

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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**THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN UPHOLDING
INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE DURING THE
RESISTANCE WAR AGAINST THE UNITED STATES FOR
NATIONAL SALVATION (1954–1975)**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the Dissertation

The guiding principle that has consistently underpinned the revolutionary leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam is the unwavering spirit of independence and self-reliance. This has been not only an enduring principle but also the fundamental source of strength that enabled the Vietnamese nation to advance from one victory to another. As President Ho Chi Minh emphasized: “A nation that does not rely on its own strength but merely waits for assistance from other nations does not deserve independence”. He further affirmed: “If we wish others to help us, we must first help ourselves”. These statements clearly demonstrate that the cause of national liberation must ultimately rest in the hands of the nation itself. Only through self-reliance and self-strengthening can genuine independence and freedom be achieved, thereby creating the conditions for creativity, innovation, and sustainable development.

This principle was further reaffirmed by General Secretary Le Duan: “Our Party is independent. Our Party independently led the August Revolution. Likewise, the revolution in South Vietnam is independent; it follows its own independent path”. These statements consistently reflect the Party's unwavering determination to safeguard national independence and self-reliance throughout successive revolutionary periods.

The Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance represents not only a vivid practical issue but also an important theoretical question. It concerns not merely historical experience but also contemporary realities, and its significance extends beyond Vietnam to the international community. Upholding independence and self-reliance involves not only political thinking, strategic vision, guidelines, and policies but also the Party's honour

prestige, moral responsibility, political will, and leadership capacity. It is neither a subjective aspiration nor an act of voluntarism; rather, it constitutes a scientific principle and a serious political responsibility entrusted to the Party by the Vietnamese people and nation. A systematic and in-depth examination of the Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance from 1954 to 1975 provides a clearer understanding of the complex historical context and the difficult strategic challenges the Party had to resolve continuously. At certain stages, the Party encountered setbacks and failed to formulate timely decisions that fully reflected practical realities, thereby temporarily hindering the development of the national liberation movement and revolutionary forces. Nevertheless, the Party promptly recognised these shortcomings and drew valuable lessons from them. Experience demonstrated that whenever the Party steadfastly upheld independence and self-reliance in a flexible and skilful manner, the revolutionary movement maintained its strategic initiative and revolutionary forces continued to expand. Conversely, departures from this principle resulted in significant setbacks. This illustrates the dialectical nature of the Party's leadership process, characterised by both achievements and limitations, thereby providing valuable lessons for subsequent revolutionary periods.

Today, innovation and international integration have become irreversible trends. Nevertheless, maintaining independence, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and national autonomy remains the decisive factor for the sustainable development of every nation. The

Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance during the national liberation struggle (1954–1975) has generated valuable historical experiences that continue to illuminate Vietnam's path of national development while also offering meaningful lessons for nations striving for peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress. Although previous studies have examined diplomatic or military aspects of this issue, no independent and systematic study has comprehensively analysed the Party's theoretical thinking and practical leadership in maintaining independence and self-reliance throughout the entire twenty-one-year resistance war. For this reason, the author selected the topic: *"The Party's Leadership in Upholding Independence and Self-Reliance during the Resistance War against the United States for National Salvation (1954–1975)"* as the subject of this doctoral dissertation in the discipline of History of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

2. Research Objectives and Tasks

2.1. Research Objective

The dissertation aims to clarify the Party's guidelines and leadership process in upholding independence and self-reliance during the Resistance War against the United States for National Salvation (1954–1975). Based on this analysis, it seeks to draw lessons that may be applied to the current cause of national construction and national defence.

2.2. Research Tasks

To achieve the above objective, the dissertation focuses on the following major tasks: To review previous studies related to the Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance during the

Resistance War against the United States for National Salvation (1954–1975). To clarify the domestic and international factors influencing the Party's leadership in maintaining independence and self-reliance during the period from 1954 to 1975. To systematize and analyse the Party's guidelines and practical leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance throughout the Resistance War against the United States for National Salvation (1954–1975). To assess the achievements and limitations of the Party's leadership process and draw lessons from its experience in maintaining independence and self-reliance during the resistance war.

3. Đối tượng và phạm vi nghiên cứu của luận án

3. Research Object and Scope

3.1. Research Object: The dissertation examines the Party's guidelines and leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance during the Resistance War against the United States for National Salvation from 1954 to 1975.

3.2. Research Scope

Scope of Content: The dissertation focuses on analysing the formation and development of the theoretical thinking and practical leadership of the Workers' Party of Vietnam regarding the maintenance of independence and self-reliance. The research is centred on three fundamental pillars. First, steadfast adherence to the strategic line of resistance by independently determining strategic resolve, revolutionary objectives, and appropriate revolutionary steps corresponding to the realities of North and South Vietnam. Second, steadfast adherence to an independent mode of warfare through the creative development of the people's war strategy, independently determining methods of combat and force organisation without mechanically following foreign models. Third, steadfast adherence to an independent foreign policy by maintaining strategic equilibrium,

safeguarding supreme national interests, and proactively implementing the strategy of "fighting while negotiating" during the Paris Peace Conference.

Within the context of the national liberation war, the Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance can be understood through the following dimensions. First, from a theoretical perspective, the Party's leadership was formulated on the basis of changing domestic and international conditions, particularly the increasingly complex dynamics of the United States–Soviet Union–China strategic triangle. Whereas some Soviet leaders warned that armed confrontation in Vietnam could trigger a global nuclear war, and certain viewpoints underestimated the military capability of the United States by portraying it as merely a "paper tiger," the Party adopted an independent assessment. It concluded that the United States was indeed a powerful and dangerous adversary, yet one operating under increasing strategic constraints. Consequently, Vietnam had to formulate its own strategy, methods of warfare, and path to victory. This demonstrates that the Party's commitment to independence and self-reliance was grounded in objective reality rather than subjective voluntarism.

Second, throughout the period from 1954 to 1975, independence and self-reliance served the objective of completing the people's national democratic revolution in the South, resisting the United States' neo-colonial strategy, protecting socialist construction in the North, and contributing to the worldwide struggle for freedom, justice, and peace. Third, Vietnam independently determined every major issue concerning the war, including strategic objectives, revolutionary tasks, military organisation, command structures, and foreign policy, without allowing any foreign country or political bloc to dictate its decisions. Fourth, adherence to independence and self-reliance did not

imply the rejection of international solidarity. On the contrary, the Party actively promoted solidarity with socialist countries, revolutionary movements, and progressive peoples throughout the world while preserving Vietnam's independent decision-making authority. As First Secretary Le Duan emphasized, genuine internationalism could only be realised on the basis of genuine independence and self-reliance.

Fifth, independence and self-reliance also required overcoming both external pressures and internal ideological deviations, including illusions of peace, political hesitation, fear of sacrifice, excessive dependence on foreign assistance, as well as manifestations of impatience, adventurism, and subjective voluntarism. In summary, the Party's commitment to independence and self-reliance was consistently reflected in both theory and practice. From the Geneva Agreement of 1954 until national reunification in 1975, this principle enabled the Party to translate its strategic objectives of liberating the South, defending the North, and reunifying the country into historical reality while mobilising the revolutionary potential of the Vietnamese people.

Spatial Scope: The research covers the territory of Vietnam.

Temporal Scope: The dissertation examines the period from the signing of the Geneva Agreement on 21 July 1954 until the liberation of South Vietnam on 30 April 1975. To ensure historical continuity and analytical coherence, the study also considers developments prior to 1954 and after 1975 where necessary.

Scientific and Practical Justifications for Selecting 1967 as the Concluding Year of Chapter 2

First, the adoption of Resolution No. 13-NQ/TW by the Third Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in January 1967 on foreign affairs marked a decisive strategic turning point by

institutionalizing the policy of “fighting while negotiating” (vừa đánh vừa đàm). This resolution demonstrated the Party's capacity for independent and self-reliant strategic decision-making through its proactive opening of the diplomatic front and its integration of diplomatic struggle as a strategic offensive closely coordinated with military and political struggles. Second, from the perspective of battlefield developments, 1967 represented the climax of the U.S. strategy of "Local War". By the end of 1967, under the Party's steadfast leadership and creative strategic direction, the Vietnamese armed forces and people had decisively defeated both U.S. dry-season strategic counteroffensives (1965–1966 and 1966–1967), most notably by thwarting Operation Junction City. These achievements provided compelling empirical evidence for an important strategic proposition: Vietnam possessed the capability to defeat the United States militarily in a direct conventional confrontation.

Third, in terms of revolutionary capabilities, Vietnam had successfully developed a powerful Liberation Armed Force comprising five divisions. By 1967, the Trường Sơn Strategic Supply Route (Route 559), including both its overland and maritime transport networks, had been substantially expanded, consolidated, and was operating at its highest level of effectiveness since the outbreak of the war. The successful deployment of vast quantities of modern weapons, military equipment, and tens of thousands of cadres and soldiers from the socialist North to the principal battlefield in the South fundamentally altered the balance of forces. This strengthened revolutionary capacity vividly demonstrated the Party's ability to direct the war independently while relying on self-reliance and endogenous strength. It also provided the decisive material foundation that enabled Vietnam to enter the subsequent phase of strategic decisive offensives with confidence.

Fourth, beginning in 1968, the Party's adherence to the principle of independence and self-reliance became even more evident than during the period 1954–1967. This was reflected in several major strategic decisions, including: proactively launching the 1968 General Offensive and Uprising (Tet Offensive); initiating negotiations with the United States on its own strategic terms; maintaining its determination to continue the resistance despite Sino-Soviet accommodation with the United States and external pressure exerted on Vietnam during the Paris negotiations; launching the 1975 General Offensive and Uprising while steadfastly maintaining its offensive strategic posture; and actively balancing relations with both the Soviet Union and China in order to secure continued external assistance, while skillfully transforming these external resources into catalysts for strengthening Vietnam's endogenous capabilities and ultimately achieving complete victory.

4. Theoretical Foundation, Research Methods, and Sources

4.1. Theoretical Foundation: The dissertation is grounded in Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought concerning national independence, the right of nations to self-determination, uninterrupted revolution, people's war, national defence, international relations, foreign affairs, and diplomacy.

4.2. Research Methods: The dissertation primarily employs the historical method to analyse the Party's leadership process across different historical periods. The logical method is used to synthesise previous studies, evaluate historical documents, analyse Party resolutions and policies, and derive historical conclusions and lessons. Additional methods include analysis, synthesis, comparison, statistical analysis, documentary research, and other specialised methods commonly employed in the study of Party history.

4.3. Research Sources

The dissertation draws upon a wide range of documentary sources, including: Party documents, resolutions, directives, reports, telegrams, and official publications. Government and National Assembly documents. Ho Chi Minh's collected works. Archival materials preserved at the Central Office of the Communist Party, the National Archives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and major national and university libraries. Memoirs and writings of political leaders, military commanders, and historical witnesses. Vietnamese and international books, journal articles, doctoral dissertations, and scholarly publications related to the Vietnam War.

5. Contributions of the Dissertation

Theoretical Contributions: The dissertation contributes to enriching the theoretical foundations of the History of the Communist Party of Vietnam by providing a more systematic and dialectical understanding of the concept of independence and self-reliance under conditions of national liberation war. It demonstrates that the Party's commitment to independence and self-reliance was neither subjective nor dogmatic but represented a creative application of objective historical laws and Vietnam's tradition of national self-strengthening.

Historical Contributions: The dissertation reconstructs, from a comprehensive and objective perspective, the Party's management of the complex triangular relationship among Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and China, as well as its relations with the United States. It highlights major strategic turning points shaped by independent decision-making while objectively evaluating both the achievements and limitations of the Party's leadership, thereby drawing valuable historical lessons for contemporary national development.

7. Structure of the Dissertation: In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, List of the Author's Published Works Related to the Dissertation, References, and Appendices, the dissertation is

organized into four chapters comprising ten sections.

Chapter 1

LITERATURE REVIEW ON RESEARCH RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1. STUDIES RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1.1. Studies by Vietnamese Scholars

1.1.2. Studies by Foreign Scholars

1.2. RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES AND ISSUES ADDRESSED BY THE DISSERTATION

1.2.1. Major Findings from Previous Studies

Research Sources: Previous studies have assembled an extensive body of documentary evidence, including numerous primary sources and declassified archival materials concerning relations among the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam during the Cold War. These sources constitute an important foundation for further scholarly investigation. *Research Methods:* Existing studies have employed a wide range of methodologies, including historical analysis, logical analysis, comparative research, statistical methods, inductive and deductive reasoning, documentary analysis, and interdisciplinary approaches combining history, politics, and philosophy. These methodological approaches provide valuable references for the present dissertation. *Research Content:* The available Vietnamese and international literature has explored the origins, development, and outcome of the Vietnam War from various perspectives. Despite differences in interpretation, most studies acknowledge that the decisive factors behind Vietnam's victory were the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam together with the determination, courage, and creativity of the Vietnamese people.

Many foreign studies, although inevitably influenced by particular ideological or political perspectives, nevertheless offer

useful explanations regarding the reasons for the failure of the United States in Vietnam. These works provide valuable materials for a more comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of the research topic.

1.2.2. Research Gaps Addressed by the Dissertation

Based on the foregoing literature review, the dissertation focuses on addressing four principal issues. First, it analyses the domestic and international factors that influenced the Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance between 1954 and 1975. Second, it examines the evolution of the Party's theoretical thinking and strategic guidelines concerning independence and self-reliance during the two historical phases of 1954–1967 and 1968–1975. Third, it investigates how the Party Central Committee and Party organisations at different administrative levels implemented and directed the policy of independence and self-reliance throughout the twenty-one-year resistance war. Fourth, it provides an objective evaluation of both the achievements and limitations of the Party's leadership while drawing historical lessons from the process of upholding independence and self-reliance during the Resistance War against the United States for National Salvation (1954–1975). Accordingly, the dissertation seeks to fill an important gap in existing scholarship by offering a systematic, comprehensive, and in-depth study of the Party's theoretical thinking and practical leadership regarding independence and self-reliance throughout the entire course of the resistance war.

Chapter 2

THE PARTY'S FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY OF UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE DURING THE RESISTANCE WAR AGAINST THE UNITED STATES FOR NATIONAL SALVATION (1954–1967)

2.1. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE

2.1.1. The Practical Foundations of the Party's Leadership Prior to 1954

Before 1954, the Communist Party of Vietnam successfully withstood successive military offensives launched by colonial and imperialist powers. Through persistent leadership, it mobilised the entire nation to build revolutionary forces, prepare for armed struggle, seize the revolutionary opportunity presented by the August Revolution, and lead the Vietnamese people through the nine-year War of Resistance against French colonialism.

At the Geneva Conference in 1954, Vietnam had not yet fully grasped the strategic intentions of the major powers. Limited diplomatic experience, restricted access to information, and an underdeveloped diplomatic apparatus constrained Vietnam's ability to exercise complete initiative during the negotiations. Nevertheless, through firm political determination and flexible diplomatic strategies, Vietnam succeeded in securing its principal objectives. These experiences became an important practical foundation for the Party's subsequent leadership in safeguarding independence and self-reliance.

2.1.2. Domestic and International Context

Domestic Context: Following the Geneva Agreement, North Vietnam entered a period of post-war reconstruction and socialist transformation, while South Vietnam continued the struggle against foreign intervention to complete the people's national democratic revolution. Consequently, the Party simultaneously directed two distinct revolutionary strategies under fundamentally different political and military conditions. *International Context:* Internationally, the revolutionary movement continued to develop under the influence of anti-colonial struggles, socialist construction,

and the workers' movement. Nevertheless, increasing ideological and political disagreements within the socialist bloc gradually evolved into open diplomatic and military confrontation, particularly between the Soviet Union and China. Beginning in 1965, the United States escalated the war through the implementation of the strategy of "local war" (Chiến tranh cục bộ), creating new strategic challenges. These developments required the Party to exercise a higher degree of independent strategic judgement, creativity, and political resilience throughout its leadership of the Vietnamese revolution.

2.2. THE PARTY'S POLICY OF UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE (1954–1967)

Even before the Geneva Agreement was formally signed, the Sixth Plenum of the Party Central Committee (Second Congress) had identified the United States as the principal and direct enemy of the revolutionary movements in Indochina. The Politburo meeting of June 1956 determined that political struggle should constitute the principal form of revolutionary struggle under prevailing conditions.

In the Outline of the South Vietnamese Revolution, drafted by Le Duan, the central proposition was clearly articulated: "Apart from the revolutionary path, there is no other path". Resolution No. 15 (1959) represented the Party's first official document publicly affirming the strategic orientation of liberating South Vietnam through revolutionary means. The Third National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (September 1960) established two distinct but closely coordinated revolutionary strategies: advancing the socialist revolution in North Vietnam; and carrying out the people's national democratic revolution in South Vietnam. The Congress further stressed that the spirit of self-reliance should be promoted to the highest level in order to build an independent and self-sustaining economy.

In December 1963, the Ninth Plenum of the Party Central Committee reaffirmed the Party's fundamental strategic principles concerning the revolutionary struggle. The Eleventh Plenum (March 1965) adopted the Special Resolution on the Immediate Tasks Facing the Revolution under the new circumstances created by the direct military intervention of the United States. Resolution No. 12 of the Party Central Committee (December 1965) introduced a series of important strategic decisions designed to respond to the rapidly changing military and political situation.

The Thirteenth Plenum (28 January 1967) reaffirmed that, although the Party attached great importance to consultation with fraternal socialist parties, it would consistently preserve its independence in determining diplomatic strategy and national policy. In December 1967, the Politburo adopted a historic resolution marking the transition of the revolutionary war in South Vietnam into a new strategic phase. The Resolution called for achieving a decisive victory through a nationwide General Offensive and General Uprising directed against enemy-controlled urban centres throughout South Vietnam. Throughout the period from 1954 to 1967, the Party's policy of upholding independence and self-reliance evolved continuously in response to changing domestic and international circumstances. Rather than mechanically following the strategic preferences of any major socialist power, the Party independently formulated revolutionary objectives, methods of struggle, and diplomatic strategies on the basis of Vietnam's own revolutionary realities. This independent strategic thinking became one of the defining characteristics of the Party's leadership and laid the political, military, and diplomatic foundations for the decisive strategic initiatives that followed after 1968.

2.3. THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN UPHOLDING

INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE FROM 1954 TO 1967

2.3.1. Upholding the Strategic Line of Resistance from 1954 to 1967

2.3.1.1. Maintaining the Resolve to Wage the Resistance War in Defense of National Independence and National Reunification

2.3.1.2. Steadfastness in Assessing Friends and Adversaries and Promoting International Solidarity

2.3.1.3. Steadfastness in Pursuing the Two Strategic Tasks

2.3.2. Upholding the Mode of Conducting the War

2.3.2.1. Engaging U.S. Forces Directly to Develop Effective Strategies for Defeating Them

2.3.2.2. Conducting a People's War Involving the Entire Population, Fought Comprehensively, and Primarily Relying on Internal Strength

2.3.3. Upholding an Independent and Self-Reliant Foreign Policy

2.3.3.1. Combining National Strength with the Strength of the Times to Secure International Sympathy and Support

2.3.3.2. Balancing Relations between the Soviet Union and China in Accordance with the Principle of "Remaining Firm in Fundamentals While Responding Flexibly to Changing Circumstances"

2.3.3.3. Supporting the Lao and Cambodian Revolutions under the Principle of "Helping Friends Is Helping Ourselves"

Chapter 3

THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE FROM 1968 TO 1975

3.1. NEW FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF- RELIANCE

3.1.1. Domestic Context

The increasingly aggressive schemes and military escalation pursued by the United States posed new and formidable challenges to the Party's leadership in upholding independence and self-reliance during the period 1968–1975. These developments required the Party to demonstrate an even higher degree of independence, self-reliance, and strategic initiative throughout its leadership of the resistance war.

3.1.2. International Context

The period 1968–1975 witnessed profound and complex changes in the strategic triangle involving the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. In particular, the agreements, diplomatic arrangements, and negotiations reached between the United States and the Soviet and Chinese leadership exposed the opportunistic and inconsistent nature of U.S. policy toward the Vietnam War. These developments created a highly volatile international environment, compelling the Party to exercise greater strategic autonomy and independent judgment in formulating and implementing its domestic and foreign policies.

3.2. THE PARTY'S POLICY OF UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE FROM 1968 TO 1975

The 14th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (January 1968) set forth the strategic task of "bringing the revolutionary war to its highest stage of development by employing the strategy of a General Offensive and General Uprising in order to achieve a decisive victory." Subsequently, the Politburo Resolution of 1 March 1968 called for strengthening the spirit of independence and self-reliance, emphasizing perseverance in a protracted struggle and readiness to endure sacrifice and hardship. Politburo Resolution No. 188-NQ/TW, issued on 10 May 1969, provided a comprehensive analysis of the fundamental weaknesses inherent in the U.S. strategy of "Vietnamization of the War." In May 1969, First Secretary Lê Duẩn further affirmed: "We are grateful for the support of the socialist camp

and remain united with it; however, without independence and self-reliance, victory cannot be achieved." This statement underscored the Party's consistent view that international support could serve only as a supplementary factor, while the decisive basis for victory rested on Vietnam's own capabilities.

The 20th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (27 January–11 February 1972) reaffirmed the necessity of firmly adhering to the Party's correct, independent, self-reliant, and creative international line, while fully promoting the spirit of self-reliance and relying primarily on the nation's own strength. Subsequently, the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee (October 1973) emphasized the need to maintain the strategic offensive orientation while exercising flexible leadership and direction in order to advance the revolutionary cause in South Vietnam. With regard to North Vietnam, the 22nd Plenum of the Party Central Committee, held from late 1973 to early 1974, deliberated on the economic development orientations and tasks for the 1974–1975 period. Meanwhile, the Expanded Politburo Meetings, convened from late 1974 to early 1975, met in two sessions to formulate the strategic plan for the complete liberation of South Vietnam. In Telegram No. 592, dated 29 April 1975 and addressed to regional, municipal, provincial Party organizations, the Secretariat declared with confidence: "We shall certainly liberate Saigon and the whole of South Vietnam."

3.3. THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN UPHOLDING INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE FROM 1968 TO 1975

3.3.1. Upholding the Strategic Line of Resistance

3.3.1.1. Maintaining the Determination to Continue the Resistance Until Final Victory

3.3.1.2. Upholding the Two Strategic Tasks and the Respective Roles of the Two Regions

3.3.1.3. Upholding International Solidarity

3.3.2. Upholding the Mode of Conducting the War

3.3.2.1. Engaging U.S. Forces Directly to Develop Effective Strategies for Defeating Them

3.3.2.2. Integrating Military Struggle and Negotiation in a Flexible and Coordinated Manner

3.3.2.3. Persisting in the Strategy of People's War and Compelling the Enemy to Fight on Terms Determined by Vietnam

Chapter 4

EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNED

4.1. EVALUATION

4.1.1. Strengths

First, the Party's commitment to upholding independence and self-reliance constituted a highly appropriate strategic policy grounded in a solid scientific foundation. It was formulated on the basis of Vietnam's national traditions, the Marxist–Leninist theory of war and revolution, Hồ Chí Minh Thought, and a careful assessment of the actual conditions of the resistance war. Second, throughout the process of directing the revolutionary struggle in accordance with the principle of independence and self-reliance, the Party consistently adhered to the guideline of relying primarily on the nation's own strength in building its comprehensive capabilities. At the same time, it continually adopted flexible and appropriate strategic approaches in response to changing circumstances, thereby ensuring the successful realization of its ultimate revolutionary objectives. Third, in terms of outcomes, first, the consistent adherence to independence and self-reliance fostered revolutionary heroism to its fullest extent, powerfully inspiring the nation's spirit of self-strengthening, self-defense, and self-reliance. Second, by steadfastly maintaining this principle, Vietnam was nevertheless able to secure broad international recognition as well as comprehensive and effective support from progressive peoples and peace-loving forces throughout the world. Fourth, in managing relations with the major powers, the Party convincingly demonstrated its capacity for independent decision-

making, strategic autonomy, and national self-determination. This provides compelling evidence to refute erroneous arguments portraying Vietnam merely as a "pawn" or "bargaining chip" in the strategic rivalry among major powers, lacking the capacity to exercise independent leadership or pursue an autonomous course of action.

4.1.2. Limitations

First, in the domestic sphere, the period 1954–1958 was marked by Vietnam's efforts to overcome the influence of externally derived ideological tendencies. Divergent viewpoints advanced by the Soviet Union and China created considerable challenges for the Party in formulating and implementing its policy of upholding independence and self-reliance. Second, in managing relations with the Soviet Union and China, particularly during the period 1963–1964, the Party did not always demonstrate a fully consistent degree of independence and self-reliance in addressing certain complex and sensitive situations.

4.2. LESSONS LEARNED

4.2.1. Formulating Appropriate Strategic Decisions on the Basis of Accurate Assessments of the Balance of Forces and the Strategies of Major Powers

Each major power that provided assistance to Vietnam pursued its own objectives, strategic orientation, and methods of engagement. Consequently, the Party needed to accurately assess these countries' national interests, the extent of their involvement, and their long-term strategic objectives, as well as the dynamics of alliance and rivalry among them. This required the establishment of effective mechanisms for continuous monitoring, periodic assessment, and timely policy adjustment. In the contemporary context, safeguarding Vietnam's independence and self-reliance requires a thorough understanding of the evolving international environment, an accurate assessment of partners and counterparts that directly affect the nation's endogenous capabilities, and the strategic vision necessary to anticipate both opportunities and potential risks.

4.2.2. Unity and Solidarity: The Foundation for Overcoming Historical Challenges

Unity and solidarity within the Party constituted the fundamental prerequisite for ensuring centralized leadership and unity in both will and action. The Party's self-criticism campaigns, conducted to review delays and shortcomings following the Geneva Agreement, the 1968 Tet Offensive, and the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement, played an important role in strengthening internal cohesion, reinforcing the Party's unity, and advancing the resistance war against the United States toward complete victory. Only when the Party maintained internal unity and organizational cohesion could it fully mobilize and maximize the strength of the entire political system, particularly in neutralizing the adverse effects of the strategic calculations pursued by major powers.

4.2.3. Independence, Self-Reliance, and Creativity: The Three Pillars of Building Revolutionary Strength

A strong national capability must be built to ensure the capacity to shape and control strategic developments. At the same time, it is essential to seize favorable opportunities, launch unexpected offensives against the enemy, and secure successive victories in individual battles, military campaigns, and strategic campaigns, thereby creating the conditions for ultimate victory. In the contemporary era, economic strength has become the foremost determinant of national power. Accordingly, building an independent and self-reliant economy constitutes an objective and indispensable requirement for safeguarding national development and strategic autonomy.

4.2.4. Integrating National Strength with the Strength of the Times while Proactively Promoting International Solidarity on the Basis of Principle and Goodwill

One of the Party's defining characteristics was its ability to maintain strategic composure even when navigating "between two lines of fire"—that is, while simultaneously facing pressure and criticism from both of its principal socialist allies, the Soviet Union and China. Vietnam consistently maintained constructive relations with both countries;

however, whenever either side adopted policies that were inconsistent with Vietnam's national interests or strategic objectives, the Party expressed its views candidly and without hesitation. Today, a foreign policy founded upon reason, goodwill, and mutual respect, together with the diplomatic principle of "remaining firm in fundamental principles while responding flexibly to changing circumstances" (dĩ bất biến, ứng vạn biến), continues to constitute a defining characteristic of Vietnam's diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

The resistance war against the United States for national salvation (1954–1975) constitutes one of the most glorious and heroic chapters in the history of the Vietnamese nation during the twentieth century. This great victory resulted from the combined influence of numerous factors, among which the steadfast leadership of the Vietnam Workers' Party in upholding independence and self-reliance played the decisive role. Drawing upon a comprehensive body of reliable and objective source materials and employing a rigorous scientific methodology, this dissertation has successfully achieved its research objectives. The dissertation highlights the following principal findings and original contributions:

First, the dissertation has systematically examined and further clarified the theoretical content of the Party's principle of upholding independence and self-reliance, while demonstrating its intrinsic relationship with the Party's strategic creativity under the conditions of a national liberation war. The findings indicate that, during the period 1954–1975, independence and self-reliance did not signify isolationism, self-imposed detachment, or doctrinaire sectarianism. Rather, they represented the Party's firm political resolve to place the supreme interests of the nation above all other considerations. The Party's steadfast commitment to its strategic objectives provided the foundation for theoretical innovation, most notably the formulation at the Third National Party Congress of the strategy of simultaneously carrying out two revolutionary tasks in the two regions of the country. Conversely, creativity and flexibility in strategic policy, revolutionary violence, and the art of people's war constituted the practical means through which the Party safeguarded and translated this principle of independence and self-reliance into reality on the battlefield.

Second, the dissertation reconstructs, from an objective and multidimensional perspective, the process through which the Party preserved its strategic autonomy and decision-making authority in the face of pressure and strategic calculations by the major powers. This constitutes one of the dissertation's most significant original contributions, as it situates Vietnam's resistance war against the United States within the broader context of international history, particularly the profound divisions within the socialist camp arising from the Sino–Soviet split. The study demonstrates that during the

period 1954–1967, the Party consistently rejected externally imposed strategic approaches that were incompatible with Vietnam's national interests while simultaneously securing substantial assistance from its socialist allies. During the subsequent period (1968–1975), as major-power diplomacy increasingly sought to determine the outcome of the war without the participation of the Vietnamese people, the Party elevated the principle of independence and self-reliance into a sophisticated form of strategic leadership. It firmly upheld the principle of national sovereignty while creatively implementing the strategy of "fighting while negotiating" at the Paris Peace Conference, thereby maintaining full control over both the course and ultimate outcome of the war.

Third, the dissertation identifies the distinctive characteristics and underlying logic of the Party's strategy of achieving victory step by step in combination with the art of seizing strategic opportunities to secure complete victory. Its original contribution lies in explaining the Party's dialectical strategic thinking in differentiating among enemy forces through the guiding principle of "driving the Americans out" as the means of eliminating the enemy's principal source of support, thereby creating the decisive conditions for subsequently "toppling the Saigon regime." This strategic creativity reached its highest expression during the Spring Offensive of 1975, when the Party accurately recognized the emergence of a historic opportunity and decisively revised its original two-year plan for the liberation of South Vietnam, replacing it with a strategy characterized by "speed, boldness, surprise, and certain victory," thus securing complete national liberation.

Fourth, the dissertation derives several lessons of both theoretical and practical significance. Rather than merely describing historical events, it identifies broader strategic principles. First, it highlights the importance of elevating strategic thinking through proactive assessment of changing international circumstances and accurate anticipation of the strategic intentions of major powers. Second, it emphasizes the principle that national strength constitutes the fundamental foundation for mobilizing endogenous capabilities, which in turn serve as the basis for effectively harnessing the strength of the times. Third, it demonstrates the necessity of harmonizing steadfast adherence to strategic principles with flexibility and

adaptability in diplomatic strategy, thereby maximizing international support while safeguarding national interests.

In conclusion, this dissertation provides a systematic, in-depth, and original analysis of the twenty-one-year process through which the Vietnam Workers' Party upheld the principle of independence and self-reliance in leading the resistance war against the United States. Its scholarly findings not only contribute to enriching and deepening the historiography of the Communist Party of Vietnam, but also offer valuable practical insights for contemporary policymaking. These lessons are particularly relevant as Vietnam enters a new historical stage of national development, striving toward a prosperous, strong, democratic, equitable, civilized, and happy society. Above all, they reaffirm that maintaining independence and self-reliance under all circumstances remains a fundamental strategic principle, while emphasizing that the effective integration of endogenous national capabilities with the achievements of human civilization is essential for enhancing national resilience, preserving national identity, and safeguarding the supreme interests of the nation in an increasingly dynamic and uncertain international environment.

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