

UDC 94

**VIETNAM – RUSSIA RELATIONS – 70 YEARS OF HISTORICAL
MILESTONES**

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ABSTRACT

After 70 years of establishing diplomatic relations (1950 - 2020), Vietnam and Russia have achieved a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Vietnam - Russia relations are considered to be in the closest period since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The research was carried out to restore and evaluate a comprehensive and multi-dimensional picture of the Vietnam - Russia relations history. Using historical, logical, analytical, and synthesis methodologies, the research has pointed out critical historical milestones and the ups and downs in Vietnam - Russia relations and assessed its role and impact in the current context of many changes.

Keywords: Vietnam, Soviet Union, Russian Federation, Role, Relations, Cooperation, Strategic Partnership, Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

INTRODUCTION

Although Vietnam and Russia do not share many similarities in culture and are separated by a great distance as well, the two countries had come to contact and an understanding quite early (around the end of the 18th century). During the Wartime in Vietnam, the Russian Federation (former Soviet Union) was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (January 30, 1950). In the current period, the Russian Federation's return to the Southeast Asian political stage along with Vietnam's role as a bridge has helped the two countries' relations elevate to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

In 1991, after numerous political turmoils, Russia became the legal successor of the Soviet Union in international relations. The Vietnam – Russia relations built upon the previous relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Despite experiencing numerous different ups and downs, Vietnam and Russia have established a strong friendship through 70 years of history (1950-2020). This is a topic that many researchers are interested in from different angles and specific periods to clarify the development process of the two countries' relations.

In order to restore and evaluate the overall picture of 70 years of Vietnam and Russia relations (1950 - 2020), the paper has portrayed the role of the Soviet Union in the significant milestones of the Vietnam revolution and of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the modern context. At the same time, the paper also clarifies Vietnam's foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, flexibility in strategies and tactics.

First problems in establishing Vietnam and Russia relations

Although Russia decided to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1950, the two nations already had their first obstacle. Some researchers believe that: The first time people in Russia learned about Vietnam was in 1783 through 65 pages of a book by Samuel Barol, son of the Dutch East India Company representative in North Vietnam. Those 65 pages of the book portrayed the climate, religion, military, financial system, and folk customs of Vietnam (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2013). But it was not until 1863 that the Russian people first set foot on Vietnamese soil. Most likely, it was Konstantine Stanyukovich, a young naval warrant officer serving on the battleship Abrek on a route through Cochinchina, that did it (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2013). Later K.Stanyukovic recorded his memories of Vietnam in the "Memoir", which described and reconstructed the war of aggression and the French colonial rule of France in Vietnam.

After K.Stanyukovic, more Russians came to Saigon, including "a famous figure in Russian history, Tsar Nikolai II - when he was still the Crown Prince - visited Saigon on the battleship Azov in 1891 during a tour of the Far East in 1890-1891" (Thuy Anh, 2011).

In Vietnam, the feudal system existed for a long time with prejudice against traders and supporting farmers, which limited the knowledge about the rest of the world as well as friendly relations with foreign countries. Therefore, some consider that "The Russian October Revolution of 1917 can be considered as the foundation for the Vietnamese to know about Russia". (Thuy Anh, 2011). But in reality, it was the poet Le Quy Don who opened up the first knowledge about a country called "Russia." After him, it was Philip Binh – a Jesuit priest in Vietnam, who lived and studied in Portugal. He detailed and elaborated on Russia in a book. However, only after the October Revolution that the Vietnam - Russia relations and mutual understanding between the two countries have truly begun.

After learning about the "strange" revolution with the slogans "Peace for the people", "Land for farmers", "Bread for the hungry", "Freedom for the slaves", from the young to

Confucian Vietnamese, all sang praise and support to that revolution. When he was still a sailor, to express his enthusiasm for the October Revolution, Ton Duc Thang raised the red hammer and sickle flag on the flagpole of the French battleship during the mutiny of the sailors of Sevastopol in 1919. In 1920, the Vietnamese patriots and the Soviet Russia representatives had their first contact initiated by Phan Boi Chau. He admired the October Revolution and believed in the ambition of the path of liberation for the Vietnamese people. However, before those plans could come to fruition, Phan Boi Chau was arrested by the French secret agents in Shanghai in June 1925 (Nguyen Quang Ngoc, 2010). Regret over the newly budding path of national salvation when catching a glimpse at the light of the October Revolution of Phan Boi Chau was inherited by Nguyen Ai Quoc in the 20s of the twentieth century.

While the revolution "Ten days that shook the world" affected every place, in Vietnam, the person who was most deeply influenced and fully understood the meaning and spirit of the Revolution was Nguyen Ai Quoc. After reading the "First Draft of the Thesis on Ethnicity and Colonial issues" by V.I. Lenin published in the L'Humanité newspaper, Nguyen Ai Quoc had transformed from a patriot to a communistic fighter. He affirmed: "This is what is necessary for the way to our liberation. To save the country and liberate the nation, there is no other way than the way of the proletarian revolution - the way of the Russian October revolution". (Ho Chi Minh volume 12, 2011). The aforementioned event created a turning point in establishing the partnership between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Nguyen Ai Quoc was the one who laid down the foundation in the journey of establishing the friendship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. On that basis, the relationship between Vietnam - the Soviet Union was further enhanced by Nguyen Ai Quoc's activities in the 1920 - 1930 years. The close relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union continued to develop when the Soviet Union, Communist International (Comintern) helped to train the first revolutionary cadres for Vietnam. Vietnamese students were enthusiastically supported by the Soviet Government, who fully sponsored the cadres living expenses, studies, and training with many famous revolutionary activists at leading schools such as the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, Lenin International School, Institute for National and Colonial Affairs... The results of that process have helped Vietnam to have a golden generation of elite revolutionary activists: Tran Phu, Le Hong Phong, Nguyen Khanh Toan, Tran Van Giau, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, etc.

After the Communist Party of Vietnam was founded (February 1930), the proletarian movement developed strongly. Like a natural connection, the Vietnamese revolution raised the slogan and expressed “Support for the Soviet Union”, “Shaking hands with the Soviet Union, the stronghold of revolution” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2000) in the most difficult conditions. From 1932 to 1935 was the period when the Vietnamese revolution suffered a lot of great losses because the French colonialists carried out White Terror attacks, the Communist party's organization and the revolutionary establishment were broken down piece by piece. Even under such strict conditions, the Russian October Revolution was still maintaining its favor, while also expressing admiration and gratitude to the communist soldiers and the Vietnamese people. When the Second World War broke out, Vietnam, being a semi-feudal colony, propagated and supported the great Patriotic war of the Soviet people. In the legendary military parade in 1941, there were at least 6 Vietnamese Red Army soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet Red Army brothers, heroically fighting to protect Moscow. They were Ly Nam Thanh, Ly Anh Tao and Ly Thuc Chat, Vuong Thuc Tinh, Ly Tu Thong and Ly Van Minh (Van Duc, 2019).

Those events made Vietnam and the Soviet Union become closer. It became the premise for the formation and development of the relationship between the two countries in the later period, the period when Vietnam waged a war to preserve its independence and territorial integrity.

Vietnam - Russia relations during the period when Vietnam wars to gain independence and territorial integrity (1946-1975)

The 1946 - 1954 period : "Close but not friendly, far but not cold"

With the success of the August Revolution, the Vietnamese people who had not yet enjoyed independence had to face the war to retake Indochina from the French colonialists. After determining the importance of the support of the Soviet Union in the struggle to protect independence, the Indochinese Communist Party sought to get assistance from the Soviet Union. In 1948 the Soviet Union asked the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East to accept its wish to admit the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Government as a member of the Association. The Soviet proposal was rejected by some countries, but for Vietnam, it was a beginning for the support and close relationship of the Soviet Government later. It can be said that from 1945 to 1950, even though no formal diplomatic relations were established, the Soviet Union still supported Vietnam. As a result, Vietnamese delegations

have had more opportunities to attend international conferences and enlist the support of a number of other democratic countries. However, due to various limitations, the support and connections of the Soviet Union with Vietnam in this period are small; however, the Soviet propaganda about the country, its people, and the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people was of great significance and effect in the journey of cultivating the friendship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

In 1950, the war against the French colonialists was making fundamental and important progress; the position and force of the Vietnamese revolution were getting stronger and stronger. On January 14, 1950, President Ho Chi Minh stated: "The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is ready to establish diplomatic relations with the Government of any country that respects equal rights, territorial sovereignty and national sovereignty of Vietnam to protect peace and build world democracy" (Ho Chi Minh, volume 6, 2011). On that basis, on January 23, 1950, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoang Minh Giam on behalf of the Government of Vietnam sent a note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, requesting that the two countries established official diplomatic relations, exchange ambassadors. On January 30, 1950, in response to the note, the Soviet Union declared: "The Soviet Government, recognizing that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is the government that legally represents the vast majority of the Vietnamese people, decided to establish diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2/4/2014). Through these events, the US, UK and France had harsh reactions. On January 31, 1950, the French Foreign Ministry protested against the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union rejected and did not accept the French protest.

After the event, in 1950 President Ho Chi Minh went to Moscow to attend a meeting with the leaders of the Soviet Union and China. During this visit, at the request of President Ho Chi Minh, President of the Soviet Union I.V. Stalin agreed to help Vietnam with 10 infantry divisions and 1 anti-aircraft artillery regiment through the role of China with the reason: "The resistance war of Vietnamese comrades is at an urgent and decisive stage, and due to China being closer Vietnam, China would directly helps Vietnam with weapons and supplies that Vietnam is currently needs by taking from the Soviet Union's aid to China and transferring to Vietnam. After that, the Soviet Union will be responsible for returning those goods to China" (Hoang Hoa, 2019). Those were grant aids and oftenly the quantity of the

aids themselves was more than the Vietnamese request. The first aid arriving in Vietnam included "a 37mm anti-aircraft artillery, numerous motor vehicles and military medicine" (Vo Nguyen Giap, 1995). Entering the 1951 - 1952 period, the Soviet Union actively fought in the international arena to promote organizations and countries around the world to recognize the Ho Chi Minh Government as a legitimate government. At the meeting of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, the Soviet Union proposed to expel the representative of the Bao Dai Government from the international economic organization; while also continued to give its views and wish the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to participate in this Committee. Then, in September 1952, at the regular meeting of the Security Council, although Britain, France, and the United States objected to the petition to consider the application of Vietnam to the United Nations, the Soviet Union still steadfastly affirmed: Vietnam is a country, the Ho Chi Minh Government was established by the National Assembly and recognized by the French Government under the Preliminary Agreement of March 6, 1946, thus it is a legitimate Government.

Worthy of the role of a stronghold, the "big brother" of the socialist countries, the Soviet Union was supporting the national liberation movement, while at the same time, aiding the people and revolution of Vietnam, answering all requests for medical aid, weapons, ammunition, and sending international students to the Soviet Union to study in a timely manner. According to Vietnamese statistics, from May 1950 to June 1954, Vietnam around 21,517 tons of international aid goods with a total value of 54 million rubles from the Soviet Union, China and other democratic countries. Among them, all 76 37mm cannon artilleries, 14 H6 missile systems (cachiusa), K50 submachine guns, 685 out of 745 transport cars were owned by the Soviet Union. The addition of 12 rocket launchers H6 - multiple-barrel cachiusa cannons (out of a total of 14) aided by the Soviet Union, directly contributed to the northern Him Lam area and has brought into play its power to obtain victory in the historic Dien Bien Phu campaign (National Archives Center 1). Not stopping there, the Soviet Government also supported Vietnam with another weapon - intelligence. Thanks to the information from the military intelligence agency Soviet GRU provided about the diversion of Henry Nava's plan and the decision to establish the "hedgehog" Dien Bien Phu. The High Commander of the People's Army of Vietnam re-examined to come to a decision: Mobilize the four strongest main battalions (308, 312, 316 and 351) and a logistical force to the Dien Bien Phu battlefield. That decision dealt a decisive blow,

breaking the spearhead of the French Expeditionary Army on the battlefield of Indochina (Hoang Hoa, 2019).

The Soviet Union's comprehensive assistance with the international spirit Communism was not only on the military front, but also demonstrated in the Soviet Union's peaceful foreign policy to end the Indochina war. Firstly, is the idea to start the Geneva International Convention to find solutions to end the war in Indochina. Along with that is the process of fighting for Vietnam to join the Conference as an official member, which was of great significance to the Vietnamese revolution. Throughout the Conference, the Soviet Union supported Vietnam's position, helping Vietnam successfully defend the 8-point stance that brought new prosperity in solving the Indochina problem in favor of Vietnam. However, until 1954, for various reasons the Soviet Union's attitude to Vietnam at this time was not as proactive, but it cannot be denied that "the efforts of the Soviet Union at the Geneva Conference helped the Vietnamese people restore peace on the basis of respect for independence, unity and territorial integrity". (Ho Chi Minh, volume 10, 2011).

The 1954 - 1964 period: "Warm but not tender, tense but not broken"

1954 - 1964 was a period with many twists and turns in the development of the friendship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Right after the Geneva Agreement, the US have invaded South Vietnam, setting up a sub-government to permanently divide Vietnam and prevent the wave of socialism in Southeast Asia. Vietnam entered a historic confrontation with a powerful enemy. In that context, Vietnam assessed the new change of the situation and set new tasks: upholding the immutable principle of foreign policy: "Strengthening brotherly relations with the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries" (Party Documents, 2003). However, due to the policy of peaceful coexistence and the possibility of a spark that could burn the whole forest made the Soviet Union have a rather cautious attitude towards Vietnam's issues by supporting the status quo. Therefore, during this period, the Soviet Union limited military aid and only provided a certain amount of weapons for the war in South Vietnam.(Soviet Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1985). After the 15th Conference of the Central Committee (2nd term, January 1959), Vietnam - Soviet relations were "covered with shadows of suspicion, which was at the lowest level in the history of the two countries' relations" (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2014).

Thus, in the 1954-1964 period, in the context of Cold War and the trend of East-West détente, the Soviet Union implemented a wise foreign policy to avoid being directly

involved in disputes and military confrontations, and especially to not interfere deeply and directly in the national liberation movement. Southeast Asia or Indochina was no longer the top concern of the Soviet Union because the problems in the Soviet-American relationship forced the Soviet Union to recognize the US influence in Asia. With the goal of expanding the Soviets influence in the Asia-Pacific, while preventing the influence of the US in Indochina, the Soviet Union did not completely abandon its relationship with Vietnam because Vietnam's position on the front line against America. For the aforementioned reasons. From 1954 to 1962, the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union remained stable, while slowly developing: consolidating political-diplomatic relations, improving the social and friendly characteristics to an alliance relationship. Unfortunately, due to different objective and subjective reasons the relationship between the two countries to enter a tense period, going to the lowest point from late 1963 to mid-1964 . This was a testament to the common principle in international relations that "there are no permanent friends, nor permanent enemies, but only permanent interests" (Lord Palmerston). And so the ups and downs in relations between countries are all governed and determined by the national interests.

However, the Soviet Union was still willing to help and respond to the aid request of Vietnam. The Soviet Union actively provided grant aids and long-term loans to Vietnam with preferential packages; providing experts, equipment, techniques for the army and economic plans in 1954-1957, 1957-1960, 1960-1964. In the years 1955-1960, the Soviet Union provided Vietnam with 29,996 tons of military goods, including logistics, weapons, and technical equipment (Ministry of Defense Archives Center). In 1964 the first military aids arrived in Vietnam. According to the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union (October 1965), from 1962 to 1965, the Soviet Union provided Vietnam with military equipment (including aircraft) worth nearly 200 million USD (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2014). The help for a small country like Vietnam which was struggling against the world's most powerful force, the United States, was extremely valuable and had great effects.

The 1965 - 1975 period: Forming and developing alliance relations, a turning point in Vietnam - Soviet relations

In October 1964, N. Khorusov resigned from the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a new leadership was established, which was one of

the reasons why the Soviet Union had changes in its policies towards Vietnam. The Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964) and especially the influence of China on Vietnam; at the same time, fear of the possibility that China would join hands with the US to balance its position and fight against the Soviet Union made the Soviet Union reconsider the relations with Vietnam.

In February 1965, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR A.N. Kosygin led a high-ranking delegation of the Soviet Union to Vietnam after many years of absence of high-level visits. The event is a turning point for the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, in order to build a new foundation for the alliance relationship, temporarily closing the lackluster relations of the previous period. At the end of the visit, a Joint Declaration was signed. It was a testament to the return of the alliance relationship of Vietnam - the Soviet Union and "The Soviet Union is not indifferent towards the security of a brother socialist country and is ready to support and help Vietnam" (Vietnam-Soviet Union: 30 years of relationship 1950-1980, 1982). The positive results for the establishment of the Vietnam-Soviet alliance were: 1. The Soviet Union was committed to providing weapons to help Vietnam resist the US air attacks and strengthen its defense capabilities; 2. The Soviet Union agreeing on a coordinated action plan with China to help Vietnam (Gaiduk, 1998); 3. The two sides agree to hold regular consultations on important issues.

After the visit to Vietnam by the High Delegation of the Soviet Union, from the beginning of March 1965, the first military aid shipments were sent to Vietnam without any formal signings or agreements. In April 1965, the First Secretary Le Duan led a high-ranking delegation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (including Minister of Defense Vo Nguyen Giap, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Duy Trinh) to the Soviet Union. The joint communiqué signed on this visit shows that the alliance between Vietnam and the Soviet Union was gradually tightening. The Soviet Union affirmed that "the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is the outpost of the socialist faction in Southeast Asia" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, 1983). From here, the Soviet Union resolutely supported Vietnam's line of resistance against the US; actively aided in all aspects, even allowing the Soviet people, who wish to fight, to come to Vietnam to fight with the Vietnamese people for a just cause. On the basis of that good relationship, from 1965 to 1975, Vietnam and the Soviet Union had more than 51 meetings with Politburo members to reach a consensus on awareness and ensure the

interests of each country and of the entire Socialist countries. (Vietnamese Diplomacy, 2002).

Since 1968 the war situation had changed in favor of Vietnam, in order to find a political solution the Soviet Union tried to convene a four-party conference in Paris. In 1969, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam was established, the Soviet Union recognized and established relations at the ambassadorial level with the Government; At the same time, there were regular contacts and exchanges on the stateside. From 1970 to 1975, on international forums, the Soviet Union expressed support for the Vietnamese people's war against the US. The Soviet Union also mobilized and organized many international conferences, enlisting the consent of the progressive forces towards Vietnam. However, around the time of Paris peace talks on the Vietnam issue, with the role of an unofficial intermediary, in some specific circumstances, the Soviet Union showed quite cautious attitude. On one hand, the Soviet Union persistently suggested that Vietnam limit their military activities in the South and conduct talks with the US; actively lobbied Vietnam to solve the problem by negotiation. On the other hand, the Soviet Union strongly criticized and strongly condemned the US military escalation action "not only has no future, but is also extremely dangerous". The Soviet Union affirmed that the complete withdrawal of US troops from Vietnamese territory is the key to improving Soviet-American relations (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2013). Before the views of the Soviet Union, Vietnam showed a determined and uncompromising stance against the US, so Vietnam "continues to receive the support and help of the Soviet Union, wishing that the Soviet Union and Vietnam would win against the US." (Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa, 2013). On January 27, 1973, the Agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam was officially signed. The Soviet Union was one of the first countries to express their joy with the Vietnamese people, because in that victory there was a significant contribution from the Soviet people and the Government.

In general, in the 1954-1975 period, the Soviet Union sought to develop influence, but it did not protect or impose on Vietnam, mainly exchanging in the spirit of understanding and persuasion to come to a concensus; The Soviet Union wanted to settle the peace negotiations and end the Vietnam war in accordance with its perception and interests, and its stance was not too different with Democratic Republic of Vietnam intentions. The Soviet Union's support in all aspects from material to political in Vietnam's struggle to preserve independence and national reunification has great significance and

value. It was a source of encouragement for the Vietnamese revolution to defeat the invading enemy US imperialists, creating conditions for the Soviet Union to balance and counterbalance in dialogue with countries in the capitalist world. With that spirit, Vietnam had made certain contributions to the stable existence of the Soviet country during the Cold War period.

Vietnam - Russia comprehensive strategic partnership and post-pandemic period of COVID.

Vietnam - Russia comprehensive strategic partnership

After the great victory in the spring of 1975, Vietnam preserved its independence and created reunification. This is an important condition for Vietnam-Soviet relations to turn to a new page, the period of friendly cooperation no longer has the "Vietnam War" wall separating and dominating the Soviet Union's foreign policy with Vietnam. The alliance relationship continued to be consolidated and the development of bilateral cooperation paved the first bricks for the establishment of the Vietnam - Russia Strategic Partnership later.

It can be seen that, from 1975 to 1991, the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union was quite strong. Although there were ups and downs, however, the unshakable friendship and solidarity between the Vietnamese people and the people of the Soviet Union continued to consolidate and develop comprehensively. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, 1983). It was a favorable basis for bilateral economic, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation, bringing both Vietnam and the Soviet Union many great benefits. With the active and comprehensive support of the Soviet Union, infrastructure, many modern economic sectors were built, effectively serving the current industrialization and modernization of Vietnam. Such as Hoa Binh Hydropower Plant, Vietsovpetro Petroleum Joint Venture, Thang Long Bridge...; especially the staff, experts in many fields. Those achievements became the basis for Vietnam - Russia (the successor to the Soviet Union) to overcome the ups and downs of the post-Soviet era, building a comprehensive strategic partnership in the current period.

The first step in the beginning of Vietnam-Russia relations after 1991 was *Treaty on fundamental principles for the Vietnam-Russia friendship ties* (June 16, 1994). The Treaty with 12 Articles became the legal foundation for the two countries to establish a new

relationship on the basis of "mutual benefit". In November 1997, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Viktor Chernomyrdin visited Vietnam. This was an important historical milestone in developing relations with Asia - Pacific countries, specifically ASEAN in general and Vietnam in particular. During this visit, Russia declared its relationship with Vietnam as a strategic partnership. After the 1994 Treaty, from 1997 to 1999, many legal documents between the two countries were signed such as: Declaration of Vietnam - Russia, Agreement on mutual legal assistance, Agreement on cooperation in construction and operation of Dung Quat oil refinery, Agreement on payment between the two banks and cooperation agreement between the two Ministries Judiciary ... From here, although still in its early stage, the trade relations between Vietnam and Russia have prospered.

After the adoption of the "New Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" (in 2000), Russia's foreign trade activities have given most priority to promoting economic relations, trade and financial investment with Asian countries including Vietnam. In particular, the first official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin (February 28 - March 2, 2000) to Vietnam has promoted the new official relationship between the two countries. The Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Russian Federation (March 1, 2001) made Russia the first country in the world to become a Strategic Partner of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Next, in order to bring Vietnam-Russia relations to develop substantively and deepen the strategic cooperation and reliable partnership with Vietnam and in the spirit of the Ordinance "On measures to implement policies on Foreign Policy" signed by President V. Putin on the day of taking the oath of office (May 7, 2012), the strategic partnership was agreed by the two countries to raise the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership. With the Statement on strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Russian Federation (July 27, 2012), a new page for Vietnam-Russia relations was written in history,

Within that framework of relations and cooperation, many coordination and support mechanisms have been formed and developed in all fields, from economic - trade, investment, political, defense - security issues, state diplomacy, political party diplomacy, to science, education and culture and society. Specifically: After the free trade agreement between Vietnam and the Eurasian Economic Union, economic, trade and investment cooperation between Vietnam and Russia has developed in a positive and dynamic

direction. Bilateral trade turnover has increased from nearly half a billion USD (2001) to more than 4.5 billion USD (2018) (up 28.5% compared to 2017). Russia ranks 24th among countries and territories investing in Vietnam with 127 projects with a total registered capital of more than 950 million USD. Vietnam with 22 investment projects to Russia with the total new investment capital and capital increase reached nearly 3 million USD. In particular, the high-tech dairy farming and processing projects worth more than US\$2 billion invested by TH True Milk Company in Moscow and Kaluga have become the first notable point in the Vietnam-Russia relationship. (Peoples Magazine, 2019).

Energy is one of the most important strategic fields of cooperation between Vietnam and the Russian Federation. The Vietsovpetro oil and gas joint venture (founded in 1981) has become a symbol of friendship, consolidating the comprehensive strategic partnership of the two countries not only because of its history of formation and development, but also because of its effectiveness. economy. During nearly 40 years of operation (1981 -2020), Vietsovpetro has always been the leading symbol of Vietnam's oil and gas industry and entered the Top 10 most efficient oil and gas companies in the world in 2012 (Vietnam+, 2012). In the fields of defense, security and military technology, and military modernization, Vietnam always prioritizes the Russian Federation - the number one and indispensable strategic partner.

Relations between Vietnam and Russia after the COVID-19 pandemic

In the current world, the Vietnam-Russia relationship is continuing to maintain a positive development of "mutual benefit" through the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership model and a free trade agreement between Vietnam – Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for Vietnam to reach the target of 10 billion USD in trade turnover by the end of 2020.

The Coronavirus pandemic broke out in December 2019, in the city of Wuhan, China, and in a short amount of time it has spread rapidly across all continents, causing the world to face a global crisis. increase poverty and discontent and having a significant impact on the achievement of the sustainability goals. Like other countries, Russia and Vietnam were heavily affected by this pandemic. Having just stood up after the crisis in Ukraine and the oil price war that caused "economic shocks", now Russia has to face greater difficulties in the post-COVID-19 era, that requires the leadership of the Russia to take measures to

"soften the consequences of the pandemic in the country as well as promote projects that serve the country's foreign policy." (Dinh Le Hong Giang, 2020). Like the Russian Federation, the World Bank predicts that Vietnam's growth will be at 3-4%, the lowest figure in more than two decades and the rapid decline of the two traditional drivers of growth. Foreign demand and private consumption make Vietnam likely to fall into the "Covid-19 Economic Trap" (Dinh Le Hong Giang, 2020).

In the above situation, economic interdependence will have a significant impact on the cooperation model of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Vietnam and the Russian Federation. Facing the economic downturn, Vietnam's defense spending will be depending, affecting Russia's trade share, because Vietnam is one of the largest arms export markets. In contrast, for Vietnam, since 2012, Russia is in the list of 10 potential markets of Vietnam's tourism. Only in the first quarter of 2020, there were about 120,000 Russian tourists visiting Vietnam (Dinh Le Hong Giang, 2020). But due to the epidemic situation, the order to close international routes between Vietnam and Russia from the end of March has caused Vietnam's tourism industry to suffer a lot of damage. According to data of the General Director of Vietnam Customs, "Bilateral trade between Vietnam and Russia in the first four months of 2020 was only 1.4 billion USD, down 7% compared to the same period last year".(Dinh Le Hong Giang, 2020).

The East Sea issue with China is currently Vietnam's biggest political challenge; at the same time, greatly influence the comprehensive strategic partnership between Vietnam and the Russian Federation. The issues regarding the East Sea and recent events related to China include: Coastal vessels ramming and sinking a Vietnamese fishing boat (early April 2020), survey ship Hai Duong Geological 8 intruding into Vietnam's exclusive economic zone, or the establishment of two administrative units to manage the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes (mid-April 2020); May 1, 2020, blatantly imposing a fishing ban in the East Sea, including part of the Gulf of Thailand and the Paracel Islands, under Vietnam's sovereignty with the supervision of the maritime force, monitoring and controlling the fisheries of this country. After those actions, the Vietnamese media accused China of taking advantage of the epidemic, and the relevant parties would react weakly because they are busy dealing with the pandemic to realize their sovereignty claims on the border of East Sea. (Dinh Le Hong Giang, 2020). Therefore, in order to ensure the necessary requirements

for the protection of territorial waters, in addition to internal factors, Vietnam needs more partners and allies to support and defend justice on the issue in the East Sea.

Having always kept a cautious and neutral attitude on issues related to the South China Sea disputes, Russia is trying to maintain cooperation with both Vietnam and China. Because Russia does not want to escalate tensions between its allies, wanting to act as a mediator to find consensus on conflict resolution. However, in 2016, Russia made a new move. It is the event that Russia participated in holding joint exercises with China in the East Sea, which has greatly affected the comprehensive strategic partnership between Vietnam and the Russian Federation, making the construction of the Ninh Thuan 1 - a symbol of Vietnam - Russia cooperation in the new era, with a worth more than 8 billion USD, being canceled (Kanaev, 2019). The "low" point after the 2016 event in the cooperation relationship quickly passed, and instead, political meetings and dialogues were always maintained at the highest level. In 2017, 2018, 2019, contacts between heads of state, ministries and agencies of the two countries were carried out regularly. Although not directly mentioning the East Sea issue, Russia has now made changes on this. It is expressed in consistently advocating for the formation of a just multipolar order based on the standards of international law, respecting the sovereignty and considering the interests of all nations. (Vnukov, 2020).

Thus, in the context of the cooperation between Vietnam and the Russian Federation, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has become more and more practical, and the relationship between the two countries has made a qualitative difference compared to previous periods, bringing real practical values and great potential for both sides. In fact, the strategic cooperation between Vietnam and Russia in the current context is still an important factor, positively affecting the Asia-Pacific region in general and Southeast Asia in particular, as well as affirming position in Southeast Asia of the Russian Federation.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Vietnam and the Russian Federation, has been cultivated through 70 years of history of ups and downs (1950 - 2020), has shown a symbol of brotherly friendship. Although experiencing ups and downs, it is also due to national interests, but the basic ideological similarities have brought the two countries together. From ally to bilaterally development to the top of a comprehensive strategic partnership. Cooperation in all aspects has brought great benefits to the two countries. Although

Vietnam is one of the largest buyers of equipment and weapons and is a partner bringing many benefits to the activities of Russian state corporations in the fields of energy production, oil and gas exploitation, machinery manufacturing, but the commercial value between the two countries has not been proportional. The aforementioned problem has raised an urgent requirement for a strategic solution to promote trade growth so that the Vietnam-Russia relationship becomes more substantive than symbolic and brings into play the true value of Vietnam. A comprehensive strategic partnership is being developed between the two countries.

In 2002, the Russian Federation withdrew from Cam Ranh (in Khanh Hoa province, Vietnam), which is considered the epitome of a Russia in the Asia-Pacific region. That act once created Russia's conservative elites regrets, because they thought it made Russia lose its influence in the post-Soviet era. And now, Vietnam has always adhered to the "three nos" principle, but the affirmation that Vietnam is a reliable partner, ally, and the link of Russia in Southeast Asia has contributed to helping to increase Russia's presence. In particular, in the context of the freedom and order world, the tense situation in the East Sea and the post-COVID-19 pandemic, the close cooperation between the two countries is vital for maintaining the interests of the two countries.

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