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Within or Without: Viet Nam's Integration into Global Capitalism

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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by

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ABSTRACT

Within or Without: Viet Nam's Integration into Global Capitalism

By

Hoai-An Nguyen

Viet Nam began economic liberalization through the Doi Moi reforms in 1986, opening the country's doors to global markets and production networks. In the efforts to "revitalize" its economic development, these reforms targeted the decollectivization of agriculture, elimination of state subsidies, and removal of state price controls and check points to ensure the free flow of market activities and growth of private enterprises (Turley & Seiden, 1993). The global integration of Viet Nam, however, was a process that had origins before 1986. The period of French colonization in Viet Nam during the era of monopoly capitalism – or imperialism – had previously inserted the country into the world capitalist system, thereby generating the initial capitalist transformations in the country. As Viet Nam re-integrates into the current stage of global capitalism, several questions come to mind: Why and how did Viet Nam integrate into the world capitalist system? How are the processes of 1986 different from the country's integration under French colonization? And how have the processes of globalization impacted the re-integration of Vietnam into the world capitalist system?

The aim of this thesis is to provide a historical analysis of the two periods of Viet Nam's integration by utilizing the theoretical framework set forth by Lenin on imperialism

and Robinson on global capitalism, respectively. In using the macro-historical-structural approach provided by these two theorists, I conduct a reassessment of Viet Nam's history in relation to the stages of capitalism starting from the late 19th century to the 21st century.

While French colonization of Viet Nam integrated pockets of the economy and labor into the circuits of capitalist production during the period of imperialist expansion, the emergence of a capitalist state came in the form of the colonial state in French Indochina. Its institutions were an amalgam of French and indigenous elites who held and maintained colonial state relations with the colonized society of Indochina. Social classes were absorbed and reorganized for the colonial enterprise under colonization. Factions within these social classes became nationalist revolutionary forces that waged and won the wars against colonial rule.

The second integration of Viet Nam into the new global capitalist system opened spaces of accumulation that the colonial system was not able to access and also dismantled the social relations established by the socialist project of the revolution. The point to be made is not whether the Vietnamese state remains socialist or not, but rather I argue that Viet Nam's decision to employ neoliberal reforms reoriented the goals of the state towards capitalist development and gradually stripped the state of its socialist principles. In effect, the transnationalization of Viet Nam, which remains on-going, has transformed the nature of state institutions to operate in conjunction with global capital. From this analysis, I also suggest future avenues of research to assess Viet Nam's relationship with China in 21st century global capitalism.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction and Overview of Thesis

A decade before my family and I migrated to the United States under the auspices of the Humanitarian Operation (HO) program in 1996, Viet Nam began to liberalize its economy in 1986 through the Doi Moi policy reforms. The Doi Moi, translated as “renovation”, and subsequent series of reforms were made on part of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) to transition away from a form of socialism that was in crisis. These reforms were targeted at the decollectivization of agriculture, elimination of state subsidies, and removal of state price controls and check points to ensure the free flow of market activities and growth of private enterprises (Turley & Seiden, 1993). Viet Nam gradually re-entered the dominant world system of capitalism by opening its doors to capitalist market forces and competition in efforts to “revitalize” its economic development.

The particular historical moment of 1986 marks the official point of Viet Nam’s transition to post-socialism, thereby fundamentally transforming the social relations of the country. The VCP continued to reorder the country’s political and economic institutions to comply with the dictums of a globalizing capitalist system. After almost a decade of economic restructuring, the VCP formally revived diplomatic relations with the United States (U.S.) in 1996. The following year, Viet Nam gained access to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to integrate into the regional trade networks (Womack 1996). In 2007, the VCP took another step towards integration by joining the World Trade

Organization (WTO), enabling Viet Nam to trade with other WTO-membered countries (Tumbarello 2007).¹

Subsequent waves of social restructuring were generated throughout this ongoing transition. Effectively, Doi Moi had either eliminated or untethered socialist and indigenous forms of subsistence production in the local economy to be absorbed into global circuits of production. Such transformations continue to take new forms to this day while labor in the country scramble to adapt to the changing conditions of the economy. This can be seen in the most recent waves of wild cat strikes orchestrated by workers in specialized processing zones (SPZs). These workers have called on the Vietnamese government to force factory employers to pay remunerations to their employees and ensure better working conditions. Wild cat strikes are one way in which laborers have confronted the changing landscapes of work in the globalizing world economy (Buckley 2019).

As I look back to Viet Nam as a subject of study, I am moved by a personal imperative to bring to light the histories of the Vietnamese people in their enduring struggle against capital. In this endeavor, this investigation of Viet Nam in relation to the broader history of capitalism is intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of the much larger history of the social world as a whole. In this respect, I make the assertion that the political economic history of Viet Nam is part of the history of world capitalism². In accounting for Viet Nam's history within a larger global history, I look towards the whole of the global capitalist system to frame my analysis. However, I cannot here undertake an encompassing

¹ Information on Viet Nam's membership status and data was found at: https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/vietnam_e.htm

² This history also encapsulates Viet Nam's relationship to China which will be further discussed in the concluding section.

study of capitalism's unstable and crises-ridden system. Efforts to characterize the totality of this system have already been done in the works of various intellectuals such as Immanuel Wallerstein and William I. Robinson. This work is more modest: to provide a historical analysis of two waves of Viet Nam's integration into the world capitalist system throughout the 19th to 21st century.

This case-study of Viet Nam's dual periods of integration into the capitalist system employs the framework of globalization as a macro-historical-structural approach to explain social changes associated with this integration. In particular, I utilize Robinson's theory of global capitalism as a framework for explaining Viet Nam's ongoing processes of primitive accumulation and *global* capitalist integration. I hope through this work to contribute to the emerging scholarship on global capitalism.

Thesis Outline

In this first chapter, I introduce the claim that there are two periods of capitalist integration of Viet Nam. The first period was under French colonization in the late 1800s, and the second took place through neoliberal policies under emerging globalization in the late 20th century. The theoretical framework I use to historicize the two periods of integration within the history of capitalism is informed by Lenin's theory of Imperialism and Robinson's theory of global capitalism, respectively.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Viet Nam's initial integration during the period of Imperialism in the development of capitalism theorized by Lenin. In this historical stage, the world capitalist system was reordered by leading capitalist countries in competition for the remaining territories available for capitalist encroachment. These territories were captured

and integrated into the developing world capitalist system. The emergence of a capitalist state in Viet Nam, thus, came in the form of the colonial state in French Indochina. Its institutions were an amalgam made by French and indigenous elites who held and maintained colonial state relations with the colonized society of Indochina.

In Chapter 3, I discuss Viet Nam's period of anti-colonial revolution, the socialist transition accomplished in North Viet Nam, and the twenty years of anti-imperial/civil war that served as a significant historical struggle against capitalist incursion. This period of conflict halted the expansion and accumulation of capital in the country at least so in the north which formed a separate government from the southern regime. The southern government and elements of its society remained under French and later US imperialism and continued to further integrate into the world capitalist system – national resistance in the south also existed and took the form of the National Liberation Front (NLF). In the broader global context, this period was one of worldwide struggle for the development of an alternative socialist bloc.³

Chapter 4 analyzes the second period of Viet Nam's reintegration into a qualitatively new stage of capitalism, globalization. This period of integration was facilitated by the Doi Moi reforms starting in 1986 that paved the way for global capitalist expansion in the country. The reforms were neoliberal policies of social restructuring for the liberalization of the socialist economy. As Viet Nam continued to integrate into the global networks of production and capital accumulation, transnationally oriented elites in countries worldwide became enmeshed in global class relations with other transnationally oriented elites, thereby

³ This coalition was built amongst Third World countries that had fought nationalist wars to overthrow the capitalist colonial regime in their countries; the revolutionary populations within core capitalist countries were also part of this coalition.

forming a class base for the expansion of global capital. In the process of transnationalizing state-societal institutions, Viet Nam as a neoliberalizing state developed a new global profile which served to provide new space to further the operations of global capital. This discussion constitutes an initial exploration into where the country's profile in the global capitalist system may be headed as the system spirals into deeper crisis.

Chapter 5 concludes the discussion of Viet Nam's integration into global capitalism with a view towards future research on China and on further contributions to the theory of global capitalism. Some avenues of research are discussed to tease out the relations between China and the U.S., as well as China and Viet Nam. An analysis of these relations would contribute to the broader theoretical objectives of explaining the current and future dynamics of global capitalism.

Theoretical Framework

The History of the World Capitalist System

In Robinson's (2004) periodization, there are four epochs that have transpired in the history of world capitalism. The first epoch, spanning roughly from 1492 to 1789, involved the emergence of capitalism in feudal Europe and its outward expansion through initial waves of colonial conquest. This process can be identified as mercantilism and the first round of primitive accumulation. In Karl Marx's *Capital* (1977), primitive accumulation is understood as the initial processes of capital accumulation which requires the expropriation of the laboring population from their means of production. This is first seen in Europe around the 13th century with the expulsion of the peasantry from the land through the enclosures of the commons. Social relations in previous feudal systems of production gave

way to capitalist relations of production.⁴ In the latter part of this epoch, we see the beginning of mercantile trade for the territorial expansion of capitalism outside of the nation-states of Europe – this is illustrative of the beginnings of worldwide extension of the capitalist market. During this time a world trade system was emerging that incorporated trade ports established by Portuguese merchant capitalists along the coast of Southeast Asia, including what are now territories in north and central Viet Nam (Smith 2009). The colonial conquest of Indochina by the French empire would come at a later epoch of world capitalism.

The second epoch from 1789 into the late nineteenth century was that of classical competitive capitalism, this involved the industrial revolution in Europe (particularly the manufacturing revolution in England) that gave rise to the formations of the national bourgeoisie and the modern nation-state. Free market competition was the model of world economic trade which led to an increased concentration of wealth and power in the hands of industrial capitalists and merchants. Within this period, capitalist forces were revving up their economic power to gain political power. This particular period observed a marriage between capital and state, in which state power served as an instrument for the imperialist plunder of the world. State power was utilized by capital in the formation of nation-states in Europe, as well as the establishment of colonies and trade territories abroad. In Viet Nam (which only constituted the territories of north and central Viet Nam in this period), the commercial-militarized French forces waged war and isolated attacks to gain territory for trade. This period marked the beginning of French colonization of Indochina.

The third epoch spanned from the late 19th century into the late 20th century with the formation of corporate-monopoly capitalism.⁵ This period of capitalist development saw the

⁴ Primitive accumulation will be further discussed in the next section on theory.

⁵ This epoch is further discussed in the theoretical section on *Lenin's theory of Imperialism*.

consolidation of the world market and the world system of nation-states. Capitalist development under monopoly control gave rise to financial industrial corporations, intensified wars between imperial powers in the form of world wars, and later emergence of socialist alternatives as legacies of revolution in the earlier epoch. Lenin's work on imperialism designated this period as the highest level of concentration of capital and socialization of labor at this point in history. This particular period, according to Lenin, observed the union of industrial capital with that of financial capital which fueled the (almost) complete absorption of the world's territories for capitalist accumulation. Within this time, the imperialist empire of France finally established complete control of the territories of French Indochina, formally integrating the territories into the world capitalist system. Social classes in Viet Nam underwent dramatic transformations under colonization as social relations that constituted the indigenous political economy became absorbed and reorganized for the colonial enterprise. Factions of the social classes that emerged from such transformations became oppositional forces to capital – the emergence of nationalist revolutionary forces waged war to dismantle colonial rule. In the latter years of this epoch, Viet Nam would develop transitional socialist ties with other socialist-liberated colonial territories. At the end of this epoch, capitalism as a world system reached the point of systemic crisis which forced it to restructure its processes of accumulation to sustain expansion.

The fourth, and most current, epoch is the emergence of globalization or globalized capitalism characterized by great economic turbulence and profound structural changes in a systemic transition from a nation-state and interstate phase to a still-emerging transnational phase of world capitalism (Robinson 2004). Capital was able to expand out of nation-state

circuits of accumulation through global neoliberalization. This political economic campaign was led by the U.S., Britain, and other First World powers to enable industry within the former core countries to move into former Third World countries. Neoliberal policies allowed capital to move more freely by eliminating trade barriers along with deregulation and privatization. The key feature of the period is the rise of a globally integrated production and financial system. Viet Nam in this period would eventually reintegrate into the new structure of global capitalism, transitioning from its socialist model to a neoliberal capitalist model.

As Robinson (2004) states, “the changes we are experiencing in this epoch of world capitalism are expressions of the emergence of a transnational social structure which generates pressure for the standardization of production and labor conditions, as well as social, political, and cultural practices that inform existing power relations” (32). We are seeing “the final stage of capitalism’s extensive enlargement [which] began with the wave of colonization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and concluded with the (re)incorporation of the former Soviet bloc and Third World revolutionary states in the early 1990’s” (Robinson 2003, 11). The last two stages of capitalism are the periods in which I conduct historical research and analysis of Viet Nam; from its first integration into world capitalism through colonization of the late 1800’s, to its socialist transition in the mid 1900’s, followed by its re-integration into world capitalism from 1986 on.

Marx’s Theory of Primitive Accumulation

The process of primitive accumulation initially began in Europe with the enclosure of common lands and the dispossession of the landed peasantry. The initial accumulation of

capital continued with the forceful proletarianization of freed rural labor, transforming the peasant laborers into wage laborers in the emerging industries of cotton and other commodities of the world trade system. The laboring population of Europe soon formed the working class that fueled the Industrial Revolution. The intensification of labor productivity under industrial production, along with the heightened concentration of wealth in the hands of a few leading industrial capitalists pushed the system towards a second phase of primitive accumulation outside of Europe – the colonization of territories for extraction of natural resources for the industrial production in Europe. In Marx’s (1977) words, the colonial system that was established enabled markets to “employ the power of the State, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, in hot-house fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode and to shorten the transition” (915-916).

The process of primitive accumulation occurs in a multitude of moments in history as new spaces are forcefully opened up for capital accumulation. The different periods and spaces in which this process occurs lends to the uneven development of capitalism worldwide. However, these moments combine to produce a protracted historical process of primitive accumulation of capital all the world over. In contextualizing the primitive accumulation of the territories of Asia, Marx identified the Opium Wars against China as a continuing moment of primitive accumulation that was part of the ongoing wars between the European nations as they competed to acquire new spaces of accumulation. Accordingly, “these moments (of primitive accumulation) are systemically combined together at the end of the 17th century in England... the combination embraces the colonies, the national debt, the modern tax system, and the system of protection” (Marx 1977, 915). At this contemporary

conjuncture, capitalism is reaching a physical limit in which all the territories that had earlier been conquered and incorporated are now part of the global circuits of capital; the process of primitive accumulation is nearing completion.

In the earlier era of the French empire and for most capitalist empires, control of trade and the discovery of raw materials to supplement national production was most sought after. The need of nation-states to look outwards is explained by the tendency of capital to stagnate within the limits of national production and consequently, the need for capital to find new markets in which to invest (Lenin 1999). This was the material basis for the territorial integration of Indochina as an auxiliary site for the capitalist development of France (Rodney 1972). The colonial ravaging of Indochina and other territories were made possible through state-operated banking systems that utilized bank credit-money to finance colonial expansions and national development campaigns (Lenin 1999). State banks, loaning institutions, and industrial capitalists were able to accumulate real value from the extraction of resources and labor of the colonies as well as the national working populations (Lenin 1999). French capitalists also engaged in the exploit of the labor of their national working class, employing that labor to process the raw materials extracted from the colonies. The relations between France and its colonies, then, were formed within the capitalist development of the French nation-state (Rodney 1972). In this system of capitalist accumulation, the development of France was wedded to the external territories brought into its imperial circuits of accumulation.

The second period of integration from 1986 and on served to revitalize the interrupted process of primitive accumulation. This integration into new global production networks and circuits of accumulation opened up spaces for accumulation that the colonial system was not

able to access, and also dismantled the social relations established by the socialist project of the revolution.⁶

Lenin's Theory of Imperialism

As mentioned before, the world historic context of Viet Nam's first period of integration is informed by Lenin's work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1999). Lenin's theory of this epoch in capitalism largely explains the first period of Viet Nam's integration into world capitalism. The colonization of the territory was motivated by France's imperialist drive in the competition for monopoly domination of world trade. The previous model of capitalism was that of colonial expansion under free market capitalism. French establishment of Indochina came at the end of this stage of capitalist development. The complete seizures of colonial territories, including Indochina, changed the state of capitalism as a whole towards monopoly capitalism; this period encapsulates the closing years of the 19th century and into the 20th century.

Under imperialism or monopoly capitalism, capitalist relations were established by militarized commercial forces that sought trade relations in their quest for control over trade in the Asian region (Smith 2009). Capitalist merchants became dependent on the raw materials that supplied industrial production at home. These merchants and industrialists thus sought to establish monopolies on trade. Monopolizing the trade of certain commodities required warfare for the acquisition of territories that supplied the extraction of raw materials. However, along with colonial military campaigns in the new territories, this period was marked by the "ascending wave of wars [amongst rival industrial capitalist countries at the

⁶ This discussion on global capital is further discussed in Robinson's theory of global capitalism.

turn of the 20th century that] culminated in the outbreak of the first world war in 1914” (Lenin 1999, 9). In the words of Lenin, these capitalist wars were qualitatively “the struggle between the “Great Powers” for hegemony of the world and control of economic resources” (Lenin 1999, 9). To this point, “capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and financial strangulation by a handful of “advanced” countries...drawing the whole world into their war over the division of [resources]” (Lenin 1999, 9). Conquering and occupying the new territories resulted in the forced absorption of their labor into a colonial capitalist system, as well as to the acquisition of monopoly control in world trade.

The emergence of a capitalist state in Viet Nam came in the form of the colonial state in French Indochina. Its institutions were an amalgam of French and indigenous elites who held and maintained colonial state relations with the colonized society of Indochina. The colonial hierarchy positioned the French colonizers at the top of ownership and control, while the indigenous ruling and economic elites held the managerial positions in the colonies (Smith 2009).

Robinson’s Theory of Global Capitalism and Third World Integration

I utilize the framework set up by William Robinson in his seminal work *A Theory of Global Capitalism* (2004) to contextualize the second period of Viet Nam’s integration within the development of capitalism. Robinson’s theory of global capitalism was developed and applied in a previous book *Transnational Conflicts* (2003), that looked at Central American countries in the late 20th century as case studies of Third World integrations into global capitalism. His theorization of the transnationalization of Third World countries resonates with my own study of Viet Nam. My application of his theory to Viet Nam’s re-

integration fits into his analysis of formerly colonized territories or transitioning socialist states that have experienced capitalist globalization. This thesis analyzes Viet Nam within global capitalism by applying the concept of “transitions into global capitalism” put forth in *Transnational Conflict*. I focus on the process of nation-state transnationalization to explain the post-socialist transition of Viet Nam. This thesis is part of preliminary research and discussion for a larger dissertation project.

In defining globalization, Robinson asserts that globalization can be understood as “the near culmination of a centuries long process of the spread of capitalist production around the world and its displacement of all pre-capitalist relations...incorporat[ing] all other types [of societies] into a single social formation, giving rise to what world-system theory terms the ‘modern world system’” which serves as “a new form of connection between all human beings around the world” (Wallerstein 1974 cited in Robinson’s 2004, 2-3). His theory of global capitalism makes the differentiation that “globalization represents a new stage of capitalism” from that of monopoly capitalism that Lenin theorized (2004, 2). In this latest stage of capitalism, the process of primitive accumulation in capturing more territory and labor for capitalist expansion is close to completion. Robinson observes that the processes of primitive accumulation are revived in these newly globalized spaces, allowing capital to complete its extensive expansion: the original mission under imperialism.

These territories were re-captured for capital to once again embed itself into the social relations of the nation-state. However, the defining feature for this current era is that these social relations became component structures integrated into global relations of production and accumulation. In his earlier work, “Beyond Nation-State Paradigms” (1998), Robinson explains that globalization shifts production and social relations under capitalism to global

networks. These new social relations culminate in global networks that exist across national borders, unbound to the territoriality of nation-states. This essence of the new stage of capitalism demarks a qualitative shift that could only be assessed as quantitative intensification of global connectedness between states by the world-systems analysis of states (Robinson 1998). Thus, while Robinson's theory of global capitalism builds upon the theories of world-world system's analysis and development-dependency, his theory is a nuanced departure from these approaches that remain within the nation-state and inter-state framework of analysis.

This new stage of capitalism marks the integration of new territories as capitalist relations dominate the social fabric of such societies. New relations of capitalist production emerge to facilitate the reintegration of the country into global capitalism and respond to the needs of global capital. Within the new global economy, Robinson observes the development of new social classes, including the emergence of the "transnational capitalist class" (2004). As this class emerges, national capital must reorient towards global processes of accumulation in order to expand and survive. This new class of capitalists, originally from the nation, adopt the interest of global capital to ensure their own class position; class positions that are no longer tied to national production but bound to global production networks. The interests of what appears to be national capital, therefore, become those of global capital (2004).

As Viet Nam globalizes its economy and society, capital seeps into these new spaces to establish conditions increasingly oriented towards the accumulation of global capital. Former conditions of social organization and production are displaced or eliminated as new formations emerge to facilitate global accumulation. According to Chang (2009), "the

movement of capital not only means the movement of money but also the expansion, recomposition, and reorganization of the social relation in which labor takes a particular form” – that of informal and flexible labor (Chang 2005 cited in Chang 2009, 162). Seen as an emerging trend under globalization, this particular form of labor materializes from the neoliberal erosion of labor protections. Labor becomes disposable as workers are stripped of legal, institutional, and union protections that were once ensured by the Fordist-Keynesian nation-state model (Robinson 2014). Work under global capitalism increasingly becomes unwaged and informal within non-traditional irregular jobs (Chang 2009). People’s ability to survive in the changing global economy becomes ever more challenging as labor becomes sequestered to a life of exclusion and precarity.

Under these conditions imposed by global capital, large segments of the population become dispossessed from their previous modes of subsistence. This process of dispossession materializes under globalization in two ways: firstly, not only are workers made dependent on wages to survive; but secondly, the uneven and fragmented character of globalization also prevents labor from becoming full wage-earners. Large sections of the population that are pushed and filtered out of the formal economy become excluded from the formal structures of global capital. The process of becoming *full* waged workers, or proletariats, becomes a rarity reserved for higher-skilled sectors of labor (Chang 2009). Such labor power and skills are employed to develop the science and technology necessary to advance the infrastructure of the system. Semi-proletarianization is assigned to the majority of the dispossessed and displaced to move between informal and formal spaces of work – their labor only partially integrated into the global economy. Even so, the privileged sector of labor is not completely shielded from the demands of increasingly mobile capital. The new

landscape of work requires that all of labor become expendable to the needs of global capital (Chang 2009). The increasing informalization and flexibilization of work feeds into the underlying tendency of capital to intensify labor exploitation – this is ever more necessary for the very intensification and expansion of capital globally.

Periodization of Viet Nam's Integration

Here, I attempt to provide a brief account of Viet Nam's successive stages of incorporation into world capitalism in conjunction with capital's trajectory in world history. However, unlike reformist-revisionist works that constitute most of the historical scholarship of Viet Nam and capitalism, my revision of Viet Nam's history aims to look at the history and material conditions of the country through class analysis. The existing scholarship tends to reify particular societies as isolated and essentialize such histories as unique, thus obscuring certain social formations or phenomena that arise in such societies and the universal kernel contained therein. My work is in response to the canon of social history that fails to utilize the methods of dialectical and historical materialism that enables history to be understood as a whole and open-ended process of emergence and change.

This thesis employs the method of dialectical and historical materialism as an applied method and epistemology of history to assess the political economy of Viet Nam under colonization, socialism, and globalization. This method serves to expose the social processes of change in the state-society complex and the structural conditions of each period of integration. In periodizing the different moments of Viet Nam's integration within the larger global history of capitalism, there is some ambiguity as to when each process concretely begins and another ends. The difficulty in deciding where the first period of integration ends

and the second one begins deals with the question of whether the history of integration is pushed and pulled by what social historical forces and in what political moment that eventually led to its historical outcome. Paraphrasing from Robinson's words, the practice of sectioning history into different periods is used solely as an analytical tool to highlight key changes that took place in societies over time (2004). What must be remembered is that the transformations of class relations are ultimately tied to the pull of integration into a globalizing capitalist world. The history of Viet Nam within world capitalism illuminates the period of socialist struggle as part and parcel of the global movement to create an alternative system outside of capital. But here we must also consider the consequences of being outside the system of global capital. To be within the system in a post-Soviet world is to be engaged with the contradictions and processes of capital, but to be outside the system is to be without the social relations necessary for survival. An ongoing question for the struggles of our time is what strategies must we develop to revive the global movement for socialism?

The contribution of this research is a historical theory of how class relations in the Vietnamese case are changed by different stages of integration. Thus, going back to the demarcation dilemma, the first stages of integration began with the violent intervention of French colonization that ultimately changed the existing social relations of production in the territory. This process, however, is multidimensional and must include the struggle of the population against this coercion that eventually culminated in the anti-colonial struggle, or First Indochina War. The battle at Dien Bien Phu and the resulting defeat of the French forces in 1954 marked the end of this stage of integration. The beginning and ending of these stages of integration, however, are more categorical and not concretely established because history and social relations do not abruptly end but are fluid and continue to exist as residuals

in later periods. Thus, although the communist revolution began in the first period of integration as a response to colonial powers, this social force and the institutions that came out of it have continued into the period of socialist development. In large part, this history was powered and guided by the very force which fought the encroachment of Western capital in the south. The second integration, consequently, came out of the socialist project of development and nation-building period of Viet Nam.

CHAPTER 2. Colonial Integration Under French Imperialism, Late 1700s to 1945

The Inception of French Indochina

In the age of late 19th century imperialism, colonization served as the coercive mechanism through which Viet Nam was integrated into world capitalism. The colonization of Indochina became integral to the maintenance, expansion, and transformation of the capitalist system. “It should not be lost that the French invasion and occupation of Indochina also coincided with the virtual submission of Qing China to a range of depredations at the hands of Western [nation-states], headed by Great Britain” (Gunn 2014, 70). As Marx had observed of the earlier periods of colonialism, brute force was necessary to the capture of territories for extraction of raw materials for industrial production in Europe. In the later periods of colonization and in other parts of the world, the world capitalist system had revved up to a new form of accumulation achieved under monopoly-state control of world trade and production. Lenin identifies this latest stage of capitalism as imperialism. In this period,

French colonization of Viet Nam was made possible by both direct foreign intervention and the propagation of missionary Christianity – a two-pronged approach of violence and manufactured consent to French domination (McLeod 1991).

Viet Nam's integration into the capitalist world system began with French colonization of several territories beginning in the early 17th century. This is not to suggest that Viet Nam had never before engaged with external processes. In fact, regional and world trade through continental and maritime expeditions have existed since the 1400s. Viet Nam had established external trade relations well before the French forcefully integrated the country's labor power and natural resources into the globalizing system of capitalism (Frank 1998). Thus, the integration of Vietnam was not purely driven by external powers in which the political system and context of the country had no influence in the trajectory of its integration. Existing political and cultural systems and processes became modes into which capital immersed itself in the fabric of Vietnamese society. The very first unification of the territories of modern-day Viet Nam in 1884 provides a concrete example of this.

In the late 1700s, Viet Nam began the unification of the northern and southern territories at the start of French seizure of port territories. The French had forged an alliance with the first Emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, Nguyen Anh, in 1787 and assisted in the consolidation of Viet Nam under the new Nguyen dynasty to effectively end the civil wars between the Tay Son and Nguyen lords. The expansion southward by the Nguyen Dynasty was intended to take over the Champa kingdom and separate from the Le Dynasty. In the southern region, the Nguyen Dynasty began expansion through policies of trade with European mercantile capitalists in the southern ports and Chinese merchants in the area of pre-colonial Saigon. Chinese merchants, in particular, had come to dominate the area of the

southern economy under the Champa since the 1370s and early 1380's before the Nguyen's southward expansion (Smith 2009). In order for the Nguyen lords to effectively achieve military victory over the Champa resistance, a compromise was made between the Nguyen emperor and French merchant capitalists. With the promise of gaining trade ports in the central regions of Viet Nam, the colonial powers of France served as militarized commercial powers that coordinated with and facilitated the very unification of Viet Nam under the Nguyen Dynasty in 1802.

The colonization, and therefore integration into the capitalist world system, of these territories was long drawn out. This was due partly to the domestic constraints of the French empire which struggled to provide sufficient investment and protection by militarized forces to secure seized property and repress opposition. In the colonies, local resistance to colonial rule was a persistent factor that stalled the colonial advance. The process of capitalist integration through colonial conquest thus meant the violent process of primitive accumulation through war. After the 1848 revolutions in Europe, the French government had sufficiently garnered commercial, religious and nationalistic resources to begin its conquest of Viet Nam (Nguyen 2013). France began its colonial campaign in 1858 under the guise of defending the religious freedom of Catholic missionaries. The colonizing forces first gained territory with the capture of Saigon in the Mekong Delta region in 1859 (McLeod 1991). However, the defeat of the royal army did not put an end to Vietnamese resistance.

Several battles were fought for the complete control of the three regions. France's heavy presence in the Mekong Delta led up to the annexation of several southern provinces in 1862 to form the colony of Cochinchina; the Nguyen dynasty signed the Treaty of Saigon which in effect required the royal army to stand down in the surrendered provinces. This

territory allowed access to the lucrative trade route into the southern periphery of China that circumvented the treaty ports of the Chinese coastal provinces (Thomazi 1934). In the first Sino-French War, French forces were able to capture the Vietnamese capital in Hue at the Battle of Thuan An in 1883 which forced the Vietnamese government to sign the Treaty of Hue to relinquish Tonkin over to French colonial powers (Thomazi 1934). This territory served as a foothold in Southeast Asia and key access to Chinese markets. These secessions from the royal court marked the decline of formal government-led resistance and gave rise to localized popular resistance that lasted for the rest of the 19th and into the 20th century (Nguyen 2013). By the 1887, the territorial whole of modern Viet Nam formed part of the colonial territories of French Indochina.

The official territories of Indochina were carved into three separately administered provinces: Tonkin in the north, Annam along the central coast and Cochinchina in the south (Llewellyn, Southey, and Thompson 2018). The French colonizers utilized the particular strategy of keeping particular segments of the indigenous political structure intact to efficiently manage the three separate regions for different purposes. At the same time, this “divide and rule” strategy was employed to undermine the potential for collective resistance that raged on throughout the period of colonization. Despite their earlier role in unifying the country, the French colonial empire used the tactic of division to maintain control over fractured territories in order to establish and maintain different colonial relations for trade and resource control.⁷

A protectorate status separated Tonkin from the other colonial regions; Annam was considered a semi-colony whereas Cochinchina was a complete colony. The protectorate

⁷ The French participation in unifying the country, then, actually created the relation of domination over and dependence on the part of the Nguyen Dynasty that would facilitate a colonial political take over.

territory is commonly understood as a territory that retains local autonomy and some independence or internal autonomy from imperial control. It is different from a formal colony; the domination of colonial power is not completely sovereign in such territories. This type of territory maintains a “suzerainty” relationship with the dominant power in which the colonial regime controls the foreign policy and international relations of the territory and maintains tributary economic and tax relations. In the case of the Tonkin territory of Indochina, its protectorate status maintained the colonial condition of resource extraction and trade control, but its pre-existing political social structures were kept in place as a means for the colonial powers to control the population through the proxy of indigenous monarchs. The Tonkin protectorate was eventually set up as the capital of the whole of French Indochina in 1901 after the territory’s seizure and periods of resistance since 1885. Later on, Tonkin would become the site of the First Indochina War in the northern city of Hanoi and eventually the site of the defeat of French forces at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The first communist nation of North Viet Nam would be established in this area as the struggle for complete colonial liberation continued against the southern “State of Viet Nam” that was managed by Emperor Bao Dai after 1949 under the control of French colonials.

The Colonial Regime

The French accelerated their colonial conquest in response to the stagnation and subsequent contraction of the French national economy during the Long Depression of 1873 to 1879. Entering into the new imperialism period, capitalist powers sought out new markets to invest their surplus of accumulated capital (Lenin 1999). French powers only began restructuring Vietnamese society and controlling its productive capacity on a large scale in

the last decades of the 19th century, beginning with the first two territories of Annam and Cochinchina. While earlier intervention in production and industry was limited, the control over territories of French Indochina ensured French capitalist monopoly of trade along the coast; a control that eventually led to colonial interventions in the productive and extractive processes in indigenous industries (Llewellyn et al. 2018). Thus, the components that made up the country of Viet Nam – its people, land, and water – propelled the development of both the colonial regime and French empire abroad. In a sense, the colonization of Viet Nam served the expansion of capitalism as a system that was reaching outside of the national and geographical boundaries of its birthplace in Europe.

At the start, the colonial state enterprise retained the dynastic imperial structure as a means of managerial control of Vietnamese society and production for colonial trade. The class structure under dynastic rule were neither antagonistic to nor incompatible with initial colonial organization. However, the class structure under the Nguyen dynasty had helped produce the conditions to transform social relations into colonial class relations between the French colonial masters and Vietnamese colonial subjects within the society of French Indochina. This is not to ignore the history of the forceful and violent overthrow of the dynastic empire by the colonial forces that was previously discussed. However, the dynastic despotism that characterized Viet Nam's imperial structure provided an imprint of social control that was absorbed into the colonial state structure. The material conditions that preceded the colonial project helps explain how the colonizers were able to expand their reach into the social fabric and establish domination over the territories.

With the structure of the royal court intact, the class of local political leaders and/or independent business or producers were readily positioned to manage the population for the

French industrial capitalists. Social production was facilitated through pre-existing provincial kinship groups and the forms of small production that continued to be controlled by local leaders. Viet Nam's international relations were restricted and mediated by the French colonial power which allowed for the establishment and maintenance of the monopoly control on trade of all commodities produced within the territories. The French colonials relied on a small number of local officials and bureaucrats to manage this transformation (Llewellyn et al. 2018). The colonial regime never designed a "coherent colonial policy in Indochina [as long as the territories] remained in French hands and open to French economic interests... The political management of Indochina was left to a series of governors" who managed the provincial operations of the regions on top of the social class of local elites who had a more direct relation to the production of colonial goods (Llewellyn et al. 2018). Meanwhile, portions of this production that would usually be extracted by the imperial state as tributary taxes were channelled into the colonial enterprise to feed export trade.

Labor and Class under French Indochina

The indigenous subsistence economy was gradually eliminated through land expropriation and transformed into a proto-capitalist system that was based on labor exploitation and plantation production – a mix between peonage labor relations under feudalism and wage relations under capitalism.⁸ As part of the process of primitive accumulation, the displacement of millions of Vietnamese resulted in their proletarianization

⁸ "Peonage" is used here to refer to debt slavery or debt servitude, a labor relation in which the employer compels the worker to pay off a debt with work.

– thousands of people were stripped from their ancestral lands and became forced labor on colonial plantations. The laboring population of Indochina “[n]o longer [were] able to work to provide for themselves, they now worked for the benefit of French *colons*” (Llewellyn et al. 2018). Large tracts of land were reorganized into large plantations, while those who owned small land plots were also disenfranchised and relocated or made into laborers on these plantations.

The leading export commodities of rice, wine, and salt in the region came under colonial state-held monopoly, while colonial production concentrated on the main cash crops of rice and rubber. The French monopoly on alcohol was driven by political imperatives to establish control in the territory (Sasges 2017). The alcohol monopoly was central to consolidating state power as the collection of taxes on the alcohol trade was used to fund colonial penetration deeper into the Vietnamese countryside (Sasges 2012). Colonial infiltration into the inland territories allowed for greater control of agricultural labor power, transforming a greater portion of the territory’s productive capacity as capitalist production.

Accordingly, while the amount of land used for growing rice almost quadrupled in the 20 years after 1880, Cochinchina consisted of 25 large rubber plantations (Llewellyn et al. 2018). By the 1930s, Indochina was supplying 60,000 tons of rubber each year constituting five per cent of all global production (Llewellyn et al. 2018). Once the colonial regime became involved in the production process of the colony in the 20th century, it decided to diversify with the development of factories and mines to tap into the country’s deposits of coal, tin, and zinc for export abroad.

Economic conditions in the colony were similar to other colonial enterprises of the time. Working conditions on the plantations consisted of long hours (as many as 15 hours) in

debilitating conditions without breaks or adequate food and fresh water – this work was paid with extremely low wages. In some instances, work was paid in commodity-species rather than currency, such as rice rather than money. Peasant farmers who remained outside direct wage relations with the colonial empire and those who did not work for wages on the plantations were subject to *corvée labor*, or unpaid-coerced labor. *Corvée labor* was introduced in 1901 requiring adult males in the indigenous labor force to supply 30 days of unpaid work on buildings, roads, dams, and other colonial infrastructure. An extensive taxation system was also put in place to further extraction of value. This included the income tax on wages, poll taxes on all adult males, stamp duties, and consumption quotas of colonial products in the villages.

Under these mechanisms of extraction, the colonial regime structured the colonies to fund and maintain themselves while producing profits for shareholders in the empire. By the 1910s, the French colonial regime had set up plantations and immersed the territories into capitalist production networks. Viet Nam’s colonial profile in the world system became that of an agricultural-export territory which “coincided with the new phase in world capitalism, characterized by a second world wave of core colonial expansion [with the] export of capital” (Robinson 2003, 64).

While French colonization of Viet Nam integrated pockets of the economy and labor into the circuits of capitalist production during the period of world capitalism expansion, the period of colonization came to an end with nationalist anticolonial struggles that simultaneously erupted in multiple other colonized territories worldwide. Within the colonial empire, the need to create an indigenous skilled managerial class to conduct and control the daily operations of society required that education be provided to a small minority of the

colonial subjects. As a small educated elite emerged from the colonial context, some remained loyal to the colonial masters while other became radicalized by the socialist scholarship they were exposed to in their travels abroad. One such case is Nguyen Ai Quoc, more famously known as Ho Chi Minh, who became the leader of the Vietnamese communist revolution (Vu-Hill 2011).

Meanwhile, conditions of gruelling work and oppression by the colonial masters were gradually producing discontent and fervour towards open insurrection within the cities and villages of the colonial society. In the colonial context of uneven development, the capitalist system in French Indochina spawned a working class alongside a new dissident social class in the 1920s and 1930s. The mandarin-proletarians that emerged studied Marxist-Leninist theory and aimed to graft the theory of Marx and Lenin in its practice onto local conditions (Gunn 2014). As Marx (1848/2012) had foreseen from the contradictions within capitalist development, “what the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave diggers” (50). The antagonisms that pushed history forward and changed the conditions from dynasty to colony and eventually liberation were founded in the class antagonism between the rulers and the ruled. Throughout the evolution of Viet Nam’s history from the dynastic context to the colonial context there existed enduring resistance from the populations below.

CHAPTER 3. The Long Struggle for Liberation and Socialist Transition, 1930’s to 1985

Global Events Leading Up to the Second World War (1939)

In the 1930's, the events leading up to the Second World War marked the end of the old monopoly capitalism as rates of profits stagnated and depression set into most core capitalist countries. According to Marxist historian Chris Harman (2008), capitalism resolved this crisis by "expanding the area which the state controlled. Formal empires and informal spheres of influence became all-important" (520). The crisis in capitalism that led to the Second World War was the "contradiction between the use of the state to try to bolster each national group of capitalists and the desire of all capitalists for access to resources beyond the narrow boundaries of the individual state" (Harman 2008, 520). The limits of nation-state boundaries were reflected in the particular case of Germany at the end of the First World War. Although it was the most powerful industrial power in Europe, Germany "had no colonies and was constrained by the narrow borders imposed on it by the other powers in the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War" (Harman 2008, 520).

After the Second World War, U.S hegemony emerged with the inauguration of a global financial plan. Under the Marshall Plan, the U.S. sought to revive the economies of Europe by funding redevelopment of war-torn Europe. However, the Marshal plan was also part of the scheme to disrupt the sphere of influence of the Soviet bloc under Stalin (Harman 2008). Through the financialization of Europe, the U.S. became the world's leading economic power, taking advantage of the ravages of war to alleviate the nation-state crisis of over-accumulation and increasing class struggle at home.

By 1949, the same year that the Communist Party gained victory in China, the U.S. came to sponsor French colonialism in Viet Nam as part of its defence of the "free world" against "Communism". The U.S. provided funds and arms to the French regime so that it could retain its hold of the territories of Indochina. After 1954, with the defeat of French

forces by the nationalist revolutionary socialist force, the U.S. took on the torch to serve as the vanguard for capital on a world scale. Roosevelt had intended that the newly liberated colonial territories would integrate into the world system through dependency on the U.S. Thus, the U.S. stood as the global hegemonic power in the latter half of the 20th century against the socialist forces that emerged from national liberation movements of formerly colonized territories and radical labor movements in core capitalist countries.

Anti-colonial Struggle of the 1930's Spark the First Indochina War, 1946-1954

As various dissident factions came to adopt the revolutionary study of Marxist-Leninism in Viet Nam, the anti-colonial and nationalist movement culminated in the creation of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party headed by Ho Chi Minh in 1930. Throughout the Second World War, there was an increase in anti-colonial struggles throughout Indochina. By the end of the Second World War, the French colonial empire in Indochina was in disarray and increasingly dependent on U.S. funding to maintain its colonial hold. The weakened state of the colonial empire was auspicious for the mounting of organized socialist forces. By the start of the First Indochina War, the former-exiled Emperor Bao Dai was situated to head the newly formed “State of Viet Nam” as a self-governing entity in the service of the French empire. He mounted an indigenous army of his own alongside French colonial forces to fight against the anti-colonial resistance.

Militarized into a people’s army of the Viet Minh under the command of Vo Nguyen Giap, the socialist revolutionary force launched the August Revolution of 1945. This uprising sparked the beginning of the First Indochina War in 1946. This war gave rise to U.S. intervention in the region, originally in the form of support for the French. Despite the

task of engaging in war, the Viet Minh were able to gradually capture the northern territory of Tonkin and began building the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRV) in 1945. The final battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 resulted in the defeat of French forces marking the end of French colonial power in Tonkin (north Viet Nam). The defeat of the colonial master and capitalist encroachment allowed for an interim period of relative autonomy for nation-building in the north.

The Two States of Viet Nam

In the north after the war, the DRV relied greatly on ties with socialist China in the north and the Soviet Union located much farther away.⁹ In 1955, the DRV began the socialization of land and other forms of property to effectively eliminate all forms of private property – this included holdings of plantations, private ownership of factories, etc., that had been established during French colonization. By removing these property relations, social relations in the north slowly transformed under socialism. Policies for a new civil society were also enacted to expand literacy, healthcare, and social production. The level of development that was achieved during this period was paramount for the next twenty years of war against the strongest and wealthiest country in the world at that time, the U.S.¹⁰ The south experienced the transition of power from France to the U.S. during this time of socialist development in the north and solidification of the Soviet bloc as a whole.

As the colonial form of capitalism ended with the restructuring of the world after the Second World War, the last vestiges of the French colonial empire would lose their hold in

⁹ At this time, China was also conducting social restructuring under Mao.

¹⁰ Socialist development will be discussed further in the period after the Second Indochina War in a section later on.

Indochina and pass the torch over to the newly hegemonic power of the U.S. The defeat of France had pushed the colonial regime out of Tonkin, while Cochinchina and the southern half of Annam remained under French colonial control. Provisions made during the Geneva conference of 1954 to end the war had divided Viet Nam along the 17th parallel, with the Viet Minh government in the north and French forces in the south (Young 1991).

The Geneva agreements were tentative and were not acknowledged by the U.S. and the southern State of Viet Nam; only France and the Viet Minh government had signed this treaty. With the retreat of French forces to the south and complete withdraw by 1956, Emperor Bao Dai served as head of state until 1955. Shortly after, Ngo Dinh Diem took the office of presidency under the auspices of the U.S. – the transition of power to the U.S. was thus embodied in this transition in the heads of state (Longevall 2012). In the south, the State of Viet Nam, renamed the Republic of Viet Nam (RVN), remained under the auspices of capitalist powers as it became more reliant on the U.S. to solidify political power and move towards capitalist modernization. “The [United States], which funded most of the French war effort, now sponsored the government that ran the south. The RVN became one of the satellite territories stationed in Asia to extend the reach of U.S. imperialism (Kahin 1967).

Under the Ngo regime, there was increasing repression of opposition groups that led to widespread guerrilla warfare and continual unrest in the towns of the south. The agreements of 1954 began to fall apart as the Saigon government rejected the popular support for elections for reunification with the north. The period of negotiations between the DRV and RVN eventually broke out into a civil war in the south as the National Liberation Front formed in coalition with the Viet Minh government. This conflict soon escalated. The civil war became a full-blown war fought out on the international stage as the U.S. formally enter

the conflict in 1964. The forces of the Viet Minh and National Liberation Front (NLF) (southern socialist forces) posed a real threat to the expansion and survival of the capitalist system that was experiencing intensified contradictions. Another successful socialist country alongside China could undermine the political stronghold of the capitalist system.

The U.S. as the hegemon of the capitalist system took the lead in ensuring the survival of the capitalist system by intervening in the Vietnamese civil war. Throughout the period of southern repression under Ngo, the U.S. gradually embedded military personnel in the south in preparation for military intervention on the ground. This transition of power from the French over to the U.S., however, ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. While the U.S. held a hegemonic position in the world capitalist system it would enter into a political crisis of its legitimacy as the capitalist system as a whole underwent a crisis of overaccumulation – the system would need to restructure its organizational processes to alleviate this crisis. At this point in the development of capitalism, capital could no longer expand within the bounds of the existing nation-state and interstate system. After the conflict between labor and capital which took the form of the Second Indochina War, the world began to witness the emergences of a new form of capital, global capital, founded on the globalization of production and accumulation.

The Second Indochina War (The Viet Nam War), 1955 to 1975

The plethora of literature on U.S.' intervention and the impact of the war on U.S.' civil society has obscured the significance of the war within the context of world capitalism and reduced the war to that of a U.S.-centric conflict. For this section on the Viet Nam war or also known as the Second Indochina War or the American War, I want to avoid solely telling

the dominant narrative of U.S. imperialism. My thesis shines light onto the unique context of the war that captured the specific structural and historical limitations of capital in its final attempt to extensively expand the outdated relations of monopoly capitalism.

The Second Indochina War was the expansion of a *permanent revolution* for the socialist transition in Viet Nam. The concept of permanent revolution was conceived by Trotsky (1931) to suggest that the socialist revolution must continue beyond the success of war, to continue as the revolution extended in order to revolutionize the nation's productive capacity. The resources of the people needed to be unified in ways that would allow the newly formed state to maintain and remain in a hegemonic position against counterrevolutionary forces that remain from unresolved class antagonisms. The revolution in the south and the war itself illustrates a period of socialist expansion and transition as whole. Forces of the U.S. and southern forces of Republic of Viet Nam (RVN) facilitated capital's counterattack against revolutionary socialist forces. In situating the struggle as a continued revolution of socialist forces seeking to uproot capital's hold in the south, this analysis will reveal how capital responded to a crisis of hegemony.

Socialist movements were already on the rise in the south from the beginning of the First Indochina War. The conflict grew out of "spontaneous struggles against the repressive Ngo regime" (Harman 2008, 580). The north did not wage a transitional war to capture the south on its own as most historical works of capitalist historians tend to claim. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam under Ho Chi Minh merged with the southern struggle under the precondition that forces in the south had already engaged in the struggle and had started to revolutionize society to continue the revolution that was achieved in the north. Before the war came to be labeled by such historians as an anti-imperialist war, it was in the first

instance a civil war. It is with this understanding that the struggle in the south was also the struggle for national unity.

Socialist forces in Viet Nam from this point on had to fight a war on two fronts, utilizing its civilian army in the north, the People's Army of Viet Nam, to assist and supply resources for the struggles of guerrilla forces in the south, the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong). The revolutionary armed forces of this war, like those of First Indochina War, were led under the command of Vo Nguyen Giap. The U.S. had entered the war in 1964 by manufacturing the Gulf of Tonkin incident to justify its intervention in the region. In deploying its imperialist military might, the U.S. waged an air war in the north and ground combat war in the south alongside the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN). However, as history would have it, the informal guerilla character of the revolutionary National Liberation Front (NLF) would prove a match for the conventional U.S. military forces. Throughout the war, the U.S. and ARVN forces were not able to keep their hold in the countryside which was predominantly procommunist – their armies were only sufficient control the towns. In addition to the tactical difficulties of fighting on foreign land and against a guerilla army, the escalating cost of the war increased the total military budget of the U.S. by 30 percent – while US businesses producing for the war effort experienced a boost in profits at the beginning of the war, the escalation of the war became a significant strain on businesses that needed to expand their operations but were limited to remain producing within the bounds of the nation-state. Mounted on this tension was the fact that U.S. intervention in the war was losing legitimacy on the international stage and at home with the rise of anti-war activism worldwide (Harman 2008).

The war years between 1955 and 1975 coincided with the qualitative change in the world system associated with globalization as the neoliberalization of national economies started towards the end of the war. Meanwhile, the Tet Offensive of 1968 marked a turning point of the war which pushed the conflict to the center stage of the world, sparking massive protests against the imperialist war internationally and within the U.S. The success of the NLF in the Tet Offensive signifies the failing mission of the U.S.’ against socialist forces. This event “persuaded key sections of big business [invested in war production] that the U.S. simply could not afford the cost of maintaining control of the country” (Harman 2008, 580). In the face of mounting imperialist competition from Japan and West Germany, “the [U.S. would not be able] to meet the challenges of their economic competitors as well as pay the cost of a land war in [Viet Nam]” (Harman 2008, 580). War expenditures could not alleviate the pressures of overaccumulation in the U.S. Businesses in the U.S. had to expand their forces of production and begin production of commodities external to the war effort – business therefore had to move its operations outside the nation-state centric model of capital accumulation.

In the end, the U.S.’ defeat in the war was not a defeat of its military prestige or its hegemonic status, but rather a structural contradiction of the nation-state model of capitalism. The economic boundaries of capitalism had to be broken down and liberated from the constraints of the nation-state in order for the capitalist system to reproduce itself in a new form. This structural contradiction of the system manifested itself in the form of an imperialist defeat, but at its roots this event and the war itself in the global context was the final straw that helped break-up the boundaries of a nation-state model of world capitalism. “The old imperialism of direct colonial rule finally died in the last quarter of the 20th

century” (Harman 2008, 599). The way forward with the existing structures and forces for world capitalism was to restructure capital accumulation outside of national markets and circuits of production (Robinson 2003).

Socialist Development after Victory

The withdrawal of U.S.’ forces in 1972 and the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 marked the defeat of the U.S. and the ARVN, thus halting whatever plans of primitive accumulation that capitalist interests had intended for the former colonial territory. The northern regime would begin steps towards reunification of the southern territory and face its own enormous challenges of reconstruction after wartime. The various policies and reforms that occurred during this time of state-society formation express the dialectics between a state in formation and a society in transition. These processes are experienced unevenly in the northern and southern region of Viet Nam.

The period of development and nation-state building of socialist Viet Nam began during the new epoch of capitalist globalization. The northern regime continued with a socialist strategy of permanent revolution. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the socialist forces of the NLF in the south began to organize workers and social committees to begin the transformation of society (Duiker 1989). These committees were to serve as interim governing bodies in society, replacing those of the capitalist state that were dismantled with the end of the war. Directives from the north were handed down to NLF-led committees in the south for transforming the structures of society.

Steps towards reunification were initially delayed as the northern regime and NLF leaders tended to the immediate issue of material and infrastructural development after the

ravages of war. The socialist leaders of Viet Nam implemented the strategy of social transformation that called for the development of material organization and ideological construction of a socialist nation: prioritizing economic material development and the ideological transformation of “the new socialist persons and society” (Guevara and Castro 2009).

Hanoi’s Second Five-Year Plan for North and South Viet Nam, 1976-1980

The socialist project in Viet Nam and other socialist countries required a global program of cooperation. In the aftermath of the first two Indochina Wars, the rebuilding of the nation necessitated external assistance. In material terms, Viet Nam had “meager reserves of foreign currency and [an] adverse balance of payments” and could not “afford a policy of self-reliance” (Duiker 1989, 34-35). Objectively and strategically, there was no opting out of the global capitalist system – a country cannot stand alone and be completely self-reliant, especially one that went through extended periods of war and destruction. In this period of reconstruction and unification, the new country would also have to contend with the new processes of capitalist globalization.

In addressing the need for development and economic growth, the party-state developed several agreements of assistance from communist and non-communist countries; this included economic agreements with the Soviet Union, China, Japan, France, and Sweden (Duiker 1989). The operations and production of national industries, particularly the heavy industrial projects of hydroelectric power plants and coal-oil extraction in the South China Sea required external assistance. The new regime also sought out relations with international

organizations to attract foreign investment capital into national industries, acquiring production and trade agreements with Western European companies (Duiker 1989).

Despite the US-led trade embargo placed on the country after the war, the new nation was able to secure the assistance of communist and non-communist states to shore up support for its development (Duiker 1989). External assistance was necessary for the survival of the new socialist country and further cohesion of the international socialist project. The trade and production agreements that were formed shaped the relations of production and reproduction of the new Vietnamese nation within the larger socialist project. Viet Nam's participation in international organizations was strategic – in part, to embed itself into emerging transnational structures and yet retain its socialist principles through the mechanism of state ownership. In this sense, Viet Nam's development of international relations was part of the globalization of socialism in the 1970's.

The Third Indochina War of 1979 – A Border War with Reformed China

The border conflict between China and Viet Nam in 1979 (or the Third Indochina War), often overlooked within this period and when analyzed often misinterpreted as a case of international conflict, is telling of the contradictions that most socialist countries faced when confronting the new epoch of capitalist globalization. In trying to understand this particular conflict between two nominally socialist countries (once allied nations), we must realize that the world had changed since the end of the Second Indochina War. While Viet Nam embarked on a nation-building project, China on the other hand had undergone socialist transformations within the globalizing capitalist system. China had experienced multiple

internal “revolutions” and party successors since Mao Zedong’s leadership ended with his death in 1976.

In 1978, a year before the border conflict and almost three decades after the revolution in 1949, China came upon its own socialist crisis. Reformist factions in the party sought to liberalize the economy to avoid internal collapse. With the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese leadership and China as a whole entered a new era. Under Deng, economic reforms were initiated to liberalize and reintegrate the country into world capitalism. As China began to liberalize, Deng Xiaoping began open communications with then President Carter to plan out China’s position in the global political economy. It was in the context of China’s liberalization and re-integration into the world capitalist economy that the border war was fought.

For China to reintegrate into world capitalism, it had to gain dominance in the region to procure its space for involvement in capital’s globalization. Carter had encouraged China to occupy Viet Nam’s northern border in response to Viet Nam’s intervention in Cambodia against the Chinese supported Khmer Rouge. In February 1979 China invaded and occupied the northern territories of the Viet Nam-China border. The following month in March of 1979, the conflict ended with a ceasefire and withdrawal of Chinese forces. Though the conflict was short-lived with both sides claiming victory, this peculiar event expressed the contradictions and social forces of the emerging globalizing era of capitalism.

Both countries faced the difficulties of building socialism within the larger global system that was ruled and organized by the logic and structure of the stagnated capitalism of late the 1970’s. The new political agenda that came out of this dilemma was a strategy of capital that facilitated its movements beyond the boundaries of the nation-state to resolve the

contradiction of capitalist overaccumulation and hegemonic crisis. A new period of economic liberalization came to the fore – global neoliberalism. The border war was part of this initial phase of China’s integration and thus globalization. These existing political economic tensions set the stage for contemporary relations between China and Viet Nam. The global context and consequences of the northern border war between China and Viet Nam are key to understanding the neoliberal transitions of both nation-states away from socialism and towards global capitalism – reintegration implemented under the banner of “economic reform”.

Conclusion

Like China, Viet Nam began to come into its own crisis of socialism as the world economy globalized. Socialist forces within the country began to confront a new form of capital on the world scale – global capital. Nation-state boundaries of the old-world order could no longer, nor ever could they, depend on the strategy of isolation and the socialist national program in Viet Nam could not rely on the crumbling infrastructure of the Soviet bloc to withstand capital’s encroachment. In 1985, the year prior to Viet Nam’s Doi Moi and 10 years after the war, William Duiker gave a short perspective of Viet Nam’s material conditions: “The economy is lagging, much of the population is sullen and unresponsive to its leaders, and foreign policy difficulties abound” (1989, xiv). Viet Nam’s socialist crisis resided in the contradictions produced by post-war social material conditions. Efforts on part of the party leadership and the Vietnamese society during the periods of reconstruction were not able to develop the impetus for a full transition to socialism. The following chapter will

layout the tensions of socialist development that shaped the necessary political-economic conditions which pushed the party leaders towards reintegration.

CHAPTER 4. The Neoliberal Integration of Viet Nam (1986)

The Globalization of Capital – Neoliberalism

The globalization of capital was a solution to the 1970's crisis of Fordism-Keynesianism, or redistributive capitalism, when the world economy came into a period of stagnation and crisis as the rates of profits were hampered by the power of labor over that of capital. This world movement was rooted in the changing relations of production. The Fordist model of the nation-state had tethered capital to a class compromise which enabled labor to limit the power of capital (Robinson 2014). According to Robinson (2014):

These constraints – the-so-called class compromise – had been imposed on capital through decades of mass struggle around the world by nationally contained popular and working classes...capital went global as a strategy of the emergent transnational capitalist class to reconstitute its class power by breaking free of nation-state constraints on accumulation... globally oriented elites captured state power in most countries and utilized that power to push capitalist globalization(133).

The imperatives of capital accumulation required a global essence over that of national accumulation, consequently modifying the role of national states to orient national production for global accumulation (Robinson 2003). Additionally, former national capital from the original core had moved beyond its nation-state territoriality and imbedded itself into new territories of cash-poor developing countries. Thus, the class of global capitalists grew out from the nation-state and came to form a transnational class with capitalists of other

nations (Robinson 2003, 36).¹¹ This illustrates that the new globalized capitalists no longer depended on a politicized national character as they became dependent on global accumulation to maintain their class position.

By the 1980's and 1990s, capital regained its class advantage with the campaign of restructuring production and finance in the world economy – capital was once again liberated in the world market. The processes of this global *neo*-liberalism birthed the current epoch of global capitalism and set in motion the rise of global capital. The new political and structural agenda of neoliberalism was the global strategy of capital to facilitate its movements beyond the boundaries of the nation-state in order to resolve the contradiction of stagnation and overaccumulation (Harvey 2007).¹² Neoliberal capitalism exists as the latest form of capitalism tied to a set of ideologies that facilitate capitalist globalization. The global institutions of the IMF and World Bank are the main global institutions that have enabled globalization by enforcing neoliberal policies of structural adjustment on the Third World countries seeking financial aid for development (Robinson 2014, Harvey 2005).

According to Robinson (2004), global neoliberalism involves two dimensions: (1) worldwide market liberalization and (2) construction of a new transnational legal and regulatory superstructure. These world market liberalization and economic restructuring programs were first designed in the 1970s and 1980s by international financial agencies and think tanks of emerging transnational elites (Robinson 2004). Such transformations sought to reorient the nation-state towards the facilitation of global capital. In effect,

¹¹ These new globally oriented capitalist classes would merge towards a global class formation, which Robinson (2004) terms the *transnational capitalist class*. This process of class formation is seen before Viet Nam's second integration.

¹² Capital was stagnant with the declining rates of growth and low rate of profits.

neoliberalization opened the trade and finance of the national economy to the world market by deregulating and privatizing the public sphere, thus removing the state from the economy. This worldwide restructuring sought to “achieve macroeconomic equilibrium and liberalization required by transnationally mobile capital” in order to “integrate each nation and region into globalized circuits of accumulation” (Robinson 2003, 57).

The new epoch of market liberalization grew out from the objective contradiction of capital within core countries which could no longer expand within the basic political-economic boundary of the nation-state. Industries of the core began to move production overseas to the global south in search of lower production costs. From this escape of national capital to a globally integrated market and production system, trade barriers were gradually dismantled to no longer protect national production from world market competition – capital would gain greater mobility worldwide and no longer be dependent on nation-state protections for its production.

Characteristic of this era is the privatization and deregulation of the markets to re-establish private accumulation in the sphere of welfare and state-social spending (Harvey 2007). The former advances of labor in its fight against capital had meant greater protection and higher wages, as well as procuring the mandate that states funnel more resources into social reproduction and welfare. These achievements in the social sphere, however, would be dismantled in the process of neoliberalization. The rise of a non-profit industrial complex in the recent decades have served replace the duties of the state in welfare and public spheres that were once provided in the core. Key to the processes of neoliberalism were the structural adjustments programs (SAPs) imposed on formerly colonized and emerging nation-states by the global “development” policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Like

in other developing countries, these SAPs were key to the globalization of Viet Nam as the country reintegrates again into the world capitalist system.

Socialist Crisis of Hegemony

Viet Nam's second period of integration was a solution to the crisis of socialist development. What was important to this transition was that it transpired in sequence with the larger processes of capitalism's transformation starting in the 1980s to resolve the structural crisis of stagnation. The structure of production shifted to new grounds that extended beyond the nation-state boundary for the major powers of the world. This structural change in the system required that production and accumulation be globalized and increasingly intertwined with global finance. In satisfying its intrinsic needs to expand and produce at lower and lower cost, capital no longer remained within the existing nation-state structures of accumulation. As capital changed in nature, socialism as its counterpart in the larger world system also came under pressure to address this change in the relation between capital and labor. Globalization came to impact all socialist countries, inevitably leading these countries towards the path of reintegration into the globalized capitalist system (Robinson 2004/2014). In this period, the Soviet bloc began to fragment under the pressures of competitive development with capitalism. The crisis of socialism arose as socialist countries advance their development by globalizing their production, allowing these countries to integrate their economies into the new global capitalism.

Regional Crisis

The fight to maintain socialism in the region against counterrevolutionary forces (that were supported by globalizing capitalists abroad) came quickly after 1975 (Duiker 1989). After the war, political tension from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and China began to mount as these countries initiated the path of further integration or reintegration into a globalizing capitalist system. The pro-capitalist and liberalizing countries within the region sought to dismantle the socialist bloc in Asia in order to open up space in the region for further integration into the capitalist system. In this context, Viet Nam stood as the only socialist country in the region after China liberalized in 1978.

As part of the capitalist campaign to dismantle socialism, international forces sought to push Viet Nam into further isolation in tandem with the U.S.-led trade embargo by manufacturing a political crisis in the region to heighten the internal crisis in Viet Nam. The political scheme around Cambodia was created to undermine the integrity of Viet Nam in the international community, condemning Viet Nam for its occupation of Cambodia. Viet Nam's presence in Cambodia was assisting the resistance against the faction of Pol Pot. The genocidal faction of Pol Pot was supported by newly liberalized China. China had liberalized its economy in that year as a way to gain access to global capital networks and capital.

This geopolitical dynamic had often been interpreted as nation-state competition between Viet Nam and China, both countries in the pursuit of imperialist expansion over the territories and countries in the region. However, as I argued before, the border war of 1979 was in fact a third capitalist counterrevolutionary offensive - this conflict was underwritten by the global character of capital. The first attempt was the First Indochina war with France,

followed by the Second Indochina War with the U.S.. These powers acted in the service of ensuring global capitalist interests in the region. The U.S. and other global powers exploited this regional tension as a third offensive against the communist bloc whose only footing in the region was Viet Nam. This in truth was the political context for Viet Nam's occupation of Cambodia in support of the resistance against Pol Pot in 1978 and the Sino-Vietnamese Border war in 1979.

Crisis of International Socialism

In addition to the regional dynamics after the war, Soviet aid that had initially supported the development of Viet Nam diminished especially after the 1989 collapse of the Soviet bloc. The external relations of Viet Nam to the socialist bloc remained fragile and eventually collapsed, ending the developmental period of socialism in the 20th century. Before this, however, at the beginning of Viet Nam's post-war development in 1979, the country was able to establish various trade relations with capitalist industrial and developing countries, along with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) under the leadership of the Soviet Union in order to support its national development (Kaser 1967). The coalition of mutual aid and trade of CMEA alleviated some effects of the isolation brought on by the US trade embargo (Tran and Smith 1998). Early aids took the form of grants of raw materials and goods, such as cotton and petroleum products. This aid allowed Viet Nam to build up its productive capacity to the extent that it would be able to reunify a country that had been ravaged by a century of warfare that consumed an enormous amount of the country's labor power, capital, and resources (Kerkvliet et al. 1998).

However, by the late 1980's as capital began to regain traction from globalization, the aid and cooperative relations with CMEA decreased as the other socialist countries enter into their own crisis. According to Tran and David (1998), "[S]oviet aid gradually declined and changed in form: grant aid was cut while loans and barter-trade increased" (79). These loans were repaid through export trade with the Soviet Union (Tran and Smith 1998). The decrease and change in aid exacerbated the intensified isolation imposed on Viet Nam by the trade embargo (Arkadie and Mallon, 2003). In following the path to transition, emerging nation-states transform towards neoliberalism under the banner of "economic reform". This path of transition would prove to be the only structural response for the party leaders to take in order to alleviate the crisis of underdevelopment, a condition that has remained throughout the period of economic liberation and post-socialist transition.

Economic Crisis

With the decline in mutual aid amongst the socialist countries, socialism as a global campaign struggled to maintain a hegemonic bloc in the world system. It was also contending with changing conditions brought on by neoliberalism and aggressive capitalist expansion through globalization. Socialism within Viet Nam had begun to encounter a crisis of hegemony by the early 1980s – this crisis was expressed as an internal crisis of reproduction in the form of famine and economic stagnation. Viet Nam faced inflation which soared to over 700 per cent in the 1980's, stagnation of growth, and a deficit of export revenues to cover the total value of imports into the country (Duiker 1989). In a sense, the productive capacity of the nation could not match the consumption unleashed on the nation – production could not keep up with the needs of social reproduction.

The decision to reintegrate into the world economy was effectively a solution to the material crisis of the socialist project and simultaneously a response to the ascendancy of global capitalism. Socialism in Viet Nam had resulted in economic stagnation that required massive capital investments to reboot the country's economic enterprises, such sources of investment inevitably came from foreign entities. The Doi Moi reforms resulted. The reforms of Doi Moi gradually relinquished state control of the national economy in order to promote domestic private capital in conjunction with foreign capital investment in private and state enterprises. Such policy changes not only opened up the country to capital investment to solve the economic crisis but capital investments from capitalist countries abroad and institutions of the IMF and WB bridged the national economy to the globalizing world economy.

The only way for Viet Nam to avert the crisis under socialism and develop its economy was to re-integrate by adopting the existing capitalist organization of global neoliberalism. Thus, the undercurrents for Viet Nam's integration were the structural changes of the world capitalist system that produced a qualitatively new process of accumulation. The capitalist system changed from world production and trade between nation-states to a system of globalized production and trade. New relations of production fragment globally as trade and accumulation became increasingly dictated by global finance capital that gained mobility across national boundaries.

Internal Political Crisis

Alongside the material crisis of underdevelopment, a party schism over the proper response to the crisis of socialism emerged before the period of reintegration. A reformist

fraction emerged out of this struggle and gradually gained political dominance. The death of party Secretary Le Duan in 1986 finally dissolved the last line of defense for socialist development and ideological legitimacy of the socialist program. Reformist elements within the party that sought a capitalist solution to the socialist crisis pushed forward and gained leadership positions that effectively oversaw the first wave of liberal reforms.

This faction sought to inject [global] capital into a starved economy and reverse the advances of socialism in the country by liberalizing the socialist economy and allowing domestic and foreign capital to thrive. Collective farming was replaced by private agricultural industries producing for the world market. The restrictions on foreign direct investment (FDI) were lifted and multiple reforms enacted to encourage massive foreign investment to enter the country. In effect, the liberalization of the country was pushed forth by capitalist social forces that continued to exist throughout the period of socialist construction. Private capitalists who have not emigrated during and after the Viet Nam war and liberal reformist party elites within the government were the social forces whose class interest began to merge with those of global capital.¹³ Liberalization gave these newly emerging elite in the state and private sector the upper hand in orienting the country towards global capitalism.

The Doi Moi of Viet Nam

This crisis of socialism had sparked Viet Nam's re-integration into capitalism. The term "re-integration" is used here to denote that Viet Nam had integrated previously under French colonization. The socialist revolution had disrupted this process of capitalist

¹³ This new class formation in Viet Nam before the liberalization of the economy would become the formation of the transnational capitalist class (TCC) as Robinson had theorized earlier on.

integration by reorienting the development of the country towards a global socialist bloc-system of production. The history that followed this period pushed Viet Nam back into the world capitalist system.

Eight years after the People's Republic of China liberalized its economy in 1978, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam followed suit with its own neoliberal economic reform in 1986 called "Doi Moi" translated as "renovation". These national policies aimed to develop a "socialist-oriented market economy" by implementing neoliberal policies that would effectively change the structure of control and ownership in the economy from a socialized state command economy to a market-driven economy. A quiet capitalist revolution was set in motion in 1986 and is still ongoing as Viet Nam continues to integrate further into the global economy. The policies of Doi Moi served to facilitate global accumulation by opening up new spaces and extracting resources for global production. Viet Nam's transnationalization is part of the larger ongoing historical process of capitalist incorporation of "the former Soviet bloc and Third World Revolutionary countries into global capitalism" (Robinson 2014, 133). Robinson observes that these newly incorporated spaces would "provide vast new markets and investment outlets" for global accumulation (Robinson 2014).

Policies of Doi Moi

At the Second Plenum in April 1986, the Sixth National Party Congress laid out the new focus of the economy by passing the decision to initiate a gradual transition away from central state management. The reforms of the following decade and on into the 21st century aimed to abolish agricultural collectives, remove price controls on agricultural goods, and enable farmers to sell their goods in the marketplace (Kien and Yoon 2008). The intention

was to encourage the establishment of private businesses and draw in foreign investment, including foreign-owned enterprises to spark economic development. The policies targeted three main areas for reform: agricultural production and land ownership, liberalization of trade and investment, and free-market orientation with private sector development (Kien and Yoon 2008).

In 1987, the party passed the 217-H'BY bill to eliminate state control over the trading decisions of state-owned-enterprises (SOEs) (Tran and Smith 1998). This change greatly impacted the decision-making power of the state. National production could now orient fully towards production for export in the global market. Tran and Smith (1998) noted that “developing industries [in Viet Nam] are linked into these sorts of global commodity chains... to jump start the process of industrial transformation” (58).

In the same year, a law was introduced to allow foreign investment to enter into the country. This was intended to revitalize the productive capacity of the nation; however, production would no longer be directed to meet the needs of the people. Further directives were passed to transform the socialist relations of property and production. In 1988, the Politburo passed Resolution 19 for the breakdown of collective farming programs that had held the collective ownership and production of land in the hands of small village farmers (Tran and David 1998). From this decree, the agricultural contract system of “khoan ho” replaced collective farming programs to fragment farming cooperatives into individual farming households. Individual households would exist as single economic units open to the competition of the global market (Dang et al. 1997). The Prime Minister also passed a bill that year for the development of private firms. The number of firms in 1988 was 318 but within a single year the number rose sharply to 1284 private firms.

Neoliberal global capitalism became more developed by the 1990's as peripheral states such as formerly colonized or transitioning socialist states globalized their economies. Within Viet Nam, the neoliberal reforms had begun to formally shift national industries over to private global interests. In 1990, reforms were passed to allow foreign direct investment (FDI) to negotiate joint-ventures and business cooperation contracts with private firms and SOEs (Tran and David 1998). In this move, the financial institutions of banks were also restructured into two tiers, one level for central state finance and another for commercial banks directly tied to the whims of the global market.

In 1991, Resolution 388 was passed allowing the state to shut down “nonprofitable” SOEs and discontinuing state subsidies for the remaining state firms (Tran and David 1998). While SOEs remain a large part of the country's economy, the decline in government support signifies a degradation of state investment into production tied to the *social reproduction* of the nation, what Marx broadly conceived as the regeneration of the nation's productive power.¹⁴ In the same year, a resolution was passed introducing the formation of export processing zones (EPZs). This resolution created the framework for increasing privatizing land for the sole purpose of global market production. The development of the first EPZ, Tan Thuan, was funded \$89 million by capitalist investors based in the US (Tran and David 1998).

Following suit, the European Union (E.U.) and Australia began trade relations with Viet Nam. By the next year, the Soviet Union had disintegrated along with CMEA (Soviet-

¹⁴ Marx's conceives of the concept of “social reproduction” to involve the “totality of the capitalist mode of production [that encompasses] production in the public sphere of all goods and services and circulation as well as reproduction in the “private” sphere” (McGregor 2018). Cited in McGregor 2018, Bhattacharya (2017) further detailed the concept to involve “various kinds of socially necessary work—mental, physical and emotional—aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined means for maintaining and reproducing population” (6).

led Council of Mutual Economic Assistance). With the fall of the Soviet Union, additional space for further capitalist accumulation opened up as post-Socialist states sought official integration into the global capitalist system. The year 1993 saw further reorganization of land-property relations with the passing of the Land Law that further dissolved the land ownership of small farmers and encouraged capital investment in rural areas for agricultural exports. Hai Phong EPZ was also created in this year. By 1994, Viet Nam normalized trade relations with the U.S.

Up to this point, Viet Nam had eliminated trade restrictions and further integrated the country into the global economy. The lifting of the embargo on the part of the U.S., however, also denoted capital's need to intensify its rates of profit as it comes up against enduring structural contradictions. At the beginning of the 21st century (2000-2007), Viet Nam underwent a "normalization" phase facilitated by the US through bilateral trade agreements that supplanted much of the socialist organization of the country. By 2007, after 21 years of neoliberal reform, Viet Nam was finally admitted into the WTO (Vu 2009).¹⁵

Transformations of the social relations of production made by the structural Doi Moi reforms have generated tensions in the country that reflect the structural contradictions of capitalism. Land reforms, particularly, have massively displaced segments of the rural population to open new space for capitalist primitive (global) accumulation.¹⁶ This process had led to internal labor migration within Viet Nam, cross-national production with China, and labor strikes in economic processing zones. The reforms have shifted economic production towards export-led development that "favor[s] new circuits of production and

¹⁵ Bilateral Trade Agreement to Normalize Trade Relations with Vietnam: Text of the Agreement.

¹⁶ Primitive accumulation is disused further in the bottom sections on crisis.

distribution linked to the global economy, and often organized along the lines of flexible accumulation” (Robinson 2003, 61). Viet Nam has also absorbed most of the low-skill manufacturing jobs offshored from China as China shifts towards high-tech production. As the structure of the global economy requires that labor become more flexible, labor is fragmented in all possible ways to increase the extraction of value within the labor process. Viet Nam’s increasing participation in the global economy depends on the increasingly flexibilization of labor for efficient extraction of value from the fragmented and globalized production processes inside the country’s specialized economic zones (SEZs).

Crises within Global Capitalism

At the turn of the 21st century, the contradictions within global capitalism became more intense as the system sought new ways to expand and extract profit. The Great Recession of 2007-08 was indicative of the level and type of destruction that crises inherent in capitalism can bring about with the intensification of transnational financial accumulation (Robinson 2014). At this current phase of capitalism, the quantitative culmination of structural crises has entered into a qualitative state of crisis which threatens the reproductive capacity of the capitalist system as a whole. In Robinson’s terms, structural contradictions of the system have become crises of the system (Robinson 2014). The system is facing an impasse that is fundamentally a systemic crisis of overaccumulation of capital (Robinson 2014). We are experiencing a historical conjuncture in the global system in which there will be two possible outcomes if capitalism remains the dominant world system: either revolution from the masses of global labor that are motivated to build a new global society, or the global system will continue to push the boundaries of its limits to the very end by veering the whole

of humanity to ecological death. Paraphrasing from Robinson's (2014) work, he admonishes that at this point in the 21st century, it is no longer an exaggeration that the real crisis of capital is in fact a crisis of humanity.

As capitalist relations of production expand across the globe and became less bound to the territory of the nation-state and capital continues to be ever more mobile with the advances of digital and electronic technology, the need for political legitimacy and ideological hegemony of the national state becomes increasingly contradictory to the process of global accumulation (Robinson 2014). To surpass this contradiction of the nation-state, the institutions and apparatuses of the national state must transform to reorient towards global capital. The political-economic unit from which global capital arose – the nation-state – becomes a mechanism for global capitalist accumulation.

Having acquired the power to concretize the masses of people into concentrated national work forces in the last century, the nation-state stands as an existing political unit to manage and facilitate the extraction of value from labor for global capitalist accumulation. As William Robinson (2003) noted, “transnational corporations during the 1990’s were able to utilize the institutions of different nation-states to continuously dismantle regulatory structures and other state restrictions... in a process of ‘mutual deregulation’” (47) – nation-state would employ neoliberal policies within their own country and demand the deregulation of other nation-states that they engage in trade agreements with as well. These trade relations, however, fold into the networks and circuits of global accumulation by facilitating global production in their own country as well as other countries. It is within this relation to global capital that the nation-state remains functional to capitalist globalization as an essential central condition of power for transnational capital

In the process of deregulation for the accumulation of global capital, the nation-state transforms and develops a new position on the global stage – inhabiting a new profile within a global division of labor as it reorganizes the labor pool of its own territory to become malleable to global production requirements. As national states struggle to adapt to the globalization of capital, the process of primitive accumulation continues to break down and blur the national boundaries of the state. This unleashes the masses of labor to the exploitation of global capital; symptomatic of this is the proletarianization and de-peasantization of labor from newly integrated spaces into global capital. These new pools of labor are products of globalization, in which they simultaneously meet the needs of global capital by providing easily extractable labor power and express the crisis of global capital as “surplus” humanity that cannot be formally and fully integrated into the social institutions of capitalism. The social condition of this crisis of the system can be seen in the remarkable refugee crises of the last two years and increasing populations that make up 25% of the world who are living in dilapidated urban areas (Hutt 2016). The operations of globalization on the ground “fragment local [conditions and state institutions] and integrate select strands of the population globally” (Robinson 2003, 32). Globalization generates uneven effects across sections of the population, producing new dimensions of inequalities that uphold the new hierarchies of labor relations.

Along with uneven proletarianization of labor, globalization’s “centralization and concentration of economic power is accompanied by a disintegration of the cohesive structures of nations and their civil societies” (Robinson 2003, 32). Local economic expansions produce core and peripheral spaces of capital accumulation that designate complex terrains of class inequality within countries, producing new labor relations that are

precarious, casualized (made to be temporary workers), contracted, and informal. In the context of globalization, the processes of production and accumulation no longer center around the nation-state unit; therefore world systems categories of core-periphery that were once meant to signify inequality between nation-state are now applied to explain the inequalities within country populations that engage in global production networks. As the global plants itself into the local sphere, the local context of the nation is coming to mirror the global process of polarization (Hutt 2016). These features of global crisis are currently present in Viet Nam as the country further integrates into the crisis-ridden global capitalist system.

Features of Crisis in Viet Nam

The state character of post-socialist Viet Nam under global capitalism is that of a neoliberal state that continues to deal with residual elements of socialism, particularly relations of land ownership and militant labor activism that continue the legacy of socialism in civil society. The point to be made is not whether the Vietnamese state remains socialist or not, rather I argue that Viet Nam's decision to liberalize had reoriented the goals of the state towards capitalist development and gradually stripped the state of its socialist principles. In effect, the transnationalization of Viet Nam had transformed the nature of the nation-state's institutions to operate in conjunction with global capital. From this work and for future work, it is imperative to maintain that the historic "role of the neoliberal state is to serve global capital accumulation" (Robinson 2003, 47).

Features of crisis within Viet Nam, and for every other country that globalization has enveloped, are crises of global capital. The neoliberalization of the country had thwarted the

crisis cause by the transition to socialism, but in return propelled the country towards the current era of crisis that every country is facing under global capitalism. Initial capital investments from the IMF and World Bank that sought to rescue the strangled socialist economy produced only temporary national economic growth. Meanwhile, the wage gap between 1986 and 1989 widened and rates of unemployment increased (Tran et al. 1998). The restructuring policies embedded within FDIs have produced institutional changes that led to inequality and greater levels of poverty in the country. According to a 2012 report from the World Bank itself, Viet Nam faces increasing inequality despite increasing foreign investment since liberalization (World Bank 2012).¹⁷ Thirty years of neoliberalization had caused the “income for the poorest 10% of the population to decrease by a fifth... while the richest 5% in [Viet Nam] pocketed nearly a quarter of the income” between 2004 and 2010 (Davies 2015).

Dispossession of Land and Uneven Proletarianization

As former spaces of socialist production and property relations are opened up and made available to capital accumulation, it is clear that the rural areas are most affected by such drastic inequality (Davies 2015). Neoliberalization had revitalized the process of primitive accumulation by reorganizing and enclosing rural lands for private global interests in agricultural export production and projects for capitalist development. According to Davies (2015), “[m]illions of farmers are driven off their land to make way for factories or roads.” An article by Nguyen et al. (2015) on land acquisition in Hue (located in central Viet Nam) reports that “it was estimated that nearly 1 million hectares of agricultural land was

¹⁷ This report utilizes the underlying neoliberal perspective that a surge in inequality is a failure on part of the country to further “develop” its economy.

transformed for non-agricultural activities between 2001 and 2010” (World Bank 2011 cited in Nguyen et al. 2015, 4). Nguyen et al. report that “[m]ore than 2,700 households have been seriously impacted by these processes” as inhabitants become displaced for global agribusinesses and infrastructure development (Nguyen et al. 2015, 7). Davies reports that “in the early 1990s, nearly all rural households (91.8%) owned land. But by 2010, nearly a quarter of them (22.5%) were landless” (Davies 2015). The process of primitive accumulation that was interrupted by the period of revolution and socialism has revived with the reintegration of these territories - this continuation of the process of primitive accumulation is nearing completion. Although Viet Nam may experience a different process of integration contingent on its specific historical, political, economic, and cultural context, the larger global process of transnationalization requires that all spaces be incorporated into the global capitalist system, absorbing all regions of the world.

As with land dispossession, the process of depeasantization that existed at the genesis of capital is seen also in the 21st century. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam had retained its agricultural base throughout the transition to supply food production as it redeveloped after the war. The majority of the population resided in rural provinces, while only a small percentage of the population lived in the cities (Nguyen et al. 2015). With integration, however, this agricultural base of collective farmers was dismantled through the neoliberal reforms. Chang (2009) noted that the lives of these peasants and farmers were “subject to the rule of the market” (164). Primitive accumulation continues in this way as a significant section of the rural populations in Viet Nam become dispossessed from their lands and means of subsistence. They are forced to engage and depend ever more on wage labor to survive in the global capitalist system.

Even then, these populations are not fully proletarianized (made into wage workers) and completely absorbed into the formal market economy. Davies (2015) reports that “hundreds of thousands of displaced workers have been made redundant as the private owners of the old state-owned companies set about cutting costs.” The economic reforms of Doi Moi facilitated the neoliberal restructuring of labor to fit the condition that “labor costs must be lowered in order to attract investment and increase the competitiveness of firms producing ‘tradeable’ (export) goods” (Robinson 2001, 550). In this process, domestic markets contract as the demand for labor declines and new proletarianized groups from the dissolved employment of the former state industrial and bureaucratic sector emerge. The displaced and unemployed urban workers are joined by the waves of poor peasants that have internally migrated to the cities in search of work (Davies 2015).

It becomes evident that a consequence of this global restructuring is the rise of millions of “supernumeraries or superfluous labor with no role in the formal local structures of globalized production” (Robinson 2003, 37). The opportunities for stable employment in the city are sparse as the type of work that is available becomes increasingly made casual to fit globalized production process.¹⁸ Those who were displaced from their lands in the countryside and hinterlands constitute the precarious laborers who fill the streets of the industrialized cities like Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City. Some find shelter in these cities’ industrial parks and export-processing zones, while many are relegated to become part of world’s supernumeraries, those whose labor are made redundant under global capitalism (Robinson 2003). This surplus population have no formal place in the new global society and expresses the crisis of surplus labor, the overaccumulation of labor.

¹⁸ Casualization of work is mentioned in the earlier section on the proletarianization of labor.

Changes in the State

Concurrent to land displacement is the neoliberal restructuring of the former socialist state of Viet Nam. Structural adjustment politics of the IMF and the World Bank implemented by the Doi Moi reforms served to hollow out the socialist state and at the same time change the orientation of the state towards global capital. In the process of transnationalizing state-societal institutions, Viet Nam is developing a new global profile which serves to provide land and space to further the operations of global capital. This discussion leads to question what is the nature of the country's profile in the global capitalist system headed as the system spirals into deeper crisis?

Davies (2015) cites Angie Ngoc Tran, a specialist on labor struggles in Viet Nam, who notes that with “the surge of capital entering Viet Nam by way of foreign investment and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, the state is becoming less and less of a government acting on behalf of the people... [In fact] some state organs and institutions are in alliance with the capitalists” (Davies 2015). Whatever the profile of Viet Nam may develop into, the political and economic elites of the country have increasingly taken steps in the interest of global capital.

As Viet Nam integrates further into the global economy in the 21st century, the neoliberalized state continues to restructure according to the requirements of the World Bank and the IMF to serve the needs of global capital. Davies (2015) includes the following:

[During the initial years of Doi Moi], every worker was guaranteed a minimum wage... In 1990 this was set at a level that matched the “living wage” which covered the essentials of life. But over the years, for the fear of losing foreign capital, the government has allowed it to be cut, frozen and overtaken by inflation... By April 2012, the government's own union was protesting the wages that covered only 50% of essential costs. Most city

workers were destitute and physically wasted away.... [living in cheaply rented] shabby rooms and suffer serious malnutrition and other health risks (Davies 2015).

This new wave of primitive accumulation brought on by the reforms of Doi Moi has once again allowed capital to further propagate and embed itself into the social fabric of formerly enclosed socialist spaces, dominating the social relations and institutions of Vietnamese society.

CHAPTER 5. Future Research on China and Tentative Conclusion

China and Global Dynamics

In tandem with Viet Nam, China has also experienced a post-socialist transition beginning in 1976 with the party leadership transition to Deng Xiaoping after the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the cultural revolutions.¹⁹ The economic transitions of China and Viet Nam both occurred at the start of global neoliberalization in the 1970's. Both serve as cases of successive re-integrations constituting new waves of primitive accumulation facilitated by global neoliberalism. In the case of Viet Nam and China, socialist social relations are broken up and absorbed into a global market.

The Chinese state, however, is gaining greater facilitation and control of global accumulation within the global capitalist system. President Xi Jinping had recently launched the state-managed and globally funded One Belt One Road (OBOR) campaign. The OBOR initiative seeks to “[reconnect] the majority of the globe around massive infrastructure

¹⁹ China's formal liberalization of its economy and reintegration into the capitalist system began in 1978.

development and intensified economic partnerships” along internal land routes and sea routes that will span the areas between China and the Europe, including the United Kingdom (Matthew Crosston quoted in Modern Diplomacy Report 2019, 4). Transnationalized agents of the Chinese state have articulated that a goal of this project is to infiltrate the remaining spaces that have not been industrialized in the region, specifically former post-Soviet and post-communist states that are in the midst of development as they integrate into the capitalist world economy (Cheng 2017). This campaign would function to alleviate the crisis of overaccumulation by providing new avenues into which surplus capital can be channeled. In effect to this, the Chinese state continues to serve as an institution of transnational capital, further integrating the state’s apparatuses into the global capitalist process of accumulation; this in itself characterizes China’s post-socialist reintegration into global capitalism. Additionally, the onslaught of Chinese transnational capitalists acting on behalf of global capital gain access to markets and resources in Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, as well as the real estate markets of core global cities like those within London, Los Angeles, and New York which are also undergoing a hollowing out effect of global neoliberalism.²⁰

China also has a hand in Asia’s regional integration into the global economy, including the integration of Viet Nam. Viet Nam and China share histories which reach back to pre-capitalist periods of world history. For example, “cho lon” merchants, historically from Guangzhou China, were stationed in what is now Ho Chi Minh city before the period of French colonization (Smith 2009). These histories, however, have been

²⁰ As part of global neoliberalization, core capitalist countries have experienced deindustrialization of the manufacturing industries in their cities. Capitalists of these industries have sought to lower labor costs in order to maintain their increasing rates of profits by offshoring or outsourcing production to former Third World countries that are beginning to globalize their national economies. As Saskia Sassen (1991) noted in her work *Global Cities*, cities that were once manufacturing centers in core countries have deindustrialized leaving behind real estate in the forms of factories and homes that housed the working population.

influenced by contention and domination (on the part of China). This relation serves as the background for most of antagonisms between the two countries – informing the power dynamics of the two countries under new relations within global capitalism. The relations between the two countries can be better understood with a study of the movements of labor and capital between the two countries reaching back to earlier periods.

The relationship between Viet Nam and China has transformed in the age of globalization into relations of global production. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the production process extends cross-nationally between Viet Nam and China. The division of labor between the two countries is maintained as production of a commodity initially begins in China and is then relocated to be finished and packaged in factories in Viet Nam or shipped out from one of the several SEZs in Viet Nam. In the last two decades, Viet Nam had absorbed the low-skill manufacturing jobs offshored from China as the country shifts towards high-tech production (Ren 2016). Transnational corporations that once had their factories set up in China (owned by mostly ethnically Han Chinese capitalists from Hong Kong and Taiwan who contract with western capitalists) have now transplanted these factories to Viet Nam to avoid labor resistance in China; ironically these factories are also seeing resistance in Viet Nam (Ren 2016).

In the context of current day capitalism, transnational capital takes the form of massive Chinese investments in Viet Nam – this connects China’s relationship with Viet Nam to its role in the global economy. What we see now is Viet Nam’s continual reintegration during the period of shifting global leadership from the U.S. to China as transnational capital further solidifies into a hegemonic bloc. The configuration of U.S. nation-state is also changing alongside the changes of global capitalism. The U.S. is

undergoing a crisis of hegemony on the world stage and a crisis of legitimacy domestically; it is becoming more dependent on its military industrial apparatus to maintain its position as facilitator of global accumulation. In the displacement of the U.S., China is positioned as the emerging global agent leading the world economy on behalf of an emergent hegemonic global capitalist configuration. The shift from the U.S. to China is still ongoing and is broadly observed and researched by multiple academic disciplines. I echo Robinson's analysis that this shift is not one of a hegemon replacing another, but an emerging new configuration of the transnational order that is contingent on the repurposing of the national states of the U.S. and China (Robinson 2004).

A conjunctural example of the shift in leading transnational accumulation of capital is seen with the recent sensationalized media coverage of the U.S.-China trade war (Babones 2018). Economic tensions between the U.S. and China are not of nation-state international competition. They have been misconstrued in the dominant media and academic discourse to propagate the narrative of nation-state competition – rather the tension between the U.S. and China may exist as these countries sort out roles in the global economy for the sake of transnational capital. As Babones notes, the trade war between the U.S. and China is driven by the efforts of the U.S. in pressuring China to further liberalize state-owned industries and on the other hand, China's deeper penetration into U.S. national production. As the sole country with the largest armed forces in the world, the U.S. becomes ever more dependent on its military industrial complex. The U.S. nation-state may serve transnational capital in the form of war capitalism or what Robinson (2018) terms “accumulation by repression” to

further expand global capital accumulation.²¹ Meanwhile, China holds the largest share of U.S. debt in surplus dollars and may serve a specific role in trade and investment for transnational capital (Babones 2018). These particular emerging processes will be further developed in future research at the dissertation level.

Conclusion

This concluding chapter ends with Viet Nam's relations to the current situation of global capitalism. Viet Nam's second integration under Doi Moi is characteristically different from the first integration under French colonization. Because of this new character of integration into a qualitatively different world system, Viet Nam's relations with the U.S. and China from the late 20th century to today cannot be explained within the context of national competition for hegemonic power between the U.S. and China as it was during the first half of the 20th century. Viet Nam's reinsertion into the global economy that have produced new transnational class alignments and institutional political relations. These new formations are conditioned by various social global forces, notably China. Future research on China's reintegration will provide a clearer picture of global dynamics under transnational capitalism.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I have gained greater clarity of the importance of analyzing Viet Nam in the context of global capitalism. While this research has assisted in a long-term endeavor to regain the history of my birthplace, the main aim of this work has been to illuminate the processes that have led Viet Nam to transnationalization. This work on the history of Viet Nam and global capitalism has led me to realize that this

²¹ This is illustrated in the international conflicts the US had been a part of in the last 40 years and is especially clear with US war on immigrants and war on drugs in the western hemisphere as the US military complex has historically and becomes ever so implicated in the conflicts and repressive apparatuses within the region. This is not saved for the whole of American continent but reaches globally in the rest of the world.

case study leads to a life-long study. I hope to expand this analysis to encapsulate a regional analysis of Southeast Asia, as well as a comparative analysis of other Third World integrations. As I complete this preliminary work on the integration of Viet Nam, the transnationalizing processes of global capital continue to transform and do so at an even greater pace. For every scholar who attempts to capture a moment in time, the moment itself is always moving and the interpretation that is provided should always be open to future revision and refinement. I hope to further develop the perspective of this thesis in future research for the dissertation.

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