resolutions according to which the National Assembly formed on the basis of 25 April 1976 general elections would be called the 6\textsuperscript{th} National Assembly; pending a new constitution, the state of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam would run on the basis of 1959 constitution of DRV; a commission would be set up with Truong Chinh as Chairman to draft a constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; Council of Ministers would be entrusted with the task of drafting necessary laws and they would provide guidance for the implementation of laws, orders, decrees, resolutions, decisions, circulars, etc. of DRV as well; and a resolution for setting up the Planning and Budget Commission, Commission for the Drafting of Laws, Cultural and Educational Commission, External Relations Commission and Social Affairs and Health Commission. Thus it became abundantly clear that the new United Vietnam would be run from Hanoi.\textsuperscript{39}

Further stressing on the dominance of the North over the South was a political report to the National Assembly by Le Duan, First Secretary of the VWP, in which he made an appeal to his countrymen “to devote all their energies, talents and knowledge to increase output and building Vietnam into a prosperous socialist country”\textsuperscript{40}. In his two hours speech, Le Duan outlined tough standards for the South’s socialist future. He made it clear that not all was running smoothly in getting the southern half of the country in line with the march to socialism. “We the North Vietnamese will continue to lead this half on the road to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] This song was composed in 1945 in North Vietnam. It was originally the marching song of the Viet Minh in the war against the French.
\item[39] Ibid
\end{footnotes}
socialism”, he said, “while in the south, where liberation was newly achieved, there are still many social and economic problems”. Among these problems he listed hoarding, speculation, loafing, avoidance of work, bribery, corruption, waste and “all sick, Western-oriented culture”. He added, “We must eliminate all feudal concepts that still pervade in the South’s society”. He warned that South Vietnamese who had profited from the war should now have to return to reality and live on the fruits of their own labour. He stated, “Those in the South who work hard will get more, those who are lazy will get less and those who do not use their labour will get nothing. This is our system of distribution”. Proclaiming socialism as the “way for Vietnam”, Le Duan said that all Vietnamese would have to live in the spirit of “one for all and all for one”.

Regarding foreign policy, Le Duan said that Vietnam intended to continue to fight alongside other communist and third world nations “against imperialism headed by the United States”. He reaffirmed Vietnam’s continuing neutrality in charting the country’s postwar relations with the two major communist powers, the Soviet Union and China and endorsed a two-track system for Vietnam’s relations with Southeast Asian neighbours; to provide at least some sort of moral or other support to neighbouring countries as Malaysia and Thailand against imperialism while maintaining friendly state-to-state relations with those neighbouring states.

On 2 July 1976 the National Assembly elected Ton Duc Thang, Truong Chinh and Pham Van Dong as President, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and Premier of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam respectively. The Assembly also elected Nguyen Luong Bang and Nguyen Huu Tho as the country’s Vice Presidents. The newly elected Vice Chairmen of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly were Hoang Van Hoan, Xuan Thuy, Phan Van Dang, Nguyen Thi Thap, Chu Can Tan, Tran Dang Khoa and Nguyen Xien. Xuan Thuy was also elected as the General Secretary of the National Assembly’s Standing Committee.

Pham Van Bach assumed the post of President of the People’s Supreme Court and Tran Huu Duc became the Chief Procurator of the People’s Supreme
Procuratorate. The membership of the National Defence Council included Ton Duc Thang (Chairman), Pham Van Dong (Vice Chairman), Le Duan, Truong Chinh, Pham Hung, Vo Nguyen Giap, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Le Thanh Nghi, Tran Quoc Hoan, and Van Tien Dung.

The all-Vietnam National Assembly selected former Hanoi leaders for most of the top governmental posts in the newly reunified nation. More specifically, the new central government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was scarcely different from the previous North Vietnamese government, apart from the fact that it contained six newcomers from the South.

The re-election of Ton Duc Thang as President by the all-Vietnam National Assembly suggested that the Vietnamese communist regime was still unwilling, almost seven years after Ho Chi Minh's death, to address the issue of naming a single successor, preferring to stick to its collective leadership pattern. The big four of the collective leadership were First Party Secretary Le Duan, National Assembly Chairman Truong Chinh, Premier Pham Van Dong and Defence Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, who had been most influential within the VWP Politburo since Ho's death. All of them were charter members of the Vietnamese communist movement and were Ho's closest associates for the past four decades.

The National Assembly concluded its first session on 3 July 1976, with a ceremony pledging "to built Vietnam 12 times greater than it was before in every field." Looking at the future of Vietnam, the powers of the new National Assembly were expected to be limited, as were those of the DRV's past National Assembly. (It had functioned as a mere rubber-stamp legislative body and had been convened only twice yearly for brief sessions to formally approve decisions already made by the ruling VWP apparatus). When the new National Assembly was not in session, its so-called permanent executive body, the Standing Committee, was supposed to act in its name. Truong Chinh, who was a ranking member of the all-powerful VWP Politburo, continued to head this important committee.

By and large what the first session of the new National Assembly accomplished—state (or governmental) unification between the two Vietnams -
was important but largely symbolic. The important measures dealing with economic, ideological, educational and other types of unification, particularly the country's new Five-Year Plan (1976-1980), were dealt with in detail only at the Fourth National Congress of the VWP held in December 1976.

Socialist development of agriculture and light industry as against heavy industry was the main emphasis of the new country. On foreign relations, it wished to have cordial relationship with the ASEAN. Gradually, the new nation of Vietnam established diplomatic relations with many countries. On 12 July it established relationship with the Philippines. On 6 August 1976 it established relationship with Thailand. On 15 September it joined the IMF.

Vietnam's relationship with the U.S. at this stage changed for the better. On 21 July, it announced that Americans stranded in South Vietnam during the war, would be able to depart soon with their wives and children. The U.S., on the other side, opened the way for mutual diplomatic recognition, UN membership and direct discussion on all outstanding issues between them. By 16 September twelve missing Americans were returned back to the US. Thus by November formal talks had started in Paris to normalize relationship with the U.S..

This is how the U.S. got itself involved in Vietnam, disengaged itself from Vietnam and established cordial relationship on the basis of mutual trust and respect with Vietnam. The study of the gradual process of disengagement of U.S. forces in Vietnam and the birth of a reunified nation thus make interesting reading. The people of Vietnam had to go a long way in order to achieve their independence and to fight the U.S. forces in their own native land. Their determination even forced a change in U.S. policy towards these nations. Ultimately the U.S. emphasized on reconciliation and constructive ways to easing out tension in this area. The U.S. found that force alone was not sufficient to

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ensure security. Popular legitimacy and social justice were also needed to resist subversion or "aggression".

The lessons from Vietnam war for Americans were many. John Fairbank, Director of the East Asian Research Center at Harvard, contended that there were many lessons to be learnt from the Vietnamese experience. Of these, Fairbank was particularly interested in two: first, "do not intervene when culture blind"; and second, "our values are not those of everyone". Otherwise, the results were inevitable. In Fairbank's words: "Ignorant of Buddhism, rice culture, peasant life and Vietnamese history and values generally, we sent our men and machines to Saigon. Now we are out, and still ignorant, even of the depth of our ignorance. In contradistinction to successful American intervention in Europe in World Wars I and II, an area that admittedly shared a common Atlantic culture", he continued, the U.S. disregarded "the interests of the local people as they see them in their cultural terms" and instead, with disastrous consequences, imposed "upon their situation our view of the world as seen in our cultural terms".\(^{44}\) It could hardly have had a different outcome. Although Fairbank undoubtedly exaggerated his assessment of the problem, much of what he said was true.

In any case, the events of Vietnam impelled the Ford administration, with Henry Kissinger at the forefront, to conduct a dual strategy designed both to provide reassurances to nervous, faithful allies and thinly-veiled warnings to wavering, faithless allies, albeit in a tone of "agonizing reappraisal". "No country", stated the Secretary of State in June 1975 within the context of Turkey's hostile reaction to the Congressional cut-off of military aid over the Cyprus question, "should imagine that it is doing us a favour by remaining in an alliance with us". He added, "Any ally whose perception of its national interest changes will find us prepared to adapt or end our treaty relationship .... We will not accept that its security is more important to us than it is to itself".\(^{45}\) Nonetheless, Kissinger was adamant in insisting, especially among the nation's Asian friends, that the U.S. had no intention of retreating from the region. Coming a short time after the swift

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and severe American retaliation against the Cambodian seizure of the U.S. container vessel, the Mayaguez, Kissinger’s message had a special relevance.

Similarly, in his first major address on Asia after the conclusion of the Vietnam War (an address to the Japan Society of New York City, in which the importance of Northeast Asia was duly emphasized), the Secretary of State pledged that the "United States will not turn away from Asia, or focus our attention on Europe to the detriment of Asia". The Secretary pointed out what he regarded as one of the most "important lessons from the tragedy of Indo-China—most importantly that outside effort can only supplement, but not create, local efforts and local will to resist". Kissinger then reminded his audience, in the spirit and letter of the Nixon Doctrine, that in fulfilling its commitments the US would look to its allies to assume the primary responsibility for maintaining their own defence, and especially in manpower requirements, although he had no doubt that in the final analysis "that popular will and social justice are...the essential underpinning of resistance to subversion and external challenge." Specifically, the Secretary expressed resolve to maintain the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula, an objective he believed to be of crucial significance to Japan and Asia; to strengthen South Korea’s economy and defence; and to continue to place the highest value on the relationship with the ANZUS partners, Australia and New Zealand, and the Philippines. Kissinger also welcomed as a stabilising force in the region the growing influence of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines and Thailand.

The culmination of reaffirming and reassuring the nation’s Asian friends in the wake of Indo-China’s war was the much heralded 'New Pacific Doctrine', proclaimed by President Ford at Honolulu in December 1975. The President who had just completed a seven-day visit to Peking, Indonesia and the Philippines, made it clear beyond doubt that America had a vital stake in upholding the equilibrium of interests in the Pacific region. After noting that U.S. strength would

46 Secretary of State’s Address before the Japan Society of New York City, New York Times, 18 June 1975.
be critical to a stable balance of power in the area, Ford reaffirmed, “that partnership with Japan is a pillar of our strategy”, as well as “the determination... to complete the normalisation of relations with the People’s Republic of China on the basis of the Shanghai communiqué”. Along with the other great Pacific powers - the Soviet Union, China and Japan - the U.S. was prepared to stay and play its part. Like Kissinger, Ford also underscored the growing role of the ASEAN organization which, in his words, “Americans will be hearing much about”. The key here undoubtedly was Indonesia, a nation of 140 million people, which, given the Americans’ traditional propensity for ‘bigness’, was undoubtedly being groomed as the next ‘bastion of democracy’. For all that, the only thing ‘new’ between the New Pacific Doctrine and the Nixon Doctrine was the President himself.

In summary, the lessons drawn from the Vietnam experience have, thus far, had a fairly salutary effect on the shaping of future U.S. foreign policy. To be sure, the Vietnam ‘fallout’ had hamstrung the Ford Administration in such places as Angola and in the unimpeded establishment of the much sought after naval base of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, whatever the merits of their respective cases. Nonetheless, Vietnam had introduced a large measure of much needed sophistication into foreign policy formulation, the outcome of which had been a more programmatic approach to international relations. The clearest and best example of this new programatism had, of course, been Daniel Moynihan’s warning of the third world nations in the UN, which were told that they could not have their cake and eat it too. Equally important, the Vietnam debate had over the past several years enlarged and encouraged the Congressional participation in the foreign policy process, a long-overdue adjustment to the ‘Imperial Presidency’. It was precisely this Congressional participation that had averted a recrudescence of McCarthyism and ‘stab-in-the-back’ conspiracy theories. Or, as

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49 For just the opposite and widespread judgment see, for example, Fox Butterfield, “How South Vietnam Died – By the stab in the Front,” New York Times Magazine, 25 May 1975; and Antonia and Anthony Lake, “Coming of Age through Vietnam,” in ibid., 20 July 1975. Both accounts are on a first-hand basis, the former a war correspondent, the latter from the State Department.
Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield observed at the end of the conflict, "There is no profit at this time in hashing over the might-have beens of the past. Nor is there any value in finger-pointing". Whether or not America would continue to pursue a more pragmatic policy devoid of ideological crusading, 'nation-building', or whether it would choose to ignore the lessons of Vietnam and suffer the consequences was anybody's guess. What was certain, was the opportunity to begin anew.

In all class societies and especially under capitalism, colonialism and fascism in the twentieth century, human dignity and justice had been repeatedly trampled upon. With the victory of the Vietnam revolution, human dignity had been defended and justice had triumphed, thereby giving tremendous encouragement, hope and conviction to all the oppressed nations and peoples, indeed the entire human race.

The special significance of the declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was that it had not only furthered the principles of the American Declaration of Independence and the Human Rights declaration of the French Revolution, but had put forward the principles of equality and independence of all nations. After quoting a passage from the U.S. Independence Declaration, Ho Chi Minh wrote: "In a broader sense, it means: all the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have the right to live and to be happy and free". In other words, all individuals of all the nations, large or small, should also be equal and free and should be entitled to decide their own affairs by themselves. "Nothing is more valuable than independence and freedom", Ho Chi Minh added.

The victory in Vietnam marked the beginning of the end of big power centralism, and the establishment of the principles of self-reliance, independence and democracy among nations, paving the way for genuine internationalism.

50 Senator Mike Mansfield (Democrat, Montana), in a statement before the Senate Democratic Conference, 14 April 1975. 
51 For an extremely perceptive comment on this point, see Armin Rappaport, "A New American Foreign Policy", The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, Newsletter, 7 March 1976, pp. 1-11.
One of the most important implications of the Vietnam revolution was the fact that it was a revolution which finally emerged victorious after a struggle fought under the most difficult conditions compared with other revolutions. The protagonists of the Vietnam revolution were the people in a small country in Southeast Asia. They had to carry out the war face to face, first with Japanese imperialism, then the French and lastly the U.S. It was a protracted struggle for three decades.

In this respect, a number of publicists erred in saying that Vietnam represented merely the victory of nationalism. Indeed it was a victory of socialism reinforced by complete democracy, creativity and national independence, a victory of the national struggle led by Marxism-Leninism. Vietnam had thus demonstrated the vitality of Marxism-Leninism as the most powerful liberating force.

Vietnam had proved that by united struggle, the people would be able to defeat U.S. imperialism and frustrate its neocolonialist machination. Through struggle and self-sacrifice, Vietnam had demonstrated the atrocious nature and the inevitable defeat of U.S. imperialism, as well as the vulnerability of Japanese monopoly capital. This was simultaneously a warning and object lesson for all the peoples of the world who are struggling against U.S. imperialism, even today.

When Vietnam was engaged in struggle against U.S. imperialism, disunity came to the fore in the international communist movement. The controversy centered around the nature of U.S. imperialism and the method of struggle against it, the nature of war in older days, peaceful co-existence of the two different social systems and national liberation movement, and the nature of an international united front. The victory of the Vietnamese revolution had shown the way to a practical solution to this controversy. A telling blow had been dealt to the revisionist and opportunist tendency to whitewash U.S. imperialism.

The victory of the Vietnam revolution was regarded as miracle of modern days. But what was important for Marxists was not merely to praise it but to study and explain it scientifically, drawing lessons from this achievement for
further advancement of philosophy and the social sciences and by so doing to contribute toward the development of revolution in all countries.

Samuel Huntington, Chairman of the Department of Government at Harvard University with his own theory of 'modernization' became the Chairman of the Council on Vietnamese Studies of the South East Asia Development Advisory Group (SEADAG) and laid the theoretical foundations for the pacification programmes of South Vietnam by his 'modernization' and 'urban revolution' theories. The compilation of military budgets and the formulation of military theories made use of the research methods and techniques developed by the RAND Corporation, a think-tank of the U.S. military, and these had become part of the subject matter of study in the name of Planning, Programming and Budgeting Systems (PPBS). Besides, Michigan State University was then a neocolonialist institution controlled by the CIA where secret police personnel of the Saigon puppet regime were trained. It formed the Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, which sent a number of sociologists to South Vietnam to study the communal structure serving under the neocolonialist rule and the "pacification programme".

In this way, U.S. imperialism put into its war of aggression the most up-to-date achievements in the fields of ideology and social sciences, especially in military theory, international politics, sociology, economics, business management and operations research. History knows of no war of aggression in which so many "first class" mercenary scientists were mobilized.

**Conclusion**

Through the heroic efforts of the Vietnamese revolutionaries, Marxism-Leninism vanquished the most powerful ideological weapons of U.S. imperialism. The tremendous significance of this achievement should be emphasized for the benefit of the world and learned societies which are under the influence of ideology and social sciences of U.S. unilateralism nowadays.
Enduring their matchless sacrifices in blood, sweat and tears, the people of Vietnam have defeated U.S. imperialism in all fields thereby inspiring courage and strengthening conviction all over the world.