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VIETNAM AS ‘A MIDDLE POWER’ ON THE EXAMPLE OF ITS COOPERATION WITH INDO-CHINESE COUNTRIES

One of the key aims underlying Vietnam’s change of domestic and foreign policy in the 80s of the 20th century was coming out of international isolation and the improvement of relations with the countries situated in the immediate vicinity. A stable international situation was supposed to allow Vietnam to develop economically, and consequently provide legitimacy for the exclusive exercise of power of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). The accession to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) not only ensured the implementation of these objectives, but also allows Vietnam to assume the role of a leader of the newly associated Member States of the so-called CLMV group¹ – in a different character than in previous decades as ‘the main revolutionary force of Indochina’. This is in line with the ‘genetically coded’ aspirations of the authorities of this state to lead the states of the Indochinese Peninsula and assume the role of a regional power. So far this ambition has aroused opposition among Indo-Chinese countries resulting from the deeply-rooted negative historical experiences. The resistance resulted from fears of unilateral action policy to interfere in their internal affairs, often involving the use of armed force or the threat of its use. The demonstrated desire for friendly cooperation with its neighbours through international institutions, both within ASEAN and beyond, as well as the gradual understanding of the source of the hostile sentiment in Hanoi

¹ The acronym CLMV comes from the English names of countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam. The acronym CLV is also used, which excludes Myanmar (Burma) from the above group – unless otherwise stated, this term is considered herein as synonymous with the term ‘Indo-Chinese countries’.

and the associated change in behaviour are conducive to the improvement of its perception in the subregion.

This aim of the article is to show the evolution which has taken place in terms of Vietnam's politics towards Indochina countries since the introduction of *doi moi*, or 'renewal' policy by the CPV in 1986. The basic vision of playing the role of a regional leader for Indochina has not changed, however the manner of its implementation has changed. This creates a favourable opportunity for Vietnam, unless the recidivism of 'the appetite for domination' appears, to assume the role of a 'middle power' in the region of Southeast Asia, which is the realisation of the key – although non verbalised – aim of this state.

THE CONDITIONS OF VIETNAM'S ASPIRATIONS

The ambitions of Hanoi to lead the countries of the Indochina Peninsula result not only from historical circumstances. The vast disparity of potentials in different spheres also speaks in favour of Vietnam. At the forefront is the advantage of economic capacities of Vietnam; even if the average annual GDP growth in recent years has been slightly higher in the case of Myanmar and Laos, the absolute level of this indicator has been by far the highest in the case of Vietnam (for more see Table 1). Vietnam is also the largest participant in international trade: not only is the value of trade in goods and services the highest (see. Table 2), but according to WTO data also the commodity structure of Vietnamese trade is the most balanced (i.e. not dependent only on exports of fossil deposits and fuels or cheap industrial goods².

Apart from a better economic situation, according to World Bank indicators, Vietnam is also better managed than the other Indochinese countries, and its citizens are on average better educated than other residents of the subregion³. This translates into not only higher productivity, but also into the development of more advanced sectors of the economy; according to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2010 Vietnam was the only country

² World Trade Organisation. *Trade profiles, op. cit.*

³ Hansakul, S. 2013. *ASEAN Economic Community: Implications for Thailand & CLMV*. DB Research. Available at: http://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD000000000304467/Presentation%3A+ASEAN+Economic+Community+-+Implications+for+Thailand+%26+CLMV.PDF [Accessed: 28 February 2014].

in Indochina whose citizens were granted patents, also the biggest number of trademarks was registered⁴. Also, we should not forget the demographic factor – the population of Vietnam, in 2012 amounting to over 89 million people, is bigger than the total population of CLM countries (14.4 million, 6.4 million and 51.9 million respectively)⁵. These factors affect the behaviour of Hanoi towards other countries of the subregion – after the transformation of *doi moi* the Vietnamese government seems to apply the strategy of ‘the first among equals’. It uses its strengths to improve the situation in Indochina while highlighting (although not demonstratively and directly) its leading position.

Table 1
Selected macroeconomic indicators of CLMV countries

State	1995	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012
GDP [billion USD]						
Cambodia	3.44	3.65	6.29	11.24	12.83	14.04
Laos	1.76	1.73	2.74	7.18	8.25	9.42
Myanmar	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	54.43 ^{a)}	57.42 ^{**}	60.87 ^{**}
Vietnam	20.74	33.64	57.63	115.93	135.54	155.82
Real GDP growth [percent]						
Cambodia	6.44	8.77	13.25	5.96	7.07	7.26
Laos	7.03	5.80	7.11	8.53	8.04	8.20
Myanmar	6.95	13.75	13.6 ^{a)}	5.3 ^{a)}	5.5 ^{a)}	6 ^{a)}
Vietnam	9.54	6.79	7.55	6.42	6.24	5.25

* Estimated values; ** Values based on own calculations.

Source: own study based on: the World Bank Group Statistics Database – Indicators: *GDP (current USD)*, *GDP growth (annual %)*. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>; ^{a)} Global Finances, *Myanmar Country Report*. Available at: <http://www.gfmag.com/gdp-data-country-reports/214-myanmar-gdp-country-report.html> [Accessed: 28 February 2014].

⁴ The World Trade Organisation. *Trade profiles, op. cit.*

⁵ Data on the basis of *Total population – both sexes. World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision*. Available at: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Excel-Data/population.htm> [Accessed: 28 February 2014].

Table 2

The value of international trade for 2011

Commodities [million USD]				
	Cambodia	Laos	Myanmar	Vietnam
Export (FOB)	6 950	2 400	9 330	96 906
Import (CIF)	9 300	2 700	8 000	106 750
Services [million USD]				
Export	2 191	489*	331*	8 769
Import	1 448	258*	754*	11 707

* Values for 2010.

Source: own study based on: the World Trade Organisation, *Trade profiles 2012*. Available at: http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/anrep_e/trade_profiles12_e.pdf [Accessed: 28 February 2014].

VIETNAM'S ASPIRATIONS – HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

Vietnam's hegemonic ambitions focused on Indochina have been a major problem in the relations with the countries of Southeast Asia after the Second World War. The fear of domination attempts was confirmed by historical examples, such as the occupation of the Red River delta territory by the Vietnamese and the cut-off of the then Khmer Empire from the sea (1620) and the expansion and takeover of areas considered by the local population as the cradle of their statehood or the actual seizure of power in Cambodia by Vietnamese officials in the years 1813–1841⁶. Also Thailand, arguing with Vietnam about dominance in the region since the eighteenth century, perceived Vietnam's aspirations as a threat to its own security.

THE POLICY OF UNILATERAL DOMINATION OF THE COLD WAR PERIOD

After regaining independence and unification of the state in 1975 the Vietnamese government has intensified its efforts to strengthen the political dominance in Laos and Cambodia. The existence in Laos of pro-Vietnamese

⁶ *Cambodia: domination by Thailand and by Vietnam*. U. S. Library of Congress. Available at: <http://countrystudies.us/cambodia/9.htm> [Accessed: 20 February 2014].

Pathet Lao communist movement⁷, ideologically kindred to CPV, helped to cover this country with political influence. The Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation, concluded in 1977, made Laos *de facto* a protectorate of Vietnam; in accordance with its provisions the Laotian government could not make decisions on foreign policy without the prior approval of Vietnam. Besides the clear objection of the government in Beijing, it did not raise broader international controversy⁸.

To a much greater extent than the subordination of Laos, the shape of contemporary relations of Vietnam with the ASEAN countries and the role of this country in Indochina was affected by the relations with Cambodia. The government's actions in Hanoi, aiming to subordinate the government in Phnom Penh, resulted not only from historical animosities, but also from the lack of pro-Vietnamese communist movement in Cambodia. Because of the role of the Khmer Rouge in Chinese policy towards Hanoi, the invasion of Cambodia was, on the one hand, the effect of Vietnam's elementary safety reasons, but, on the other hand, a consequence of its hegemonic aspirations. Tense relations between the states, aggravated further by the Soviet-Chinese rivalry, from 1976 took the form of border incidents, which – despite initial attempts to resolve the dispute diplomatically – led to breaking the relations at the end of 1977 and in 1978 to the beginning of a border war which transformed into a full offensive and ended in conquering Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979 and the establishment of a pro-Vietnamese government of Heng Samrin in Cambodia⁹. The activities of Vietnam provoked a strong reaction of the PRC – the inspirer of the exasperation of the confrontation between the two Indochina neighbours¹⁰ – in the form of a military intervention

⁷ Pathet Lao was a left-wing nationalist organisation formed in 1950, fighting for the liberation of Laos from the French colonial domination. Since its inception, it cooperated with the Vietnamese analogous organisation Viet Minh. It took power in the country in 1975, after the overthrow of the US-supported government in Vientiane, creating the Lao People's Democratic Republic. For more see, for example, *Laos: The Pathet Lao*. U. S. Library of Congress. Available at: <http://countrystudies.us/laos/18.htm> [Accessed: 20 February 2014].

⁸ Pike, D. 1978. Vietnam in 1977: more of the same. *Asian Survey*, vol. 18, no 1.

⁹ Karwowski, M. 2010. *Polityka zagraniczna Wietnamu*. [Foreign policy of Vietnam.] Warszawa: Fundacja Studiów Międzynarodowych, pp. 76–79.

¹⁰ For more see Rowiński, J., Szafraniec P. 2006. Indochiny w strategii politycznej Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej w końcowej fazie „zimnej wojny”. [Indochina in the political strategy of the People's Republic of China in the final phase of the 'cold war'.] *Studia Międzynarodowe*, vol. 2, no 1–4, pp. 41–47.

in Vietnam (17 February – 16 March 1979)¹¹. Beijing was strongly opposed to the domination of Hanoi in Indochina, unless it served the implementation of its policy. The behaviour of the Vietnamese government – its ties with countries which China at that time regarded as opponents (initially the United States, then the Soviet Union) raised in Beijing the feeling that its safety was in danger (it was perceived as ‘the encirclement of China’) and that its influence in the region was being limited. The government’s actions in Hanoi also aroused concern and opposition from the ASEAN countries (especially Thailand) which refused to recognise the government of Heng Samrin¹². The condemnation of the Vietnamese occupation by both the PRC and the USA, its Western allies and the Asian non-communist bloc led to the isolation of Vietnam on the international arena. An absolute condition for accession to the peace talks set by ASEAN was the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia¹³, to which Hanoi did not consent at that time. The consequence of such an attitude was freezing of relations between Vietnam and ASEAN until the mid-80s of the 20th century.

THE CHANGE OF THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN CAMBODIA

The decision to maintain the Vietnam People’s Army (VPA) in Cambodia was dictated by the fear of re-taking of power by the Khmer Rouge, who in 1982 allied with the non-Communist forces of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, creating the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) in exile¹⁴. That situation changed in the mid-80s, when the attacks of the VPA reduced the number of guerrilla units, so the constant presence of the Vietnamese army was no longer necessary – the military factor, although significant, was no longer

¹¹ Karwowski, M., *op. cit.*, pp. 80–82.

¹² Rungwasdisab, P. 2005. Thailand’s response to the Cambodian genocide. In: Cook S.E. ed. *Genocide in Rwanda and Cambodia: new perspectives*. Transaction Publishers; Haacke, J. 2004. Significance of Beijing’s bilateral relations: looking ‘below’ the regional level in China-ASEAN ties. In: Leong, H.K., Samuel, C.Y.K. eds. *China and southeast Asia: global and regional challenges*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 83.

¹³ More information on the position of ASEAN towards the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia see, for example, Soon, L.T. 1982. ASEAN and the Cambodian problem. *Asian Survey*, vol. 22, no. 6, p. 548 ff.

¹⁴ Curtis, G. 1993. Transition to what? Cambodia, UNTAC and the peace process. *United Nations Research Institute For Social Development Discussion Papers*, no. 48, p. 2.

regarded as the most important. In 1985 the government issued the decision to withdraw the troops from Cambodia by 1990, but in fact it happened at the end of 1989. This was possible thanks to the co-existence of important internal and international reasons. For Hanoi the decisive factors were the reduction of impact of the Khmer Rouge (still supported by Beijing) perceived as a threat in the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), as well as the redefinition of foreign policy objectives and the departure from the ideological key in international contacts. The economic factor was also significant – the withdrawal of Soviet economic aid from Indochina, more than a half of which had been spent on military purposes, made the maintenance of the army in the PRK too expensive for Vietnam¹⁵. As a result, the government in Hanoi began activities aimed at resolving the conflict in a diplomatic way.

Despite the initial distrust, thanks to the VPA's withdrawal from the territory of Cambodia and stopping cross-border attacks on refugee camps in Thailand¹⁶, as well as a result of the adoption by the CPV Political Bureau of appropriate legal regulations, codifying the new direction of Vietnam's foreign policy¹⁷, the peace process became possible. In 1989 the approximation of the positions of the parties led to the acceleration of peace negotiations in the form of the Paris Conference¹⁸; in accordance with its provisions, contained in the Paris Peace Accords of 27 October 1991, the peace process was taking place under the aegis of the UN within the UNTAC mission, while Vietnam distanced itself from the internal affairs of Cambodia, which was to prove the sincerity of its peaceful intentions.

¹⁵ Emmers, R. 2005. The Indochinese enlargement of ASEAN: security expectations and outcomes. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 1, p. 86.

¹⁶ Attacks of the VPA on the border Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand, repeated throughout the duration of the conflict, but increased in the early 80s, were considered significant security threat both by the government in Bangkok and the other ASEAN countries. See the news about the attacks, for example, in: Thai troops placed on alert after raid by Vietnamese. *The New York Times* [Online] 1981. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/01/05/world/around-the-world-thai-troops-placed-on-alert-after-raid-by-vietnamese.html> [Accessed: 22 February 2014]. Vietnam troops attack Cambodia refugee camp. *The New York Times* [Online] 1983. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/01/world/around-the-world-vietnam-troops-attack-cambodia-refugee-camp.html> [Accessed: 22 February 2014].

¹⁷ Thayer, C.A. 1999. Vietnamese foreign policy: multilateralism and the threat of peaceful evolution. In: Thayer, C.A., Amer, R. eds. *Vietnamese foreign policy in transition*. Singapore: ISEAS, p. 2-3.

¹⁸ *Indonesia, ASEAN, and the third Indochina war*. The US Library of Congress. Available at: <http://countrystudies.us/indonesia/99.htm> [Accessed: 03 March 2014].

THE CHANGE OF VIETNAM'S POLICY AFTER ACCESSION TO ASEAN

The basis of Vietnam's coming out of international isolation was to regulate relations with the other Indochinese countries, which in turn was only possible through the termination of the Vietnamese-Cambodian conflict lasting since 1978. For this reason, the government focused on the normalisation of relations with Cambodia, showing clearly less interest in contacts with Laos. The intensification of Vietnamese-Cambodian relations took place with the reconstruction and economic development of Cambodia, thanks to which business contacts were resumed¹⁹. Further development of bilateral relations took place within the framework of ASEAN, which Cambodia joined in 1999, among others, thanks to the support of Vietnam²⁰. Relations with Laos maintained their 'special character' much longer, given to them by the Treaty of 1977²¹. Pathet Lao, remaining under the strong influence of the CPV, decided to undertake *Chintakanan Mai* reforms in 1986, based on the pattern of Vietnam and continued with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund²². The positive effects of the modernisation, backed by the Vietnamese diplomatic efforts contributed to the admission of Laos to ASEAN in 1997²³. As in the case of Cambodia, the further development of bilateral relations took place on the basis of regional structures, as well as on the subregional cooperation of Indochina countries. In recent years, however, a gradual reduction in the degree of dependence of Vientiane from Hanoi has been observed. It results from both the changes occurring in Vietnam and the membership of both countries in ASEAN, as well as from the dynamic Chinese economic offensive in Laos²⁴ – China

¹⁹ Karwowski, M., *op. cit.*, pp. 108–110.

²⁰ Langran, I. 2000. Cambodia in 1999: year of hope. *Asian Survey*, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 24.

²¹ See more in Pike, D. 1978. Vietnam in 1977: more of the same. *Asian Survey*, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 74.

²² See more on the Laotian economic reforms in Lathouly, P. *Macroeconomic policies and institutions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic*. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, Available at: http://www.unescap.org/drapad/publication/ldc1_1788/chap7.pdf [Accessed: 05 March 2014].

²³ Stuart-Fox, M. 1998. Laos in 1997: into ASEAN. *Asian Survey*, vol. 38, no. 1, p. 75 ff.

²⁴ See more on the dynamic growth of China's economic involvement in Laos, for example, in China likely to become Laos' largest foreign investor. *Asia News Network* [Online] 2012. Available at: <http://www.asianewsnet.net/home/news.php?sec=2&id=29312> [Accessed: 04 March 2014]. Chanhchom, P. 2010. *Laos-China trade reaches new high*. Lao Investor House. Available at: <http://laoinvestorhouse.com/2010/09/08/laos-china-trade-reaches-new-high/> [Accessed: 03 March 2014]. China, Laos enhance economic

is currently intensively seeking to gain dominant influence in this country (this includes not only investments in the border region, but throughout the country).

Vietnam's special involvement in actions of ASEAN in the Indochinese sub-region stems not only from the geographical proximity and the already mentioned historical aspirations to play the role of a regional leader, but also from the similarities of the economic situation and a clear distinction of CLMV countries from other countries of the Association. The engagement in cooperation linking the countries of the Indochina Peninsula contributes to economic development and rising living standards throughout the subregion, and at the same time to the resolution of the problem of development disparities between old and new Member States (the so-called ASEAN divide issue). It is also supposed to facilitate the efficient use of the ASEAN free trade area (AFTA) and other free trade areas²⁵. For the same reasons, Vietnamese investors increasingly choose to invest their capital in the countries of Indochina; the most important recipient of Vietnam's FDI are Cambodia and Laos. For Laos, Vietnam remains the most important investor: in April 2012 active Vietnamese investments amounted to over 5 billion USD²⁶. For Cambodia, Vietnam became the second investor from ASEAN, after Malaysia, investing a total sum of 812 million USD in this country in the years 1994–2011²⁷.

The problem of development disparities within the framework of ASEAN stems not only from differences in the efficiency of individual national economies, illustrated by the macroeconomic indicators. In comparison with the old Member States, transport and communication infrastructure of CLMV countries is underdeveloped and the privatisation of enterprises is limited and economic growth is achieved through faintly advanced production sectors. For the Indo-Chinese countries it often means the lack of subjective

cooperation. *Asia News Network* [Online] 2013. Available at: <http://www.asianewsnet.net/Laos-China-enhabce-economic-cooperation-53443.html> [Accessed: 03 April 2014].

²⁵ Pietrasik, M. 2010. *Środowiskowe wyznaczniki polityki zagranicznej Wietnamu w obliczu procesów integracji z gospodarką światową*. [Environmental determinants of foreign policy of Vietnam in the face of the processes of integration with the world economy.] Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, p. 174.

²⁶ Yuan, L. 2012. *Vietnam to remain Laos' biggest investor*. ASEAN-China Free Trade Area, Available at: <http://www.asean-cn.org/Item/4975.aspx> [Accessed: 02 February 2014].

²⁷ Lina, Y. 2011. *Cambodia attracts 476 mln USD investments from ASEAN in 9 months*. Xinhua. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/10/c_131239303.htm [Accessed: 02 February 2014].

readiness and objective possibilities for further integration of the economies; the participation in the AFTA and other free trade zones with the maintaining current difference in the level of development will lead to the deterioration of the situation of the CLMV countries and deepening of divisions²⁸.

COOPERATION WITHIN THE POLYGONS OF GROWTH IN THE MEKONG RIVER BASIN

The awareness of the adverse impact of the ASEAN divide issue on the chances for further economic development prompted Vietnam to engage in cooperation at the subregional level in order to eliminate disparities. It most often takes a form of the so-called polygons of growth – transnational cooperation structures created in the border regions of the countries concerned, aiming at exploiting existing comparative advantages²⁹. Actions of Indochina countries concentrate largely in the Mekong basin, due to the important role of the river in the economies of the CLMV countries.

At the same time we should not forget that the countries located along the course of the Mekong River significantly differ from one another in terms of their potential – both as far as the access to the river resources, and economic possibilities of its use are concerned. For the states located in the lower course – Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam located in the delta – the river is the basis for agriculture and fishery which are essential in the economies of these countries. Of particular importance is the constant inflow of sediment from the upper course of the river forming alluvial soils in the lower course, which are necessary to practice traditional agriculture. Mekong is also an important communication route, key in the areas cut off from the sea, such as Laos and China's Yunnan province³⁰. Apart from these traditional functions, the hydroelectric potential of the river is currently more and more often used – the Mekong is becoming

²⁸ Terada, T. 2004. *Thorny progress in the institutionalisation of ASEAN+3: deficient China-Japan leadership and the ASEAN divide for regional governance*. Policy and Governance Working Paper Series, no. 49, p. 21; Klecha-Tylec, K. 2013. *Regionalizm w teorii i praktyce państw Azji Wschodniej*. [Regionalism in theory and practice of East Asian countries]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 234.

²⁹ Dent, C.M. 2008. *East Asian regionalism*. Abingdon–New York: Routledge, p. 73.

³⁰ Keskinen, M., Mehtonen, K., Varis, O. 2008. Transboundary cooperation vs. internal ambitions: the role of China and Cambodia in the Mekong region. In: Pachova, N.I., Nakayama, M., Jansky L. eds. *International water security: domestic threats and opportunities*. Tokio: United Nations University Press, pp. 82–84.

an important source of income for the CLMV countries and the PRC³¹. It is estimated that the hydroelectric potential of the upper course, falling almost exclusively on China, is 28 930 MW, while in the lower course it amounts to a total of 30 000 MW for all participating countries³².

But the potential inequality is not a problem – the opposition is raised by the fact that unilateral behaviour dominates in Beijing's policy in the Mekong region. The authorities of the PRC are accused of using their stronger negotiating position and taking decisions without consulting the countries from the lower course and without informing them. This prevents a realistic assessment of the consequences of hydroelectric projects and may result in, among others, disrupting the ecological balance of the region, and consequently a violation of the economic and agricultural structure in the basin and delta of the Mekong, the impoverishment of local communities and the dramatic deterioration of the living conditions³³. Currently, the most important plan of China pertaining to the river is the project of a cascade on the upper reaches of the Mekong³⁴, thanks to which a greater use of the hydropower potential will be possible³⁵. The government in Beijing made the

³¹ An example of this may be a new Lao project of supplying neighboring countries with electricity from a dam in Xayaburi; according to the authorities, it is supposed to transform Laos in the 'battery of Southeast Asia', but the chances of success seem limited. See more in Hydropower on the Mekong: might not give a dam. *The Economist* [Online] 2011. Available at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2011/05/hydropower_mekong [Accessed: 02 April 2014].

³² Mekong River Commission. 2010. *State of the Basin Report 2010*, p. 27.

³³ See more on the possible consequences of Chinese hydropower dams for the economies and environment of states located in the lower reaches of the Mekong, for instance, in Xi, L.X., Jian-Jun, W., Grundy-Warr C. 2008. Are the Chinese dams to be blamed for the low water levels in the Lower Mekong? In: Kummu, M., Keskinen, M., Varis O. eds. *Modern myths of the Mekong. A critical review of water and development concepts, principles and policies*. Water & Development Research Group. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, p. 45 ff.

³⁴ In the rest of the text – unless indicated otherwise – the term "Mekong" refers only to the main course of the river, with the exclusion of its tributaries. Therefore, only projects of dams on the main course are discussed, bypassing facilities on tributaries. See the status of the construction of the river dams in the whole Mekong basin, that is with tributaries, in Challenge Program on Water and Food. 2011. *Mekong Basin Hydropower Map*. Available at: <http://mekong.waterandfood.org/cpwf-in-the-mekong/45> [Accessed: 02 April 2014].

³⁵ See a more extensive overview of individual Chinese dams on the Mekong, for example, in Mehtonen, K. *Do the downstream countries oppose the upstream dams?*, Kummu, M., Keskinen, M., Varis, O. eds. *Modern myths...*, op. cit., p. 163 (table 3).

decisions on the establishment and implementation of the cascade project without consultation with the countries in the lower course, neither in the bilateral formula nor within the framework of the existing international forum of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Despite China's assurances about the harmlessness of the project to the other riverside states³⁶, these actions aroused opposition in all countries of the lower reaches, especially in the face of protests of local communities of farmers and fishermen, attributing the deregulation and unpredictability of the Mekong to the activities of China³⁷. This causes the intensification of insecurity in the countries in the lower reaches of the Mekong, and also since – as opposed to economic cooperation, the management of the river course is closer to the realistic idea of 'zero-sum game'³⁸, the existing tensions in the region exacerbates.

Moreover, China's economic presence in the region raises some concerns. It engages itself mainly through growth polygons (GMS, the so-called Golden Quadrangle³⁹ and the Strategy for Economic Cooperation Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong), as well as through development assistance. In the economic relations with the countries of the Mekong basin, Beijing concentrates on investments in infrastructure and the creation of special economic zones; the major projects include Kunming – Hanoi – Haiphong and Kunming – Nanning

³⁶ Xi, L. X., Jian-Jun, W., Grundy-Warr C. 2008. Are the Chinese dams to be blamed for the low water levels in the Lower Mekong? In: Kummu, M., Keskinen, M., Varis O. eds. *Modern myths...*, op. cit., pp. 39–40; Baker, M.M. 2000. The Mekong Cascade. *Executive Intelligence Review*, vol. 27, no. 48, pp. 18–19.

³⁷ Lee, Y. China hydropower dams in Mekong river give shocks to 60 million. *Bloomberg Markets Magazine*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-10-26/china-hydropower-dams-in-mekong-river-give-shocks-to-60-million.html> [Accessed: 02 April 2014].

³⁸ See more in Liebman, A. 2005. Trickle-down hegemony? China's 'Peaceful Rise' and the dam building on the Mekong. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 287–288.

³⁹ The Golden Quadrangle, established in 1993 and associating China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand, is an intermediate institution between a formal growth polygon and a loose consultancy forum. Activities under the Golden Quadrangle focus on cooperation in the field of tourism and on improving navigation on the Mekong River. See more in Boyd, A. 2002. Fears of Mekong free-for-all as China goes it alone. *Asia Times*. [Online] Available at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/DK16Ae02.html [Accessed: 02 April 2014]; Xu, H., Bao, J., Zhou, Ch. 2006. Effectiveness of regional tourism integration: case of quadrangle economic cooperation zone in Great Mekong Region. *Chinese Geographical Science*, vol. 16, no 2, p. 141 ff.

– Hanoi roads⁴⁰. The PRC also finances a number of projects pertaining to the development of human capital, through the agency of ASEAN⁴¹. Projects emerging in the GMS countries are largely Chinese investments or are a form of development assistance for the CLMV countries⁴²; consequently – although they often bring positive economic effects – they contribute to reinforcing of inequality in the region and dependence of the countries in the lower reaches of the Mekong on China⁴³.

In comparison with the behaviour of China, Vietnam's attitude seems to be easier to accept for the Indo-Chinese countries. The government in Hanoi got engaged in cooperation with the Indo-Chinese countries of the Mekong basin even before joining the ASEAN. In 1992, together with the CLM countries, Thailand and the PRC took part in the establishment of the GMS⁴⁴. The GMS program includes nine economic sectors, among which the priority is the expansion of transnational transport infrastructure, allowing to accelerate the development and to achieve other objectives. Vietnam took part primarily in the construction of the so-called transport corridors – road connections intended to form the basis for the development of trade, tourism and investment in the CLM countries with in framework

⁴⁰ ASEAN-China Center. 2011. *China-ASEAN Cooperation: 1991–2011*. Available at: http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2011-11/16/c_131249656_7.htm [Accessed: 02 April 2014].

⁴¹ See more, for example, in Haibing, Z. 2007. China's aid to Southeast Asia. In: Swee-Hock, S. ed. *ASEAN-China economic relations*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 256–257.

⁴² See more in Zhenming, Z. 2009. China's economic aid to the CLMV as its economic cooperation with them. In: Kagami M. ed. *A China-Japan comparison of economic relationships with the Mekong river basin countries* [Online]. BRC Research Reports, no. 1, p. 69 ff. Available at: http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Brc/pdf/01_chinaseconomic.pdf [Accessed: 03 April 2014].

⁴³ See more on China's economic cooperation with GMS countries and assessment of its effectiveness in, for example, Masami, I. 2007. GMS economic cooperation and its impact on CLMV development. In: Soharit, Ch. ed. *Development strategy for CLMV in the age of economic integration* [Online]. ERIA Research Project Paper, no 4, p. 115 ff. Available at: <http://www.eria.org/research/images/pdf/PDF%20No.4/No.4-part1-4-GMS.pdf> [Accessed: 03 April 2014].

⁴⁴ The objectives of this program, established with the help of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are the support for the economic relationship between the participants and the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals by strengthening the so-called 'three Cs', that is connectivity, competitiveness and community. See more in *Overview: Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program*, Asian Development Bank, 2012, p. 3.

of the so-called economic corridors. To date within the framework of the North-South Economic Corridor road links from Hanoi and Haiphong to Kunming and Nanning have been created⁴⁵. The GMS Transport Strategy for 2006–2015 also provides for the creation of a land connection between Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok and between Da Nang and Rangoon (also within the economic corridors)⁴⁶. Under the aegis of the GMS, the Cross-border Transport Agreement was signed in 1999, under which Vietnam, Laos and Thailand are obliged to introduce practical facilitations in the cross-border traffic. By 2003 all the GMS countries joined the Agreement⁴⁷.

A narrower forum for cooperation between Indochina countries, covering only the Member States of ASEAN, is the Mekong River Commission (MRC). This institution was founded in 1995 and is the culmination of previous attempts to institutionalise international cooperation in this region⁴⁸. Commission members are Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand; the PRC and Myanmar have an observer status. In addition to the countries, a number of organisations and institutions dealing with technological, environmental and developmental issues participate in the work of the MRC – including ADB, UNDP and ASEAN and representatives of local communities⁴⁹. The most important tasks of the MRC include the fight against poverty, strengthening of regional cooperation, environmental protection and the introduction of integrated management of water resources⁵⁰. So far, however, the Commission has focused on the conceptual, organisational tasks and the creation and dissemination of knowledge⁵¹. As a forum for cooperation and coordination of Indochina countries' policy on the use of the Mekong, the

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 10–11.

⁴⁶ *GMS Economic Cooperation Program*. In: *Cross-Border Infrastructure Toolkit*. Asian Development Bank, 2007, pp. 5–6.

⁴⁷ *Greater Mekong Subregion: Transport*. Asian Development Bank. Available at: <http://adb.org/countries/gms/sector-activities/transport> [Accessed: 03 March 2014].

⁴⁸ First major project of international cooperation in the Mekong basin was the Mekong Committee set up in 1959 under the aegis of the United Nations. See more in *The story of Mekong cooperation*. Mekong River Commission. Available at: <http://www.mrcmekong.org/about-the-mrc/history/> [Accessed: 03 March 2014].

⁴⁹ *Development partners & partner organisations*. Mekong River Commission. Available at: <http://www.mrcmekong.org/about-the-mrc/development-partners-and-partner-organisations/> [Accessed: 03 March 2014].

⁵⁰ *Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2011–2015*. Mekong River Commission. p. xxi, Available at: <http://www.mrcmekong.org/assets/Publications/strategies-workprog/Strategic-Plan-2011-2015-council-approved25012011-final-.pdf> [Accessed: 03 March 2014].

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

MRC is currently facing a new challenge which is the increasing number of dams (both regulatory and hydropower) on the river. It will force the participating countries to strengthen cooperation not only among themselves but also with other dialogue partners⁵².

Vietnam is also involved in other sub-regional institutions, aimed at promoting development and strengthening of cooperation in the Mekong basin. ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC) has operated within ASEAN since 1996 in the form of meetings at the ministerial level. In the framework of two working groups: Mekong Development Fund and Pan-Asia Railway Project infrastructure projects are implemented, trade and investments are supported and human capital is developed⁵³. The strategy for Economic Cooperation Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong (ACMECS) was founded at a meeting of heads of state of Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand in Bagan in 2003. Vietnam joined the initiative a year later. The declared objectives of ACMECS are: mutual help in the collective increase of international competitiveness, support for economic growth and promotion of sustainable development in line with the Millennium Development Goals⁵⁴.

OTHER FORMS OF INDOCHINESE COOPERATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF ASEAN

The gradual improvement in relations of Vietnam with Laos and Cambodia, achieved both on the bilateral path and through the activities of multilateral institutions, enabled the creation of a tripartite institutionalised form of cooperation. The Cambodia – Laos – Vietnam Development Triangle (CLV-DT) was created in 2004 at an informal meeting of prime ministers of the three countries in Vientiane. Meetings of heads of government are to take place once every two years; an institutionalised form of cooperation are

⁵² Lee, G., Scurrall, N. 2009. *Power and responsibility. The Mekong River Commission and lower Mekong mainstream dams.* Oxfam Australia, p. 45 ff.

⁵³ See more in *Basic framework of ASEAN – Mekong basin development cooperation.* ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <http://www.aseansec.org/6353.html> [Accessed: 04 March 2014]; *ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC).* Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia. Available at: http://www.miti.gov.my/cms/content.jsp?id=com.tms.cms.article.Article_bc03eba4-c0a81573-aba0aba0-ff751500 [Accessed: 04 March 2014].

⁵⁴ See more in *About ACMECS.* ACMECS.org. Available at: <http://www.acmeecs.org/index.php?id=9> [Accessed: 04 March 2014].

also meetings of Prime Ministers with representatives of Japan, which has supported this initiative diplomatically and financially since its inception. CLV-DT currently consists of 13 border provinces from all the three countries⁵⁵. The cooperation to accelerate economic growth in the framework of CLV-DT covers five areas: infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and trade, energy as well as human resources. So far, the greatest progress has been made in the development of transport infrastructure (among others, the created in 2006 project of connecting the Cambodian province of Mondulkiri with the Vietnamese province of Gia Lai by means of Road No. 78 and linking it with road 18B leading to the Lao province of Attapeu) and the creation of investor friendly environment⁵⁶. Moreover, since 2007 the increased co-operation for the development of tourism in the region has been taking place; special meeting of ministers in charge of tourism aim to create conditions for the collection and exchange of information related to tourism and training on this subject, as well as to support private companies operating in the sector and initiatives encouraging tourists to visit all the three countries⁵⁷.

The perception of Vietnam as a key player in the Indochina subregion is also deepened by the engagement of Hanoi in the economic development of Indochina, the desire to increase its international openness and the level of integration of the entire South-East Asia. The cooperation with the Indochina countries, in particular with the countries of former French Indochina, is characterised by three features. Firstly, there is pragmatism and focus on economic development and fight against poverty. This is an answer to the problem of development disparities within ASEAN, bringing new Member States closer to one another. Secondly, basing the majority of the activities on the geographical area of the Mekong River, which results both from the historical tradition of cooperation in the region, as well as from the economic role of this river. Thirdly, the multilateral nature of the initiatives, and above all the inclusion of the countries and institutions, not only from outside

⁵⁵ Cambodia – Laos – Vietnam Development Triangle Portal. 2010. *Overview report on reviewing, adjusting the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam development triangle master plan.* Available at: http://clv-triangle.vn/portal/page/portal/clv_en/819086/1305933?path=cateid=825523&item_id=8003478&article_details=1 [Accessed: 04 March 2014].

⁵⁶ Pietrasik, M. Środowiskowe...[Environmental...], *op. cit.*, pp. 191–192.

⁵⁷ Inthamith, S. 2009. *The Cambodia – Laos – Vietnam development triangle*. International Cooperation Department Ministry of Planning and Investment of Lao PDR. Available at: http://www.moc.gov.kh/pdf/pdf_conferences/Presentation%20CLV%20%5Bcompatibility%20Mode%5D.pdf [Accessed: 04 March 2014].

Indochina, but also from outside ASEAN. This demonstrates the growing maturity and independence of regional policy of Hanoi.

At the same time, the membership of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in ASEAN has limited the development potential of projects of deeper, formal integration of the Indochina subregion, raised by some environments in all three countries⁵⁸. One of the most important reasons – beside nationalism shaped during the Cold War – were reforms adapted by Hanoi with the aim of joining the Association: resignation from relying on an alliance with one state, policy based on multilateralism and maintaining friendly relations with all countries. These assumptions, taken over and used also by Laos and Cambodia, have led these countries to greater independence in policy towards Vietnam and the realisation of their interests on the basis of contacts with multiple partners. The successes of this policy, also achieved through ASEAN, led to the situation in which the vision of closer cooperation between the CLV countries in the form of a 'new Indo-Chinese federation' lost its attractiveness⁵⁹. The lack of formal ties does not contribute to the reduction of the role of Vietnam in the region. As the economically and politically strongest, and also the fastest growing state, it has accepted the leading role among Indo-Chinese countries, although it has never applied openly to take the leadership position. This moderate policy is the credibility of Vietnamese intentions towards Indochina and contributes to building trust. It is evidenced by the stabilisation and strengthening of relations with Laos and Cambodia. Especially the latter case seems to be significant because it gives evidence in favour of overcoming the hitherto existing Cambodian concerns stemming from historical events⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ More on the history of the integration concept in Indochina and the evolution of the idea of the national state in the period of colonialism and the Cold War see in Sidel, J.T. 2012. The fate of nationalism in the new states: Southeast Asia in comparative historical perspective. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 136–139.

⁵⁹ Pholsena, V. 2006. From Indochinese dreams to post-Indochinese realities. In: Diokno, M.S.I., Chinh N.V. eds. *The Mekong arranged and rearranged*. SEASREP, pp. 50–51. It is worth noting that the very notion of 'Indochina' seems to be outdated; in foreign literature is increasingly used only in the context of the historical region – the French colony.

⁶⁰ Dosch, J. 2007. *The changing dynamics of Southeast Asian politics*. Lynne Rienner Pub, p. 176.

CONCLUSIONS

Vietnam's membership in ASEAN has become an indispensable element of the implementation of multilateral foreign policy, and also the way to further integration with the international community. Above all, however, it gave the opportunity to create a new national identity and a sense of regional links and to find its place in the new, globalised world. The adoption of rules and standards developed by the Association meant the abandonment of the previously existing hegemonic aspirations with respect to the immediate neighbourhood, but it opened a way for cooperation with other countries of Indochina on the basis of partnership and equality within the framework provided by the ASEAN. Thanks to its present successes, the realisation of the Vietnamese ambition to play the role of a regional power takes place gradually and with the approval of Indo-Chinese countries.

The improvement of the Vietnamese political image after the Cold War was mainly caused by its commitment to the further expansion of ASEAN by Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, as well as the cooperation in sub-regional polygons of growth and bilateral engagement in the reconstruction and development of Indochina. This was particularly evident in the case of Cambodia, when Vietnam, as the host of the Sixth Summit of ASEAN in 1998, actively spoke in favour of admitting it to the Association⁶¹. Vietnam's efforts to bridge the development gap among the CLMV and the ASEAN-6 countries meet positive response of Indo-Chinese countries, but also other ASEAN members. According to the Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing Development Gap for Closer ASEAN Integration of 2001, they contribute to strengthening of unity within the Association, and provide its less developed members with tangible benefits⁶². An example of this, in addition to the described above bilateral actions in the framework of sub-regional groups, may be the inclusion of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to the cooperation within the framework of the ASEM initiative at its fifth summit in 2004 in Hanoi⁶³.

⁶¹ Emmers, R., *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁶² *The Hanoi Declaration on Narrowing Development Gap for Closer ASEAN Integration*. ASEAN Secretariat. Available at: <http://www.aseansec.org/934.htm> [Accessed: 13 February 2014].

⁶³ Do, H. 2006. Economic interdependence within ASEAN. In: Balme, S., Sidel, M. eds. *Vietnam's new order: international perspectives on the state and reform in Vietnam*. Palgrave Macmillan, p. 115.

The previous effects of Vietnam's policy towards Indochina and Vietnam's generally distinguished position in the subregion more and more often inspire researchers to consider whether Vietnam has become a 'middle power'. There are many definitions of this term, taking into account both objective potential of the given state, as well as subjective factors, such as the doctrines of foreign policy and external perception and self-perception. Vietnam, despite its weaknesses and belonging to a group of developing countries, has at least three marks of a 'middle power': (1) its geographical area, population and military potential are located in the middle of the scale between great powers and small countries; (2) it is situated in the zones of influence of conflicting powers; (3) it seeks to exert greater influence than implied by its objective potential through confrontation with major powers, using the existing legal and institutional frameworks⁶⁴. Moreover, as rightly observed by Professor Jin Canrong of Beijing University, an adviser of the PRC government, the notion of power is inextricably linked to the issue of responsibility⁶⁵, realised at three levels: the observance of treaty obligations and international law, bearing costs associated with the fulfilment of international obligations, and changes (also legal) within the structure of the international system⁶⁶. Apart from the key implications of this position for Vietnamese policy towards global powers – China and the USA⁶⁷ – the recognition of Vietnam as a 'middle power' also entails consequences for the Indochina region. It means, first of all, that Vietnam – aspiring to be recognised as a power – is obliged to its partners to fulfil all the commitments and bear their costs. Previous actions of Hanoi:

⁶⁴ More on this and other definitions of a 'middle power' see in Capie, D., Evans, P. 2002. *The Asia-Pacific security lexicon*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 161–164.

⁶⁵ At the same time it is worth noting that the term 'responsible power' was formed only in 2007. See more in Gill, B., Blumenthal, D., Swaine, M. D., Tuchman Mathews, J. *China as a responsible stakeholder*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2007/06/11/china-as-responsible-stakeholder/2kt> [Accessed: 18 February 2014].

⁶⁶ Canrong, J. 2012. *Odpowiedzialność wielkiego mocarstwa. Chińska perspektywa*. [The responsibility of a great powers. Chinese perspective.] Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, pp. 19–21.

⁶⁷ See more, for example, in Easley, L.E. 2012. Middle power national identity? South Korea and Vietnam in US–China geopolitics. *Pacific Focus*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 421–442; Chen, S., Ratnam, G. *Vietnam rises as middle power at defence summit: Southeast Asia*. Bloomberg News. Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-27/vietnam-rises-as-middle-power-at-defense-summit-southeast-asia.html> [Accessed: 26 February 2014].

the lack of territorial or trade disputes, compliance with concluded treaties or active operations to level the ASEAN divide issue are part of a vision of a power acting responsibly, thereby reducing the sense of insecurity of other Indochina countries against the Vietnamese ambitions.

Of particular interest seems to be the last plane of responsibility of powers mentioned by Jin Canrong – the change of the international system. Vietnam's past actions indicate that its intention is not a revolutionary change of the system; on the contrary, the policy of Hanoi rather suggests an adaptation to the existing framework of international law, both in terms of economy and security. At the same time, the commitment to the principles of ASEAN, the engagement in regional cooperation and the rapprochement with Indochina provide an explicit declaration of the international order desired by Hanoi based on multilateralism and the central role of ASEAN in regional cooperation. Such behaviour highlights at the same time – though not directly – not fully symmetrical relationship between Vietnam and other Indochinese countries, further strengthening its position as an informal leader.

Taking into account the potential difference existing among the CLMV countries, the government in Hanoi must yet be careful in both declarations and actual activities. The aspirations to lead the Indochina countries cannot take the form of hegemonic intentions or attempts of domination; this kind of action, totally contrary to the interests of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, will most certainly raise the opposition in those countries. If they are able to accept the status of a 'middle power' and the difference of potential, if their relationships with Vietnam are based on cooperation, then the hegemonic aspirations – even hidden under the appearance of cooperation – are doomed to failure.

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VIETNAM AS ‘A MIDDLE POWER’ ON THE EXAMPLE OF ITS COOPERATION WITH INDO-CHINESE COUNTRIES

Summary

The article presents the process of evolution of Vietnam policy towards other Indochinese countries in the broader context of changes in the direction of Vietnam's foreign policy. Hegemonic aspirations of Hanoi and imposing its domination over Laos and Cambodia during the Cold War were met with the resistance (also armed) and aversion of these countries. However, a departure from the ideological aspect of foreign policy, reorientation to cooperation and the membership in ASEAN have significantly influenced the change in the approach of Vietnam. The withdrawal of troops from Cambodia and the termination of the conflict, the support for the accession of Cambodia and Laos to ASEAN contributed to a significant improvement of the image of

Vietnam in the region. Close cooperation – also in the sphere of development – with Vientiane and Phnom Penh, both in the Association, and regardless of its, cause the situation in which Hanoi changes from unwanted hegemony to the accepted leader of Indo-Chinese states.

WIETNAM JAKO „MOCARSTWO ŚREDNIEJ WIELKOŚCI” NA PRZYKŁADZIE JEGO WSPÓŁPRACY Z PAŃSTWAMI INDOCHIŃSKIMI

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia proces ewolucji polityki Wietnamu wobec pozostałych państw indochińskich w szerszym kontekście zmiany kierunku vietnamskiej polityki zagranicznej. Hegemonistyczne aspiracje Hanoi i narzucenie swojej dominacji nad Laosem i Kambodzą w czasie zimnej wojny spotkało się z oporem (również zbrojnym) i niechęcią tych państw. Jednak odejście od ideologicznego aspektu polityki zagranicznej, reorientacja na współpracę i członkostwo w ASEAN znaczco wpłynęły na zmianę podejścia Wietnamu. Wycofanie wojsk z Kambodzy i zakończenie konfliktu, wsparcie procesu akcesyjnego Kambodzy i Laosu do ASEAN wpłynęły na znaczną poprawę wizerunku Wietnamu w regionie. Ścisła współpraca – również rozwojowa – z Vientiane i Phnom Penh zarówno na forum Stowarzyszenia, jak i niezależnie od niego sprawiają, że Hanoi z nieuchcianego hegemonii zmienia się w akceptowanego lidera państw indochińskich.

ВЬЕТНАМ КАК «ДЕРЖАВА СРЕДНЕЙ ВЕЛИЧИНЫ» НА ПРИМЕРЕ ЕГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА С ГОСУДАРСТВАМИ ИНДОКИТАЯ

Резюме

Статья представляет процесс эволюции политики Вьетнама в отношении остальных государств Индокитая в более широком контексте изменения направления вьетнамской внешней политики. Гегемонные стремления Ханоя и навязывание своего доминирования над Лаосом и Камбоджой в период холодной войны столкнулось с сопротивлением (в том числе вооружённым) и неприязнью со стороны этих государств. Отказ от идеологического аспекта

внешней политики, переориентация на сотрудничество и членство в АСЕАН оказали большое влияние на перемены в политике Вьетнама. Выход войск из Камбоджи и завершение конфликта, поддержка процесса присоединения Камбоджи и Лаоса к АСЕАН повлияли на значительное улучшение имиджа Вьетнама в регионе. Тесное сотрудничество – в том числе развивающее – с Вьентьяном и Пномпенем как на форуме Ассоциации, так и независимо от него, привело к тому, что Ханой из нежеланного гегемона преобразуется в позитивно воспринимаемого лидера государств Индокитая.