



**Vietnam foreign policy: the rationale of its
instruments towards China in solving South China
Sea disputes since HD-981 incident in 2014**

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Disclaimer:

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List of Acronyms

US	United States
HD-981	Haiyang Shiyou 981 Oil Rig
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
UNCLOS 1982	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
IR	International Relations
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
DOC	Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
VOV	Voice of Vietnam
WTO	World Trade Organization
SCS	South China Sea
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
BFA	Boao Forum for Asia
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting

Abstract

This study aims at studying foreign policy under theoretical approaches. This paper argues that such an integrated approach of Neorealism and Constructivism, rather than an exclusively one-sided approach, would help to analyze foreign policy more comprehensive. The case of Vietnam's foreign policy instruments in dealing with China in the HD-981 incident in South China Sea has been chosen because it embraces all aspects of a bilateral relation, including one of the most difficult issues is territorial disputes. The findings suggest that: First, Vietnam relies on diplomacy rather than military power in handling its situation in South China Sea; Second, the nature of Vietnam's strategy is self-help and balance of power and interest; Third, Vietnam's instruments aim at finding common identity to complement mutual understanding, strategic trust for cooperation in dealing with China in South China Sea.

Keywords: foreign policy, Vietnam's foreign policy, China, HD-981, South China Sea, Neorealism, Constructivism.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Research problem

The South China Sea, a semi-enclosed sea, a part of Pacific Ocean consists of approximately 3.500.000 km², the world largest sea after 5 oceans. It is also a critical location in terms of geopolitics, geostrategy, marine resources and international shipping route. Every year, a half of world trading ships, in equivalent to 1/3 of global trading values 5.3 billion US dollars, 1/3 of crude oil production and over 1/2 of world liquefied petroleum gas pass through South China Sea. This region also accounts for 1/10 of world fisheries production and other undiscovered natural resources such as flammable and combustible liquids. Therefore, it would be no exaggeration to say South China Sea has largely contributed international prosperity for many years. However, it is also a destination for potential conflicts and it can be seen as a “flash point” which is challenging Asia Pacific security and stability. Among 6 involved countries, China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei all have overlapping claims in the South China Sea, causing extremely complexity situation in the region.

From 2 May 2014 to 15 July 2014, China had blatantly, illegally deployed the Haiyang Shiyou 981 (HD-981) in an oil explorer campaign at the position of 17 nautical miles to the south of Triton Island, 120 nautical miles to the east of Ly Son Island (Quang Ngai, Vietnam). Vietnam has claim territory over the Paracels archipelagos including Triton Island and its waters. While this position might cause disputes of overlaying waters, ironically, it also violated Vietnam 200 nautical miles EEZ and on its continental shelf in accordance with UNCLOS 1982 of which both Vietnam and China had ratified the Treaty since 1994 and 2006, respectively. To Hanoi, the relationship with China changed last summer and it will not be back to the pre-May 2014 with the 16-golden words “friendly neighborhood, comprehensive cooperation, long-term stability and future orientated thinking” anytime soon. The ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh repeatedly said, quoted by CFR, that “the South China Sea issue is not just about competing claims; it’s about peace and stability in the region”. So far, the HD-981 oil rig is a typical complexity in South China Sea in the sense that it spreads from the field of economics, security, politics and influences. Hence, the impact of the incident echoes from the bilateral relations to regional level and even potentially affects international principles. Therefore, the incident is also a good example for students in exploring the application of foreign policy analysis in the case of South China Sea.

In recent years, territorial disputes have escalated in South China Sea, leading to the rise of misunderstandings, collisions and even armed clashes. Multiple benefits of nations, within and without the region, have been negatively affected despite of efforts to dialogue and negotiate to settle tensions

and disagreements. Hence, many hidden risks are still relevant because of the complex essence of issues and calculations of all countries. While South China Sea is attracting attentions of regional leaders and scholars, the demand for understanding and explanation of concerned parties' perspectives also emerges. Vietnam's perspective is certainly not an exception. However, there is a puzzle of interpreting Vietnam's foreign policy: most of current writings approach from a one-sided theoretical interpretation, commonly exclusively with Realism/Neorealism, Neoliberal Institutionalism or Constructivism to Vietnam's foreign policy, which lead to the result of incapable to highlight comprehensive calculation of Vietnam in South China Sea.

So far, most of the studies on the dynamics of Vietnam foreign policy and relations have focused on the geo-strategic aspect and economic aspect, leaving a vacuum in examining instruments that Vietnam has applied in South China Sea. Neorealists like Carl Thayer (1999, 2004, 2008) and Amer (1999) have predominantly the literature writings on Vietnam's foreign policy study with geo-strategic aspect by coining out the term of "asymmetry" in the Vietnam-China relations. They suggest Vietnam's instruments should rest upon two mutually reinforcing pillars: self-help and multilateralism because the asymmetric relations does not offer Vietnam any other better choices (Thayer 1997, Thayer and Amer 1999). Self-help is understood as the force modernization and soft balancing through limited defence cooperation with key powers while multilateralism is about the regional integration under ASEAN's regimes (Thayer 2004). Tung (2007) studies Vietnam on the aspect of economic reformation in which he applies Neoliberalism to highlight Vietnam decision making into ASEAN in 1995. He argue that Neoliberalist view is inappropriate to examine the decision of Hanoi to join ASEAN but it might be useful if we apply to observe development of Vietnam-ASEAN relations due to lack of mutual economic interests at the year of 1995 given political suspiciousness of the aftermath of Cambodian crisis. Hence, regionalism and deepening integration might be the doable and reasonable instruments for Vietnam to draw benefits from the relations with ASEAN. Constructivist approach seeks to explain Vietnam's foreign policy by reference to states' bureaucratic organization which dominantly represents by the Communist Party of Vietnam. Abuza (1997) examines the role of CPV regarding its policy in pursuing survival of itself throughout the internal shift of thinking of CPV leaders since the advent of revolution process (*doi moi*). Abuza did not suggest any instrument to Vietnam's foreign policy in the new structural context because he argued that a new perception from CPV leaders by itself constitutes new behaviors and instruments to conduct them. In short, each of these writings helps to unveil an aspect of Vietnam's foreign policy and all have possibilities to apply to examine Vietnam's foreign policy in South China Sea issues.

However, the similar approach of previous writings might face defective in examining current situation in South China by 3 matters. First, the analysis of Vietnam's foreign policy is much broader than the study of Vietnam's foreign policy in South China Sea disputes which is embedded in a narrower

yet distinguished context and linked to particular actors. Second, after the HD-981 incident, the regional context has been far undergone since the US and China is comprehensively engaging, by both cooperating and competition means, than ever before and Vietnam is considered as important actor in both two countries' strategy in the region. Third, the incident also remarks new behaviors of Vietnamese leaders that certainly would be reflected into its foreign policy in general in its instruments in particular. It is definitely wrong by saying that the previous literatures are defected to bring into the case of HD-981. In fact, they are the baseline for analysis of the case but they would need a new systematic concept that embrace the upsides of the previous one in new order pluses new analysis.

So far, these reasons have led to a demand of a new study on Vietnam's foreign policy with multiple approaches regarding of territorial disputes to investigate reasons behind Vietnam's behavior. The reason of the selection of approaches will be further mentioned in the next chapter. I narrow down the field of Vietnam's foreign policy into its instruments because a smaller area of research can help to highlight better within the limitation of the paper. Hence, all involving countries, whether big or small, are looking for more investigations, analyses and assessments onto this topic to seek creative and breakthrough resolutions. I hope it will bring academic contents from the perspective of Vietnam to integrate to international academic community where scholars are trying to help resolve the flash point in South China Sea.

Objectives of the research

The objective of the following thesis is to conceptualize an analytical framework to account for Vietnamese foreign policy that may be applied to the South China Sea issues. I will systematically address the instruments which embed in Vietnam foreign policy system under bilateral relations and regional context. To narrow and focus the study it is important to acknowledge that the study should only deal with critical events and incidents which give crucial meaning to Vietnam and China relationship rather than touching upon detailed incidents in South China Sea. Hence, the result of research can provide some suggestions regarding of the study in South China Sea to foreign policy makers and academic community.

Methodology

A study on Vietnam's foreign policy towards China is a typical case illustrating how a small state should handle with an neighbouring regional major power. This study only focuses on the aspect of policy regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Because the case reflects most of Vietnam foreign policy instruments in relations with China, the findings of this paper is referable to policy makers

Both primary and secondary sources of Vietnam's foreign policy are selected to be examined as textual sources of Vietnamese political discourse and

identity. Primary sources of the thesis include policymaking documents such as political reports, policy memoranda, strategic assessments and interviews with CPV and government officials. Secondary sources are mainly comprised of journal articles, books and papers written by officials and academics (all translations of Vietnamese language by the author). I have conducted 5 interviews with senior policy officers from the Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, due to political sensitiveness that they do not want to reveal their identities, so I will cite the words under anonymous preferences. Ethical risks do not really matter to me because this paper's aim is mostly predominantly theoretical.

The choices of the Neorealism and Constructivism approaches are an attempt to examine the applicability of the most two mainstream theories in studying Vietnam's foreign policy. There are a lot of other useful theories that might be applied, nonetheless, I will explain my argument in the next chapter.

The time frame for this study is open-ended, spanning more than 24 years from 1991 up to the present. However, since most of analysis is to support for the case of HD-981, I will mostly pay much attention on recent years activities.

Research questions

As argued before, a one-sided approach is not being able to reason adequately Vietnam's foreign policy. Therefore, if this argument is true then the question of alternative approach must be a puzzle for analysts. This study aims to provide such an alternative that synthesizes the two different approaches to understand Vietnam's foreign policy. A take on the analysis of the topic need to be address in a systematic questions to provide comprehensive answers. Therefore, I coin out following questions, which contain of 1 main research question and 4 sub-questions in purpose of addressing the research problem:

How to conceptualize an analytical framework to account for Vietnamese foreign policy that may be applied to the South China Sea issues?

+ How to find a proper analytical concept to apply to Vietnam's foreign policy analysis?

+ Why an integrated analysis of Neorealism and Constructivism can help to formulate an analytical framework Vietnam's foreign policy?

+ How does the HD-981 incident provide the context to examine the integrated analysis on Vietnam's foreign policy?

+ How to apply the integrated analysis into the HD-981 case in order to highlight the Vietnam's foreign policy instruments in dealing with China in South China Sea disputes?

Structure

The overall purpose of this thesis is to formulate the application of theoretical framework to present instruments to Vietnam foreign policy towards China in dealing with territorial disputes in South China Sea after HD-981 incident. The important of the case HD-981 is that it remarks injection of Vietnam behavior with China, from prioritizing economic tie rather than interest disagreement on the sea to vice versa, and changes of strategic context in the region with reactions from Vietnam.

In chapter 2, I address the dialogue of Vietnam foreign policy debate in which most of scholars are in favor of Neorealist and Neoliberal Institutionalist view. However, this baseline has been criticized from Constructivists for its lack of effectiveness to understand the evolution Vietnam foreign in recent years. My argument is that in the case of Vietnam's instruments in dealing with issues in South China Sea, it is necessary to address the combination of Neorealist and Constructivist perspective to reason Vietnam's behavior. Certainly, there is room for other theoretical framework but I will lay my perspective on the two approaches that I argue they possibly offer enough for a relatively comprehensive view of Vietnam foreign policy in the South China Sea. In chapter 3, I have built up theoretical framework based on two mainstream theories, Neorealist and Constructivist, concerning source of national behavior and instruments of reaction to formulate the essence of Vietnam foreign policy with China. I argue that, from Neorealist perspective, behavior is shaped by perception of national power conditions and national interests. On the other hand, behavior according to Constructivist view would be constructed by normative conditions and national identities. The breakdown of HD-981 incident in 2014 and Vietnam reactions will be collected into chapter 4 to provide strategic context of the case and its meaning to Vietnam side. Besides, the impacts of HD-981 incident will be examined under the lenses of triangle relations US-Vietnam-China when the 2 major powers are dominating and shaping regional order as well as other states' behavior. In chapter 5, the rationale of Vietnam's instrument towards China in solving territorial dispute will be comprehensively detailed from the Neorealist and Constructivist perspectives. However, it is important to acknowledge that these instruments aim towards the broad issue of Vietnam-China relationship and to help settling the whole disputes in South China Sea but not to seek a solution from individual case like HD-981 incident. Therefore, it would take years of effort and preservice to take advantages of them. After completed major job of the thesis, in chapter 6, I will conclude with findings of studying Vietnam's foreign policy through the lenses of such an integrated approach.

Chapter 2

The dialogue of Vietnam's foreign policy study

The aim of this chapter is to address the baseline of academic debate on Vietnam foreign policy. There are 2 mainstreams trends that constitute from the structure-based and agency-based which consistently reflect at the theories of Neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism and Constructivism, respectively.

Analytical framework

International relations studies contain a broad field of different theories such as Realism/Neo-Realism, Constructivism, Liberalism/Neo-Liberalism, Marxism/Neo-Marxism and so on. At the systemic level, all of them view at the global system level and regional level. However, as scoped by the purpose of this thesis in exploring South China Sea disputes within an asymmetric bilateral relationship, it is not necessary to mention theoretical framework at the global level. Certainly, international context will be mentioned to reason behavior of parties yet the idea is not to bring the study from regional level to the global level.

During the thesis, I will summon two theories that are popular in IR studies and helpful to answer conundrums: Neorealism and Constructivism. I will explain the reasons of the selection of integrated analysis of Neorealism and Constructivism in the next section in which I trace the debate of Vietnam's foreign policy study to reflect the advantage of a combination work. None of these theoretical frameworks are singular entities, complete and consistent but I would like to apply advantage aspects of them into following chapters. Both Neorealism and Constructivism, putting under the consideration of South China Sea disputes as well as Vietnam-China relations, will be examined on two aspects: source of behavior and instruments.

Neorealism

For all realists, the anarchy system, meaning the absence of any authority above states, causes the demand of security to states. International order is set up through arrangements of which power is the ultimate parameter to allocate a state position. As security can only be secured, they said, through power, anarchy system produces security dilemma to all states. In the billiard ball model, suggested by realist theorists, "states are the billiard balls that collide with on another while sovereignty is the hard and impenetrable outer shell of the ball which enables it to withstand the impact of the collision" (Heywood 2011: 113). Hence, because of states always act to gain capability of exercising sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders, when overlaying claimants are likely to confront each other to defend their own territory.

Theoretically, the rise of China is challenging US hegemony and the confrontation between the two major powers is inevitable. In contrast to balance of power theory, which considers stability of international order can be achieved with equilibrium between centers of power, power transition theory (Organski 1958) suggests that once a major power increases its power with incremental strategy, who also embraces ambition winning hegemony role of the dominating state, disputes between them are foreseeable. The law of power transition theory has been proven many in history and I believe that it will maintain to be an oath of Realist/Neorealist theory in IR. Empirically, under the circumstance of South China Sea, power transition theory is proving itself validity up to date while China is finding ways to expand influence and competing for hegemonic role in the region with the US, the dominator silently engages to restrain China in terms of geostrategy by multiple instruments such as rebalancing doctrine, the FTA of 21st century TPP without presence of China, consolidating relations with alliances and partners, promoting the use of international law and international institutions to adjust Chinese behavior.

Applying the logic of neorealist into the case of South China Sea security, there are at least two instruments that should be concerned to states foreign policy to small states like Vietnam in the case of South China Sea. First, local states tend to strengthen their power as far as they can to look forward the defense of territory by increase military spending. For example, given the lack of resources due to economic crisis, small states like Vietnam, the Philippines or Malaysia are increasing their spending on defence recent years to prepare their own strategy in South China Sea disputes. In language of neorealist, this instrument is called “self-help” strategy. The reason for this kind of reaction is that they fear of political, historical impacts of disputes might escalate to military conflict. This argument seems to be true when most of territorial conflicts throughout human history, particularly in 20th century, end with wars but not any peaceful resolution. In the case of maritime territorial disputes, while some cases have been dealt under UNCLOS since its ratification by the major of states in 1982 in the past, but what is more important is that none of the disputes related to China have been solved with UNCLOS instrument. Therefore, since an instrument of multilateralism like UNCLOS has not helped to settle the disputes in South China Sea, self-help strategy is still being a worth choice for parties. Second, states in South East Asia are also seeking to policies in accordance with balance of power theories, for example, by building defense alliance with major power against asymmetric pressure or as a way of guarantee in times of strategic problem. To make it short, Busse said that “they can either exercise self-help by arming themselves or create alliances in order to maintain a stable balance of power” (Busse 1999:41). These instruments are completely consistent with way of neorealist thinking in IR field. In the following chapters, I will examine the way that Vietnam has applied Neorealist thinking into practice and efficiency of those policies.

Constructivism

Constructivist approach to IR comes from opposed position of Realist/Neorealist idea that “anarchy system is what states make of it” (Wendt 1992). Anarchy is the result of interaction among states which constitutes by norms, identities, rules and institutions that govern relations. Thus, constructivism suggests that anarchy is not the nature of the international system so states behavior can be driven by ideational relations with other actors.

Constructivists also study sovereignty. Perception of states on sovereignty determine other principles to protect equal right of all countries sovereignty such as basic principle of United Nation (UN) like self-determination, non-interference, prohibition of threat or use of force in international relations. That is why Ruggie considered sovereignty as one of the most fundamental norm in the world politics (Ruggie 1983). In short, the notion of sovereignty comes from states ideation; and because it is an idea so can also be overlaid among states. From constructivist view, they can claim or win sovereignty by different instruments that what are suggested by Neorealists.

One of the key concept of Neorealist theory about balance of power receives strongly disagreement from Constructivists because of the idea of states instruments in interacting in international relations. “Constructivists focus on the role of ideational forces such as culture, norms and identity; which develop our understanding of the foundation and factors of Asian regional order” (Jensen 2011: 21). Jensen argument seems to be true in South East Asia situation when none of regional states has the defense power strong enough, or even the collective power of all regional states, to balance China. In contrast, a collective identity, for example, is a more appropriate approach to South East Asia states when, through the words of Wendt, “they share destiny of others, they define their interests with regards to other states, and they possibly will develop a sense of community” (Wendt 1994). Therefore, they are promoting different instruments to solve the issues in South China Sea through ASEAN and its sub-mechanisms, international law and UNCLOS, and other institutions.

So far, the review of literature framework has formed the foundation for analysis in the thesis. First, both Neorealism and Constructivism agree that objects of the research, given their different perception of the content, should be examined under structural context. Second, as suggested by Neorealists, states should apply self-help and balance of power strategy to preserve and pursue their interests. Third, Constructivists highlights the use of shared ideational forces such as culture, norms or identity for policy makers in conducting their policy.

The dialogue of Vietnam’s foreign policy study

The debate has begun since 1980s with many different approaches aiming to address Vietnam’s foreign policy due to the demand of studying a new thinking of Vietnam from a radical Communist country to a more pragmatic

one. Accounts for Vietnamese foreign policy often fall into the categories of neo-realism or neoliberal institutionalism. These perspectives view foreign policy mostly focus on structural constraints to Vietnam to observe evolution of Vietnam's foreign policy. Thayer's writings (1999, 2004, 2008) has been predominated literatures on Vietnam's foreign policy by combining Neorealist and Neoliberal Institutional approaches. He suggests that "Vietnam turned from a foreign policy model heavily structured by ideological considerations to foreign policy model which placed greater emphasis on national interest and realpolitik" (Thayer 1999). This theoretical strand is also applied to examine Vietnam's relations with China by Womack (2006). He argues that the power asymmetry constitutes the all-time defining feature of Vietnam-Sino relationship. Another approach to study Vietnam's foreign policy has been emerged since Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995. Abuza considers the evolution of Vietnam's foreign policy as "...from the Realist battlefield to the interdependent market-place" (Abuza 1996:418). Nguyen Vu Tung (2007) applied Neoliberal institutionalism to observe Vietnam's ASEAN membership. Despite of legitimacy of the theoretical framework, he concludes that Neoliberal institutionalism has failed to address reasons Vietnam's process of decision making to join ASEAN as "Hanoi faces little pressure from ASEAN to readjust its domestic institutional arrangements and make them more compatible to those of other ASEAN members" (Tung 2007: 68).

Another strand of studies on Vietnam's foreign policy comes from an agency-based approach, which looks at the explanation of Vietnam's behavior by reference to the attributes of Vietnamese state rather than international structure. Salomon and Vu Doan Ket in 2004 attempted to find the ultimate player in Vietnam's foreign policy making process. Their conclusion is that the National Assembly is the de jure authority in constituting Vietnam's foreign policy in the era of reform. CPV Politburo, in fact, is the ultimate authority because it is the group of highest position leaders which man the Assembly's President, Standing Committee and Foreign Affairs Commission. Another agency-based approach looks at the internal politicking within Vietnamese leadership to distinguish the influence of different political groups on state foreign policy. Vuving (2010) assumes that Vietnam foreign policy making process is constructed with 4 main players, they are conservatives, modernizers, rent-seekers and China; and depending on prevailing situation of internal political players Vietnam foreign policy clumps like the image of bamboo towards China and vice versa. Le Hong Hiep (2013) argues that in the 1980s and early 1990s, Vietnam foreign policy is driven by hostile thinking with China. However, the later period watched a reverse waves when Vietnam strived to mend relations with China as quickly as possible because of urgent demand on promoting economic reform and protecting the regime's survival.

Vietnam foreign policy regarding South China Sea disputes has received increasing attentions since Vietnam is one of the most active actors among parties to seek a peaceful resolution to empirical disagreements, which ironically provoked from China. Calr Thayer (2011) makes his argument on the

geographic position of Vietnam constituting asymmetric relationship framework with China. He views Vietnam bilateral mechanisms under lens balance of power process under the name of “struggle and cooperation” process, meaning “codification of bilateral relations through high-level visits by party and state leaders; enmeshment of China in a web of cooperative relations including economic ties; and self-help, particularly military modernization. This article analyses the bilateral mechanisms that structure political, economic and defense relations” (Thayer 2011: 1). This Neorealist approach to Vietnam case has made numerous successful in addressing Vietnam long-term foreign policy towards China because of irreplaceability of geographic position.

On the other side, Carl Thayer (1997) tried to explain the Vietnam-ASEAN relationship at the year of 1995 with a Neoliberal Institutional view. He concludes that “Vietnam joined ASEAN primarily for the political and strategic benefits it calculated it would gain vis-à-vis China and the US” (Thayer 1997: 372). From 1997, Thayer already saw potential tension could emerge between Vietnam and China in the following years since territorial border had not yet been settled. However, in the case of South China Sea issues, while Thayer has recognized the limited role of ASEAN by stating that “Vietnam also sought membership in ASEAN to enhance its bargaining position with other states, specifically China” (Thayer 1997: 367), at the empirical level, Vietnam seeks the membership status in ASEAN for more interests than bargaining power with China such as economic cooperation with ASEAN partners or practicing collective identity in international institutions. In fact, Neoliberal Institutional approach has less effectiveness in examining the case of Vietnam-China disputes in South China Sea due to 2 reasons. First, ASEAN has no official mechanism to help members solve disputes with China yet ASEAN can only provide sub-institutions such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN+1 as a dialogue for involving parties raising their voice. Second, the highest achievement of ASEAN to China regarding its provocative and coercive measures in South China Sea that has been seen is the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in 2002, which per se has no legal constraining power to China’s behaviors. Therefore, applying Neoliberal Institutional view to the case of Vietnam-China disputes in South China Sea is certainly less effective as other area of research such as Vietnam-ASEAN economic cooperation or ASEAN’s role in the new changing Asia Pacific order.

In sum, my argument is that while there are more ways to approach foreign policy analysis, Neorealist and Constructivist have more potential to explain Vietnam’s behavior towards China in the case of South China Sea disputes. Therefore, in chapter 3, I will lay the theoretical framework to the research and reason the rationale of Vietnamese leaders’ choice in constituting its foreign policy.

Chapter 3

Vietnam foreign policy and its rationale

This chapter lays the theoretical platform for discussion of Vietnam foreign policy since 1991 until now. A theoretical explanation of the transition of Vietnam foreign policy will focus on the change of foreign policy of state and the change of dynamics driving and shaping the change. In chapter 2, I would like to analyse Vietnam foreign policy based on two dispositions of power and normative factors in the policymaking environment via interactions with national interest and national identity.

The explanation of actors' behavioural dispositions are often regards to the conversation between material and ideational perspectives. The IR discourse translates the contention of these two dispositions into the debate of Realist/Neorealist and Constructivist which respectively consisted to the approach of rationalist (well known as a brand of materialist) and constructivist ontology, which is understanding reality as ultimately socially constructed. Material and ideational also formulate states' behavior manifest in the shape of national interests and national identities. I argue with an attempt to synthesize the 2 dispositions, Neorealist and Constructivist, to reasoning Vietnam's behavior and selection of policy's instruments. Since both theories often receive critics from each other, one can not resist Neorealist and Constructivist have their own priority in analysis that could help to reveal different aspects of foreign policy. Neorealists see the minimum role of national identity and norms and they usually be brought as low as they can to provide scopes for analysis of interests and powers in their analysis. Constructivists prior the role of national identity and norms, the role of interests and power that are all "filtered" through assumptions and beliefs on how reality is constituted.

Vietnam foreign policy from theoretical analysis: Neorealist and Constructivist perspectives

Neorealist on foreign policy

I argue that the study of foreign policy within Neorealist paradigms is popularly focusing on "national interest" with power-centric studies, which also have received various approaches as well as critics from one to each other with the common purpose of identifying the important meaning of national interest in the IR discourse. Because behavior of actors is motivational from consciousness international structure, in IR discourse, perception of interests cannot be separated to perception of power. Realists prioritize interests over identities, arguing that identities are derivative of the distribution of power and states behaviors are formed by international structure rather than internal factors such as identity. Among theories, Realism/Neorealism is/are the theoretical tradition which mostly refers to the

notion of “national interest” and “perception of power” in their analyses. They seem to have a narrow understanding of which national interests are often regards to survival of states mainly under specific dimension of hard power (military power). In order to explaining behavior of states, Realists/Neorealists intensively lay ground on national interests with concentration of the role of perception of power. While Realists believe states are unitary and rational with the goals of maximizing their interests in the anarchic competition and assess states behavior on human nature, Neorealists spend their resources on the study of constraints of international system. Still, the main actors of international relations, to Neorealists (and Neo-Liberal Institutionalists), are states and their behavior towards each other in the international structure. International institutions are treated as acting environment for states without highly appreciation to their role. This point makes profound distinction between thinking of Neorealists and Constructivists, which I would mention latter.

Among modern Neorealist IR scholars, Kenneth Waltz should be regarded as the most influence man to this famous paradigm of IR studies. To Waltz, states’ behavior are shaped under what is so called “structural constraints” that “anarchic nature of international system drags all states into the game of power politics and requires them to build up power” (Waltz 1979: 79). Although the notion of structural constraints by Waltz is attractive because it can help understanding the nature of international relations, there are different interpretations of structural constraints. To my understanding, structural constraints are formulated by two components, internal constraints and external constraints, of those the latter is largely dominating states behavior.

According to Neorealists, there is only one ultimate goal of all states’ interests that is the survival of state under structural constraints. That means we cannot dig into Vietnam’s foreign policy, as the meaning of reflection of Vietnam’s interests in international relations, without understanding of structural constraints to Vietnam and its perception of power. Because of anarchic system, all states face with security dilemma and therefore uncertain about intention of each other, national interests in the sense of protecting security against external threats are always top priority of states. To add more persuasive, Waltz’s quote in the following statement should be valued: “Structural constraints cannot be wished away, although many fail to understand this. In every age and place, the units of self-help systems – nations, corporations, or whatever – are told that the greater good, along with their own, requires them to act for the sake of the system and not for their own narrowly defined advantage... The international interest must be served; and if that means anything at all, it means that national interests are subordinate to it” (Waltz 1979: 109).

Certainly, the study of theories of foreign policy is mostly to reasoning state’s strategy or instruments in solving issues with other countries in international relations. There are 2 famous schools of thought in this discourse which are Offensive Realism and Defensive Realism; despite there are lots of theories of foreign policy, they are the most popular and helpful in study-

ing contemporary international issues. The first well-known branch of Neorealism in studying state's foreign policy is Offensive realism which aims to explain why relations among states are riddled with conflicts. Having agreed with Waltz in most of his analyses, Mearsheimer (1995; 2001) accounts his theory with 5 core assumptions: First, international relations' essence is anarchy; second, no state can absolutely trust each other's intentions; third, survival of state is the primary motivation to foreign policy; fourth, states are rational entities who always seek to maximize national interest with state's survival centric; fifth, state certainly will have to think about the use of force as core instruments in solving issues and this is the most effective instrument to states in interacting in international relations. An important conclusion in Mearsheimer's theory is that states' behaviors are about seeking maximization of security through foreign policy in an anarchic world.

In contrast to Offensive realism, another famous branch of Structural Realism (Neorealism) is Defensive realism which emphasizes the maximization of states' power and influence in anarchic system with a softer tone of analysis. The core argument of defensive realists is about states' strategy of preserving the existing balance of power through defensive strategies (Jervis 1978; Posen 1984; Grieco 1990; Snyder 1991; Van Evera 1999). In rebuttal of Offensive Realists, Defensive Realists do not highlight the role of "offensive" military power in international relations but appreciate other strategies such as establishing alliances to encircle one's behavior. The role of military to them is still pivotal but only aiming at the purpose of defense and maintaining the balance of power. Based on the basic assumption of strategy/instrument of states in the case of South China Sea, it is even more relevant rather than Offensive Realism since all regional countries do not seriously with an engagement of military deployment but the escalations of military spending can be reasoned by the purpose of balance of power.

Despite of different in ways of arguing states' strategies and instruments in their foreign policy, most of Neorealists (both international relations discourse and foreign policy discourse) share ideas with classical realists about defining national interests in terms of power. Neorealists believe that states seek relative power to protect their security in a given power structure. Rather, "the appropriate state action", said by Waltz, "is calculated according to the situation in which the state finds itself" (Waltz 1979: 134). The concept of power in this study, I argue, is the relative power in the sense that power of states has applicability and power must be considered under comparison with other's under structural constraints. It is not necessary to prove an absolute "degree" of power but what seems to be more important is that the perception of state's power in the relationship with other states.

Constructivist on foreign policy

Most of Constructivists share common belief with Neorealists on the way of analysis that should be put under structural context, which in IR discourse means the anarchic system. However, the fundamental difference is that Constructivists argue the anarchic nature of international relations is the result of consciousness of actors about the international system. Based on that as-

sumption, Constructivists make an opposite path from the use of notion of “national interest” to study foreign policy of states. On the other hand, while constructivist paradigm does not reject the role of “interest” as a guide to states’ behavior, they claim that “identity” has more explanatory power because it indicates who actors are, what they want and instruments they apply given their identities. National interests, in Constructivist view, “presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is, and since identities have varying degrees of cultural content so will interests” (Wendt 1999: 231). An other important point is that Constructivists call for thinking “out-of-the-black-box”, meaning concentrating on other actors in international relations such as institutions, norms, international law. They do not reject the role of states as centre of international systems, however, they claim a better position for new comers in the field. This argument helps to explain reason of choosing collective identity of Vietnam within ASEAN and its role in dealing with China in South China Sea issues.

In order to studying “identities” in foreign policy, I will use Wendt’s framework on 4 types of “identities”. Since states per se are a complex actors whose behaviors hardly can be bring into only one definition, an attempt to breakdown types of “identities” is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of states’ behavior and policy. In general, Wendt sees identity is “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self” (1992: 397). Wendt identifies four kinds of identity: personal or corporate, type, role and collective (1999: 224-33). I would like to remind that the analysis of Vietnam identity will follow this structure but not before revealing the meaning of Wendt’s framework.

“Personal/corporate identity” is what Wendt called “platform” for other identities because it constitutes a distinct entity with “a consciousness and memory of Self as a separate locus of thought and activity” (Wendt 1999: 225). Personal/corporate identity is the cognitive capability of state to interpret itself and external relations as guidance to behavior. And because the international system is anarchy and actors interact by their-own consciousness of others, personal/corporate identity is the most profound goal in understanding the nature identity of an actor. “Type identity” indicates, suggested by Wendt (1999), a social group where an actor has a membership and shares common characteristics with other group members. They can be languages, shared values, historical experience, norms, political belief or cultural commonalities. This type of identity is particularly useful when investigating identity of state in which its regime is shaped by multiple political structures with common interests or political willingness. In the case of Vietnam, “type identity” is a framework to understand the cognitive thinking of the CPV, which although is the only party in Vietnam but also driven by many actors with different dynamics. Besides, a state contains in itself a “role identity” through its relation with others. In other words, “role identity” aims to expose the relationship between “self” and “other” via the mutual consciousness of identity. For example, the notion of “friend”, “ally” or “enemy” are kind of role identities which help to define interstate relations. The US considers rogue nations such as Iran, Iraq, North Korea are

“enemy” but at the same time treats Japan, South Korea or the Philippines as its “allies”. The last type of identity to Wendt is “collective identity” when actors positively identify with each other when the “self” actively embed itself or embrace “other”. Take ASEAN as an example that they share the identity of 4 principles, as cited in Article 2 of ASEAN Charter, as guidance for cooperation framework of the association works: “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, settlement of disputes by peaceful means, and renunciation of the threat or use of force” (ASEAN Charter 2007: 1). This notion offers a better explanation of group behavior, says ASEAN behavior towards China in the South China Sea, which is not just an aggregate of coordinated individual behavior as assumed by rational models.

Reflecting theoretical framework into Vietnam’s foreign policy: national interest and national identity

National interest

In the case of Vietnam, I argue that Vietnam’s national interest is defined and represented by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). CPV is the solitary party which is also the political force leading in Vietnam. Therefore, Vietnam’s national interest can be translated into the “national survival” both physical meaning and political survival. Physically, Vietnam’s national survival is at stake with safeguarding its territory from being divided as it had been during the feudal and colonial period and the Second Indochina War. Even after the unification in 1975 until now, Vietnam still does not consider itself as fully territorial integrity while the Paracels and Spratlys islands have not being recognized in accordance with UNCLOS 1982. According to Burchill, territorial integrity and physical survival of states is common interests that: “In international politics, the whole community speaks with one voice and has a single identity” (Burchill 2005: 47). Therefore, finding an effective means to the problematic in South China Sea is always at top priority of the CPV leaders. Politically, Vietnam has interests in maintaining survival of the dictatorship of the CPV in pursuing domestic stability and development. The argument aims to indicate latter analysis of instruments to protect national interests in the South China Sea without the purpose of debating political correctness of the dictated role of the CPV in Vietnam politics.

Vietnam’s perception of power vis-à-vis China could be coined by the term “asymmetry” in terms of size and location. Besides, Womack, specialized in Vietnamese studies, uses the term “parameters” to describe “basic realities of a country’s situation that help determine how it views relations with other countries” (2006: 34). A parameter represents “the general and intractable givens” which shapes national behavior towards the structure (Womack 2006: 34). The internal dimension consists of two parameters: geography and resources. Geographically, Vietnam is a relatively small state, located in

South East Asia with China is its northern neighbor. Vietnam and China not only share territory border in the mainland but also face each other in the maritime in South China Sea. Vietnam is a maritime country with a coastline of approximately 3260km, over 2 times longer than the land border with China, about 1400km. Every 100km² Vietnam has 1km coastline which numbers are 6 times higher than average world figure (600km²/1km). None meters of Vietnam's territory is 500km far from the coastline. In terms of natural resources parameter, Vietnam's population is approximately 92 million people that equal 1/14 of 1.3 billion people of China in 2015. Vietnam is still being an agricultural oriented country with 22.2% of its territory. Vietnam's energy resources are sufficient for operation of national economy vis-à-vis industrialization and modernization.

In terms of external dimension, China is the primary "point of reference" for Vietnam's relative power. Womack assumes that Vietnam-China relations are governed by "a structure of asymmetry" that superior weights fall into China side (2006). Therefore, Chinese superiority on Vietnam is a relatively stable condition for the latter's definition of national interest throughout its history. According to Realists/Neorealists, the lesser state has to feel threatened by the greater state because the latter is not restrained to use instruments, particularly force against the former to govern domination in an anarchic system. Under this circumstance, I examine the case of Vietnam by broaden the bilateral relationship to the triangle China-Vietnam-US as precondition for Vietnam perception of power. In IR discourse, "perception of power is measured by relation", argued by Baldwin, "rather than property" (Baldwin 2002: 181). As argued before, Vietnam's perception towards China is characterized by the term "asymmetry": the differences in scale between the two influence each country's general attitude toward the outside world" (Womack 2006: 16). Therefore, Vietnamese behavior is sensitive and vulnerable since it depends on Chinese behavior and intention, making a profound perception of security threat from China to Vietnam in policy making leaders.

However, it is even more difficult to Vietnam under the circumstance of Sino-US competence in South East Asia because the notion of "asymmetry" also can be applied to the case of Vietnam-US relationship. Truly, the fact that the US is the dominator at global level and regional leading power has crucially shaped Vietnam perception of power. According to the "power transition theory" (Organski 1958), the prospect of disputes between China and US is foreseeable, particularly in the South China Sea, while China is finding ways to expand influence and empirical prevailing advantage in Paracels and Spratlys archipelagos. The only problem is to define the extent of "disputes" between China and US while military disputes seem not feasible but there are also diplomatic offensives from the US has been made such as the denial of Chinese efforts in practice in South China Sea: the US "opposes changes to the status quo made through force or coercion", reported by Chubb, said by Defense Secretary Ashton Carter in May 2015. Hence, reported by Andrew Chubb, "Senior U.S. military and civilian officials have used this standard formulation frequently since mid-2013, most prominently

in relation to the PRC's East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), and its well-publicized island-construction project in the South China Sea" (Chubb 2015). A political compromise between China and US to distribute influence and interests in South China Sea is the worst scenario for Vietnam as it adds the strength of the two powers together, which lesson Vietnam has painfully experienced in 1980s.

National identity

Under the constructivist paradigm, Vietnam identity is recognized as a guide to behaviour and centrally located on the top bodies of the CPV. The CPV should not be seen as a rational actor that objectively defines Vietnam's national interests through power structure but as a cognitive agent with its own perception of Vietnamese nation. I will spread my analysis on the ground of ideational that constitute Vietnam's national ideational identity with Wendt's framework on types of "identity". Vietnam is not different to any country in the sense that it consists of multiple identities but it also carries unique characteristics, from a Socialist, a Ho Chi Minh Ideologist to a South East Asian and a developing state in regional structures.

At the first glance, Vietnam's corporate identity is the most important component of Vietnam's national identity. Deeply embedded in the thinking of CPV leaders, Vietnamese identity is constituted from its nationalism. Most of Vietnamese people are "Viets" which accounts for 86% of the Vietnamese population (Ngoc 2002) and that is the reason why Vietnamese people largely shares common culture and normative behaviors. Vietnam's traditional nationalism is also attached with feudalism period and characterized by patriotic resistance against external dominance. The fact is that Vietnam has suffered almost 1000 years of dominance from Chinese throughout history. Thus, Vietnamese people had to live over 60 years under French colonialism and 30 years under American's invasion. "In fact", written by Vien (1993: 70), "the common suffering from and resistance against external invaders, especially China, constitute the core of Vietnam's national identity". It constitutes Vietnam strategic culture as an ideational factor that refers to "nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat and use of force" (Booth and Trood, 1999: 363). My intention is not going to a deeper analysis of Vietnamese strategic culture but the idea of using "strategic culture" notion only aims to shape the shared identity of Vietnamese people towards behavior with international relations.

The CPV leaders have a common "type identity", in Wendt's words, which rooted from Communism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology. In fact, it is not a new and distinct kind of identity to Vietnam's "corporate identity" but a continuous and modern nationalism. Under the light of Marxist-Leninist and Ho Chi Minh's ideology, the CPV has achieved its goal of national independence after the August Revolution in 1945. Since then, all CPV leaders share common thinking of ways to maintain party's survival and national

independence status. Ho Chi Minh leaves the greatest legacy to Vietnam's diplomacy in the modern days is the flexible diplomacy, usually called the principle of "from a steady stances, respond to ten thousand changes". This approach to Vietnam diplomacy in general and to the South China Sea case in particular has helped Vietnam to deter Chinese escalation and raise attention of international community. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh said to a report by the Voice of Vietnam, an official vocal department of Vietnam's government that: "our [Vietnam] unchanged stance is peace and stability and that our sovereignty is ensured", he continued, "If Vietnam has problems with one country, its policy is to solve them bilaterally, and with many other countries multilaterally", and "our policy [in the South China Sea disputes] is to settle disputes in line with international law" (VOV 2015).

Vietnam's identity at the third place can be assumed as "role identity" in the sense that Vietnam has capability of intentional behavior with qualities as desire and belief towards international actors. In other words, in international relations with other countries, the notion of Self-Other that constitutes Vietnam cognitive capability can be interpreted into the distinction between "friend" and "enemy". In 2003, the Central Committee announced the 8th resolution on the new framework of classification of Vietnam's external relations into partners of cooperation (doi tac) and objects of struggle (doi tuong). It is also worth to note that the basis for this cognitive thinking is rooted from the Marxist reasoning on dialectic relationship in the sense that Vietnam sees no country is entirely as partner of cooperation or object of struggle but ones, says China as an example, can be an economic partner but also security threat.

As an actor within international systems, Vietnam performs collective identities with other countries in its participation in international politics. The formation of Vietnam's collective identity is critical for decoding of its group behavior, especially as a member of ASEAN Community (to be established in 31/12/2015) as well as of the WTO and the UN (as an impermanent member of the UN Security Council in 2008-2009). I hereby only focus on the Vietnam's identity within ASEAN for creating background of its behavior in South China Sea. Collective identity of Vietnam in other international institutions such as WTO or UN will not be carefully considered due to limited scope of analysis. While all regional countries was tired of Cambodia issue, Vietnam also demanded a peaceful and stable environment to reconstructing its economic turbulence, the VIth Congress formally stated that: "we [Vietnam] desire and are prepared to negotiate with regional countries to address issues in South East Asia, to establish relationships of peaceful coexistence, and to build South East Asia into a region of peace, stability and cooperation" (CPV 1987). This announcement remarked rethinking of CPV leaders to engage with ASEAN countries for peace and stability in the region. Later, Vietnam formally acceded to the TAC, a regional norm found by ASEAN, at the 25th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1991; gradually nurtured its vision as a ASEAN member, with its enactment of ASEAN norms and principles in the late 1980s and early 1990s (for more infor-

mations, see Tung 2007). Vietnam official entered into ASEAN with full membership since 28/7/1995 until now. In other words, Vietnam has shifted from self-identity which characterized by nationalism and Marxist-Leninist, Ho Chi Minh Ideologies (as discussed before) into a collective identity of South East Asia regionalism. “More importantly”, Tung written, “as ASEAN cooperation is based on the free will of all its members, membership would in no way negatively affect Vietnam’s independence and sovereignty” (Tung 2007). Collective identity in ASEAN by no means being harmful to Vietnam but to consolidate its internal power and regional status through increased interactions and better understanding with ASEAN members.

Conclusion

After reviewing of theoretical perspectives on the constitution of foreign policy in general, I have addressed its rationale to the case of Vietnam’s foreign policy. I have proved that both national interests and national identity are recognized as legitimate policy dispositions in which both power and norms can have a role to play in shaping these dispositions. However, each theoretical perspective brings different way in analyzing Vietnam foreign policy. While Neorealists prioritize interests over identities, they argue that identities are derivative of the distribution of power and states’s behavior in international relations is to preserve their national survival. On the other hand, Constructivists believes in the cognitive thinking of states in making choices upon their own conception of themselves and others. I have also reasoned both rational and cognitive thinking of Vietnam’s leaders which reflecting through Vietnam’s foreign policy. The Neorealist perspective on Vietnamese foreign policy based on the notion of “asymmetry” which describes the essence of Vietnam-China relations over history. The Constructivists underline 4 different types of identities that also help to highlighting Vietnam’s behavior in this case. In the next chapter, I will briefly address the HD-981 issues, explaining why it would remark a new crossroad in Vietnam-China relationship by tracing the process of Chinese’s administration on South China Sea since 1991. Besides, I would like to draw out major impacts of the incident to the triangle US-Vietnam-China relations.

Chapter 4

The HD-981 incident and its impacts to Vietnam

The meaning of South China Sea to Vietnam

Connecting Pacific – Indian Ocean, Europe – Asia and Middle East – Asia, the South China Sea (SCS) is located on the arterial nautical route which is considered as the world's second busiest international shipping lane. This international shipping lane plays a vital role in many regional countries' economy such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and China.

Vietnam is not an exception as SCS includes the country's defence coastal line. The islands and archipelagos in the SCS, particularly the Paracels Islands and Spratlys Islands, are not only sufficiently important in controlling the sea lanes, but also play a role as geostrategic importance for Vietnam. As a part of SCS, Vietnam's territorial waters and continental shelf stretch along approximately 3,260 kilometres; hence Vietnam has a high land area/coast line ratio of 100 kilometres square per 1 kilometre, six times higher than the world's average ratio. No place on the continent of Vietnam is far away from the coast more than 500 kilometres. Vietnam possesses large internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982. The country also claims its sovereignty over the Paracels Islands and Spratlys Islands and thousands large and small, near and offshore islands.

The coastal waters of Vietnam are included in shipping trade lanes connecting the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, Europe and the Middle East to China, Japan and other countries in the region. The natural conditions of Vietnam present a favourable potential for the maritime transport sector in Vietnam. A huge number of seaports combine with roads and railways along the coast connecting with the inland areas allows the transport of imported goods all areas of the country quickly and smoothly.

Vietnam's waters have resource-rich potential, especially oil and gas. It is estimated there to be approximately 11 billion barrels of oil reserves in Vietnam's continental shelf, mining reserves of 4 to 5 billion tonnes. Gas reserves are estimated approximately 1,000 billion m³. Currently, Vietnam has discovered over twenty oil and gas fields, which can annually provide millions tons of oil and billions cubic metres of gas serving economic development and livelihoods. In addition, there are other important minerals such as coal, iron, titanium, fire tape, glass sand, salt and other construction materials.

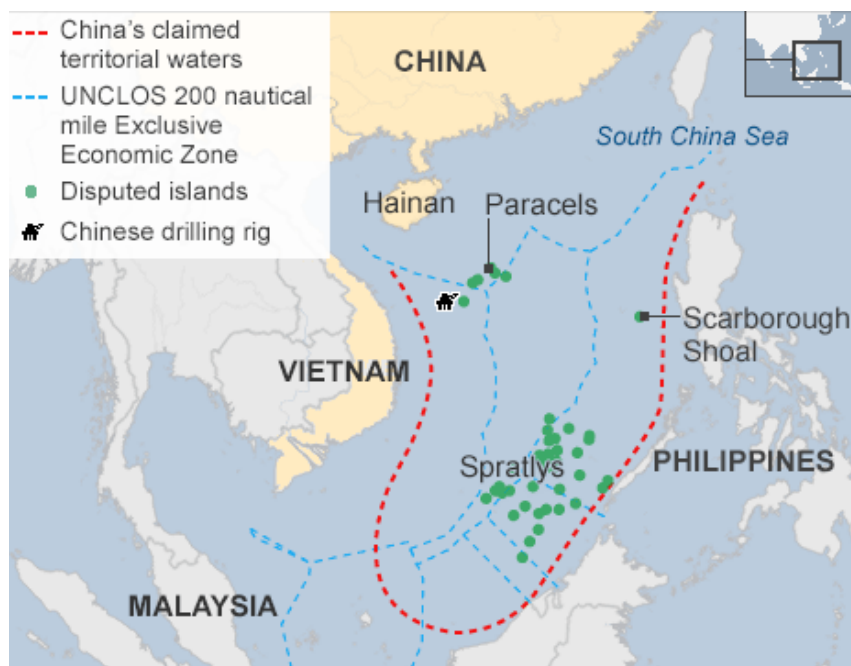
As the gateway to Vietnam, SCS is considered as the country's first line of defense. In the history, it was witnessed that in two third of the wars, the

invaders attempted to reach the country by sea. The glorious feats of arms in the history have proved the importance of SCS to the national defense and security of Vietnam.

Nowadays, SCS plays a role as increasing Vietnam's depth of defense towards the sea. Due to the S-shaped land territory of the country, stretching along the coast from the north to the south, plus a narrow width, the depth of the country is limited. Most of the political and economic centres are all located within coast area, making them vulnerable to enemy attack from the sea. In case of war occurrence, all targets on the mainland are within range of shelling from the sea. If the offshore and near-shore islands are strengthened with the construction of strategic anchored position, deployment of Vietnam People's Navy and the involvement of other forces, the islands have a vital part to effectively increase depth of defense for the country.

HD-981 incident and its impact to US-Vietnam-China triangle relationship

The HD-981 incident process



Map 1 China's HD-981 oil rig position

(Source: MOFA Vietnam)

On May 2, 2014, China blatantly placed its drilling oil rig HD-981 in disputed waters in the south of the Paracels Islands, which located 17 nautical miles from Triton Island and 120 nautical miles from Ly Son Island's east (17°03'75" North and 109°59'05" East). In her response, Vietnam Foreign

Affairs Spokesman claimed that this placement was located on Vietnam's 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone according to United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982. Colonel Ngo Ngoc Thu, Vice Commander and Chief of Staff of Vietnam's Coast Guard said, reported by Tuoitre News, "many of the 80 vessels deployed by China to guard oil rig HD 981, which has illicitly operated in Vietnam's waters in the East Sea since May 1, intentionally crashing into several Vietnamese ships and damaging them as well as injuring six Vietnamese fisheries surveillance staff over the past few days" (Tuoitre News 2014). Carl Thayer said : "China's placement of the giant state-owned oil rig HD-981 in Block 143 inside Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on May 2- 2014 was unexpected, provocative and illegal" (Thayer 2014). The strategic move of China by deploying the giant oil rig HD-981 deeply into Vietnam's EEZ and continental shelf is not a spontaneous incident but "it fit in a long-prepared and well-calculated action from China as a step in their grand strategy of controlling South China Sea", assessment by a former Vietnamese ambassador (Anonymous 2015). His statement is not sentimental if we look at several numbers of HD-981 such as 1 billion US dollar and 6 years for construction, which is also the largest oil rig China has ever successfully produced (114 meters long, 90 meters wide, 137.8 meters high, 31.000 tons weight).

On May 22- 2014, in response of press conference in the Philippines on the SCS dispute, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung has underlined that Vietnam will resolutely defend its sovereignty and legitimate interests because territorial sovereignty, including over its maritime zones and islands, is sacred. "We are thirsty for peace and friendship, but it must be based on ensuring independence, self-reliance, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We never barter these sacred things for an elusive and dependent peace and friendship" Prime Minister Dung insisted.

On June 18- 2014, at the highest-level talks between the two countries with Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi in Hanoi, Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong affirmed that "Vietnam's standpoint on its sovereignty over Paracels and Spratlys archipelagos and the East Sea is unchanged and unchangeable."

Vietnam's response

In this part, I would like to collect remarkable response from Vietnam towards the incident that consists of 3 distinct levels: government, scholars and media. I only address official response reflecting Vietnamese authority's view while I also notice about other type of reaction such as local boycotts as well as protests that also caused difficulties for Vietnamese government with China.

On May 11- 2014, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung delivered key note address at the 24th ASEAN Summit in Myanmar about sequence of events, reasoning Vietnam's behavior towards the incident. The message later was reemphasized by Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thi Doan at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building (CICA) where China was the host of conference in Shanghai on May 21- 2014. Besides, Hanoi

had directly delivered clear information to all diplomatic partners through its official foreign representative offices. On May 28- 2014, Vietnam had submitted “position paper of Vietnam on China’s illegal placement of Haiyang Shiyou 981 oil rig in the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of Vietnam” to the UN¹. On June 18- 2014, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong hold meeting with Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi in Hanoi in seeking of resolution for HD-981 tension but concluded with no progress.

On May 22- 2014, in response of press conference in the Philippines on South China Sea situation, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for the first time addressed new indications of policy adjustment to international community towards China that lowered the importance of “16 golden words” friendship relations between Vietnam and China by highlighting territorial integrity and security in Vietnam’s foreign policy, reported by VOV, that:” Vietnam will resolutely defend its sovereignty and legitimate interests because territorial sovereignty, including sovereignty of its maritime zones and islands, is sacred... Vietnam will not accept any exchange of this sacredness for quixotic peace and friendship” (VOV 2014). However, he also underlined Vietnam’s fundamental rule of action as “ever the first to use military means and would never unilaterally start a military confrontation unless we [Vietnam] are forced to take self-defense actions” (VOV 2014). Vietnam had hold a series of international press conference (May 7, 17, 23- 2014 and June 5, 17- 2014) to deliver most updated information to international community. Especially, Vietnamese authority also published images and videos caught provocative action from Chinese vessels from the field.

Truong Minh Huy Vu and Luc Minh Tuan (2015) made an attempt to collect evidence of China’s move and Vietnam’s counter response during the incident that would be cited as follows:

	China	Vietnam
Au- thority	Chi- na National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) places its deep sea drilling rig HD-981 in Vietnam’s EEZ and continental shelf (May 2- 2014)	Petro Vietnam (PVN) official replies by a letter of protest to CNOOC (May 4- 2014)
	High-ranking official leader’s statement (May 8, 13, 20, 21- 2014)	High-ranking official leader’s statement (May 11, 21, 27, 28- 2014)
Legal	Chinese administration declares	Vietnam

¹ To access the position paper, visit: <http://vietnamconsulate-ny.org/news/2014/07/position-paper-viet-nam-chinas-illegal-placement-haiyang-shiyou-981-oil-rig-exclusive>

action	fishing ban from May 16 to August 1 2014; China's Maritime Safety Administration announces restricted area of 3 nautical miles around the HD-981 oil rig	responses under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Declaration of Conduct between China and ASEAN (DoC)
	Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations position paper in documents A/68/887 and A/68/907 (June 9- 2014)	Permanent Mission of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam submits position paper of Vietnam on China's illegal placement of HD-981 oil rig (May 7, 28- 2014)
	China deploys hundreds of vessels including coast guard ships, maritime police ships, armed fishing boats, and naval vessels (e.g., corvettes, missiles boats, landing ships) and surveillance and strike aircraft in the territorial waters and air zone of Vietnam	Vietnam sends Vietnamese Maritime Police and Fisheries Control ships as well as fishing boats to banish Chinese illegal activities
Media	State's media reports on the activities of CNOOC empirically to domestic people and international community	Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds press conference on the issues (May 7, 17, 23- 2014)
	Encourage scholars publishing papers on China's position	Encourage scholars publishing papers on Vietnam's position
	Chinese Ambassadors release articles on local newspapers and response to international press agencies	Vietnamese Ambassadors release articles on local newspapers and response to international press agencies

Table 1 China and Vietnam's actions within the HD-981 incident

The withdrawal of HD-981 oil rig after 8 weeks on July 13 which had helped to deescalated the tension in South China Sea, however, its legacy was still significant. Carl Thayer suggested that the placement of HD-981 was “unexpected, provocative, and illegal” which absolutely later came to “political pressure and geopolitical considerations forced China’s hand” to remove the oil rig (Thayer 2014).

What can be seen beyond HD-981 towards the triangle of US-Vietnam-China relationship?

The purpose of this part is to analyze the impact of the HD-981 incident on to the US-Vietnam-China where Vietnam would be considered as central point. I argue that the incident created new nuances of the strategic environment in South China Sea that are benefiting a favorable condition for US-Vietnam relations and, on the other hand, pushing Hanoi further away from Beijing. The argument will be examined under 2 perspectives: strategic engagement and bilateral relations of Vietnam-US and Vietnam- China.

There is no doubt to affirm that the competition between US and China is at peak since the end of the Cold War with many specific characteristics of the new liberal world orders. While 2 sides are also competing for regional influence, that kind of fundamental spectrum of the Cold War era, there are mass of side effects to both states if they want to engage in a military confrontation such as economic dependence, interconnected world with the internet, international institutions particularly economic institutions, the rise of under-development countries with the highest pace in Asia Pacific where China is seems to be the core dynamics. The above factors cause US and China has to cooperate and struggle comprehensively each other at the same time.

The determination of China on its rise to expand its influence is also clear and, in fact, it is also being a challenge to US’s supremacy. Joseph Nye believes that “at least in the first half of this century, the US will still maintain its primacy in power resources and continue to play the central role in global balance of power” but he also does not forget to mention that China will be one of the most challenging factor to the US in this era (Nye 2015). In recent years, under Xi Jinping tenure, China has established the new grand strategy called “One belt, One road” that seems to be the alternative strategy after Deng Xiaoping’s mantra of “tao guang yang hui” (hide our capabilities and bide our time). Holistically, the “One belt, One road” strategy contains comprehensive initiatives from infrastructure building with many bilateral agreements between China and partners in South East Asia and South Asia as recently resulted in the initiation of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in late 2014, to the development of regional institutions driven by China such as Shanghai Cooperation Operation (SCO), Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) to bilateral economic agreements with the purpose of increasing Chinese economic power and its influence to all countries in Asia Pacific and South Asia. Among many strategies, the core step, as well as the first one that China has to conduct is to awakening its maritime power by outreach-

ing through the South China Sea and East China Sea. China has learned an important experience from major powers in history that none of them could be achieve the global influence and hegemony without the domination of maritime power. Therefore, the “String of Pearls” strategy has been launched to fulfil Chinese’s leader’s ambition. The strategy narrowed down the work of China in increasing its presence from mainland to the South China Sea, so called the first string, and the second one is from mainland to Indian Ocean in terms of economic, security and military. Having to confront that ambitious determination from China, the US’s administration is increasing commitment in preserving its supremacy role in the region by many counter measures with the hearth is located in the Trans-Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (TPP). “The purpose of TPP to the US is not to change or create a new regional order but, vice versa, to maintain the current order in Asia Pacific which is in favor of not only the US but also most of regional states”, said by an official from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, “however, it seems that China is not satisfied with this initiative since they are not get much benefits from the TPP at current stage” (Anonymous 2015).

Considering that context, South East Asia has been emerged as the first engaging battle field of the US and China for the role of regional supremacy. Thanks to its geostrategic position, Vietnam has been the focus objective of diplomatic and strategic policies of both 2 sides. The HD-981 has hollowed out a large rift in the relationship of Vietnam and China, pushing Vietnam further away from China and that is a great opportunity for the US to enhance its side in the triangle relationship. China is certainly conscious of potential disadvantages of a US-favored Hanoi, therefore, Beijing also makes notable adjustments in its foreign policy towards Vietnam.

The aftermath of the HD-981 incident in 2014 to China was strong condemnation of a coercive and provocative policy that forced Beijing to make adjustment to relieve tension with Hanoi. In April 2015 Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong visited Beijing at the highest level of protocol by the invitation of President Xi Jinping in his attempt to address tension in South China Sea. As a consequence of new adjustment moves, China offered new economic and infrastructural projects with mutual benefits to both sides. For example, China agreed to include the northern port of Vietnam Hai Phong into China’s Silk Road Initiative. Hence, Hanoi is accepted to be a founding shareholder of China new infrastructural bank with in Jung 2015 with the purpose of seeking new the funding source for effective projects to ensure sustainable economic development. China also agreed to negotiate with Vietnam on 3 highway projects (Lao Cai-Ha Noi- Hai Phong, Lang Son-Ha Noi, Mong Cai- Ha Long) which would indicate the main hub and spokes in economic network of northern part of Vietnam in the future. Last but not least, Xi Jinping is going to pay a reciprocal visit to Hanoi in late 2015. “To be fair”, said by a senior researcher at Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, “the visit of a Communist Party’s leader to China shed the light of an effective track in reconciling relations between the two countries that other partners

of Vietnam such as the Philippines or Japan could not conduct in this way” (Anonymous 2015).

Washington seems not to fall behind Beijing in this regards while the US-Vietnam relationship has achieved the highest record in history of diplomatic relation since 1995. Clearly, the US approaches Vietnam by 2 terms, economics and strategy, with the essential of mutual interests. In economic field, Washington has succeeded in pushing Vietnam fastening its decision to join TPP in which “Vietnam has compromised sensitive issues to Hanoi such as labor rights or the role of state-owned enterprises in economics and trade” (Anonymous 2015). The “Joint Vision Statement” between Vietnam and the US in the visit of Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang to Washington in July 2015, which is an upgrade of Memorandum of Understanding on defense relations in 2011, has shown strategic commitment of the Obama’s administration to tightening relations in the remark of 20 years of diplomatic relation. Hanoi is going to receive a fund of 18 million USD to equip military capacity, under a defense agreement signed in 2013. Washington has announced its decision to partly lift the lethal weapon bans to Vietnam under the aegis of the Senate Armed Services Committee in October 2014. In short, the relations between 2 sides have been broadened and deepened since mid-2014 particularly in strategic regards. Hiep said comparatively to the Vietnam-China relations that “The enhanced defence cooperation with the US certainly makes Vietnam-US relations more comprehensive than Vietnam-China relations. Ha Noi currently has no meaningful defence and strategic ties with Beijing due to the South China Sea disputes” (Hiep 2015: 4).

Conclusion

The HD-981 incident does not come along with a significant change in situation in South China Sea as well as the triangle relations US-Vietnam-China. However, it remarks a crossroad in the bilateral relations between Vietnam and China, shedding the light of Chinese leaders’ strategy by coercive and provocative measures towards Vietnam in dealing with disagreement in South China Sea. The incident is new dynamics pushing the momentum of cooperation and competition in the region or fastening changes of current regional order. It can be illustrated by adjustments of foreign policy of US, China and Vietnam where the US-Vietnam side is being at the closet position, on the other hand, the Sino-Vietnam side is contrary at the most further point since 1991. Both the US and Vietnam have seen mutual interests in deepening their bilateral relations in diverse terms such as economics, politics, strategy, security and influence. The comprehensive relationship, established since 2013, is awaited to be further enhancing in the next few years with many significant moves from 2 sides. In contrast, the HD-981 does not remark the collapse of Sino-Vietnam relationship, which has never been embedded in mind of Vietnamese CPV’s leaders. Yet it is a key to open new door of perception of Sino-Vietnam relations in mind of Hanoi. It also creates demand of Vietnam side to applying new instruments, or at least, to re-conceptualize way of deploying instruments in dealing with

China in South China Sea. The shift of the two pairs of relations should be considered under the most dominating relationship between US and China that essentially characterized by the terms of cooperation and competition at the same time. If the HD-981 did not happened, I argue, there would be no such huge dynamics for Vietnam to conduct “lesser friendly” behaviors towards China from mid-2014 until now as it used to amiably concern towards China in previous years. In the next chapter, I particularly focus on the case of HD-981 in reasoning new adjustments of Vietnam foreign policy’s instruments in dealing with China in South China Sea and logical reasons of these instruments under Neorealism and Constructivist paradigms.

Chapter 5

An integrated approach to Vietnam's foreign policy instruments in the case of HD-981

In this chapter, I would like to address Vietnam's foreign policy in a specific context: its instruments in dealing with China after the HD-981 incident. I will address a number of instruments that Vietnam has applied in the case of South China Sea which arranges in both domestic affairs and foreign affairs. Foreign policy's instruments, which are employed by states towards foreign partners, are often associated with a corresponding goal or capability. In fact, an instrument can be employed to gain multiple ends and utilize different capabilities and resources. Therefore, it is frequent when different analyses might reason states' instruments in various ways. The examination of Vietnam's foreign policy instruments here is to serve the underlying analysis of examining the effectiveness of an integrated approach of Neorealism and Constructivism to understand Vietnam's foreign policy.

In examining Vietnam's menu of choice of instruments in dealing with China in South China Sea disputes, it is worth to mention that diplomacy has been selected as the primary instruments of Vietnamese strategy. Diplomacy has been the priority since 1986 when Vietnam was eager to break out of international blockade and alleviate the economic crisis. After 1986, the use of military force in dealing with external affairs has never been appeared in any CPV official documents. Instead, the first primary resource was released from the CPV on the shift from military force to diplomacy was the "Strategy for Socio-economic Stabilization and Development towards 2000" in 1991, of which highlighted economic diplomacy in its selection of foreign policy: "multilateralization and diversification of economic relations with every country, every economic organization" (CPV 1991). This guideline was further developed into the general policy of foreign affairs until nowadays as "multilateralization and diversification of foreign relations", which officially appeared in the documents of the 1994 CPV Mid-term Congress.

Regarding of territorial dispute management, Vietnam has employed diplomatic efforts to secure disputes in South China Sea immediately after 1991 when Vietnam and China has re-established their diplomatic relations after the Cambodian crisis. Given the diplomatic relations remarked a new phase of Vietnam-China relations after the Cold War, China's determination in the South China Sea has continuously increased its coercive and provocative by various measures. The first manoeuvre that Beijing conducted after the reconciliation was the passage of the law on Chinese territorial waters and contiguous areas in February 1992 which incorporated the Paracels, Spratlys and almost all South China Sea waters into its territory. In confront of the threat of territorial integrity issue, Vietnam has consistently employed 3 levels of instruments that flooding in comprehensive terms, from national level

to regional level and international level, to secure its claim on territorial right over Paracels and Spratlys archipelagos.

The first level of foreign policy's instruments of Vietnam is at national level, which comprises of 2 strategic responses in dealing with China after the HD-981 incident. Regarding of external reactions, Vietnam has consistently maintained its neutral diplomacy that usually known as 3 No's policy while seeking new sources to balance with China in South China Sea from other major powers. 3 No's is indeed the pillar of Vietnam's defence policy that refers to Vietnam's standpoint of having no military alliances, not allowing any country to set up military bases on Vietnamese territory and not relying on any country for combating others. Besides, after the HD-981 incident, Vietnam believes that it is time to strengthen ties with major powers especially the US. In the wake of the tensions, Vietnam and the US has sent senior envoys to talk about leveling up their relationship. The cooperation occurs from the highest level as the state visit of CPV Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong to Washington in July 2015 to the official visit of Deputy Prime Minister Vu Van Ninh for talks on enhancing bilateral trade and TPP negotiations. Noteworthy, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh's visit in October 2014 has brought the breakout of partially lifting the embargo on lethal weapons sales to Vietnam. Clearly, the relationship of Vietnam-US has reached its peak in recent years.

Besides instruments targeting at external factors, Vietnam's policy also focus on domestic affairs which could provide foundation for enhancing Vietnam's capability in terms of military and economic powers. The modernization of military capacity has started since mid-1990s except a short period of the Asian economic crisis of 1998-1999. Vietnam has officially set the GDP percentage of its defence budget at 2.5% for all the armed forces. However, the modernization of military force seems not be able to help Vietnam increase its relative power in dealing with China. A vivid example that China's military spending in 2014 was 148 billion USD, which number that was even higher than total GDP of Vietnam in 2012, 135.54 billion USD (Le 2014). Although economic dependence to China is already a popular trend in Vietnam since 1991, after the HD-981 incident, it is the first time the Vietnam shows its determination to diversifying economic relations to decrease deficit to China. According to a report from Vietnam Centre Institute of Economic Management, trade deficit to China has gradually increased from 2000 and reached 23.6 billion USD in 2014. This is the consequence of fast growing in trade relations as the annual import from China increases 30%/year while export's number rises only almost 20%/year in recent 13 years. Since July 2014, delegations have repeatedly call for "escaping China's economic influence" at the parliament sessions. Noteworthy, the Vietnam-China relationship is considered as sensitive and not usually being discussed at official working sessions at national level. Assessed by a senior officer of MOFA Vietnam, he said: "Although we can not assume that the decision to join the TPP this year is a direct consequence of China's provocative and aggressive actions in South China Sea in 2014, the incident should be seen as a catalyst for Vietnam's leaders to settle their determina-

tion to join TPP that suspicious of conservative group has been now dominated by modernizers” (Anonymous 2015).

As argued in Chapter 3, a power-based approach on Vietnam’s selection of instruments emphasizes on the constraints of evolving regional structure and Vietnam’s position of power asymmetry regarding of China. For Neorealist, Vietnam’s instruments is formulated as a response to threats and opportunities presented by the China-US structure with priority to securing its national interest. Given the fact that Vietnam’s strategic environment is evolving after the HD-981 incident (as presented in Chapter 4), Vietnam’s response to the situation is an attempt to keep the balance of power between the US and China. According to Neorealists, the conventional explanation of states responses to external threats is that they would balance against the source of threat or bandwagon with them (Waltz 1979; Walt 1987). Both of these two selections are rational and straightforward strategies, which would result in alliances against or with the principal threat. In other words, when states see a direct external threat that might harm its security, they should take a side to protect its own interests. However, as Vietnam consistently declared on its 3 No’s policy, which published since the 2004 White Paper that “Vietnam consistently advocates neither joining any military alliance nor giving any foreign countries permissions to have military bases in Vietnam” (MOD 2004: 14). Certainly, Vietnam is not going to bandwagon with China because they have unresolved disputes in South China Sea over Paracels and Spratlys islands. Besides, Vietnam has also declared that not to seek a military alliance to protect its interests in South China Sea. To reasoning Vietnam’s selection of instruments, we should take a step back to the argument that “does Vietnam see China as a direct threat to its security?”. The answer is “Yes, but not that simple”. It is because “Vietnam determines that disputes in South China Sea is only an aspect of Vietnam-China relationship and ones should not assess Vietnam’s foreign policy towards China by only looking at the tensions in South China Sea”, viewpoint from a senior researcher at the Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies (Anonymous 2015). In other words, Vietnam sees China is a security threat in the South China Sea disputes but not in other areas, particularly in terms of economics .Because of economic dependence and politics influence from China, Vietnam understands that they should not exchange the relative stable situation (with the assumption that allying or bandwagoning with an other country can make it real) to economic and political security. This argument is helpful in understanding Vietnam’s reaction with China after HD-981 incident by sending the Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong to Beijing in Jun 2014 to mend its relations with China.

Clearly, Vietnam is not seeking allying or bandwagoning measures with any countries and it is not true when saying that Vietnam does not aim to balance with China. Therefore, a new question emerges here that what kind of balancing Vietnam is looking for. In fact, Vietnam is seeking a self-help strategy of balance of interest from the US and China rather than balance of power. The difference between balance of interest and balance of power is that, I argue, the previous highlights the goal of benefiting from each other interests in the region without requiring states choosing a side. S.Walt

(1988) reasoned Western Europe states' behaviour after World War II that it was not the balance of power but the balance of threat matters to them in choosing a side between the US and Soviet Union. He concluded that "structural balance of power theory often leads to inaccurate predictions...These deficiencies can be overcome by recognizing that states seek allies to balance threats, and that power is merely one element in their calculations-albeit an important one" (Walt 1988: 280). However, both these two theories are not applicable to the case of Vietnam. If Vietnam was concerned solely with balancing power, Vietnam had chosen to align with the US against China because of the US predominant military capability. Similarly, Chinese aggressive moves and aims made them appear more threatening to Vietnam but empirically Hanoi did not also align with the US to balance the threat from Beijing. Putting into the case of Vietnam, given that Vietnam always avoids to see China as its enemy, Vietnam's rational selection of instruments comprises of 3 No's policy reassure China from a southern security threat with the presence of the US forces in Vietnam's soils. Besides, the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's statement, reported by Tuoitre News, that "Vietnam needs to conduct both cooperation and struggle activities to safeguard its territorial sovereignty in South China Sea" also suggests another idea (Tuoitre news 2014). The statement should be understood that Vietnam's foreign policy instruments are not rigid but conditional, that Vietnam's behaviors do have benefit to Chinese interests in South China Sea if only China does the same thing to Vietnam. On the other hand, Vietnam's priority is focusing on strategies that can further deepen the US interests in the region such as promoting military and economic cooperation (see Chapter 4 for evidences of cooperation). In short, a reasonable answer for Vietnam's foreign policy instruments in South China Sea after the HD-981 incident is to further elucidate the US interests in the region rather than promoting the US power in the region to counter China's measures. Hence, Beijing's moves that pushing the geostrategic changes in the region, has posed impact to Vietnam's response rather than Vietnam own-making decision

So far, Vietnam's instruments in dealing with China can partly be taken into account with the concept of power, yet Neorealism does not provide comprehensive paradigms to judge Vietnam's policy. Criticism might arise to counter arguments that Vietnam's "irrational" choice of non-balancing and non-bandwagoning behavior should be address with another approach. Plus, Vietnam's self-help measures such as increasing military spending for new strategic weapons and facilities or diversifying economic dependence to Chinese economics are long-term policy that could not help Vietnam tighten asymmetric power regarding of China in few years. In short, a power-based analysis suggests that Vietnam can hardly head up with China in South China Sea disputes. However, since Vietnam has acknowledged its asymmetric capability in comparison with China, Hanoi also employs different instruments that go beyond from power-centric reasons. For example, the fact is that Vietnam has employed efforts to encourage deeper integration to ASEAN even ASEAN does not have any official mechanism to in-

tervene to settle territorial disputes in the region. There must be a way to reason Vietnam's selection of employing regionalism in this case.

Vietnam also employs efforts at the regional level to deepening integration into regional and international structures, particularly into ASEAN's mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of this instrument in countering China after the incident. The 11th National Party Congress, which occurs every 5 years that would propose Vietnam's orientation in its office term, has been concretized, in April 2013, by the Politburo's resolution No.22 on "international integration". The resolution reaffirms Vietnam's determination for further comprehensive partnership building process with its partners. There is a connection between Vietnam's determination for international integration and tensions in South China Sea. "Vietnam sees integration to international community as the most effective way to achieve development and security", said by a senior officer at MOFA Vietnam (Anonymous 2015). "It's now time to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges of proactive international integration", cited from the No.22 Resolution, "...persisting in a foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation, and development under the motto "Vietnam is a reliable friend and a responsible member of the international community", and "...harmoniously dealing with the relationship between independence and self-reliance and international integration to realize the fundamental goals of the revolution while pursuing security and development goals". As such a large meaning of "security" concept among Vietnamese leaders, international integration could be understood as an policy that also has impact on South China Sea issues. However, integration process is such a long-term objective that Vietnam has initiated into ASEAN's structure since 1995, the case of HD-981 is not vital to Vietnam's internalization of ASEAN's identity but its determination still worth to examine. The integration process is important to Vietnam's policy because it has proved its effectiveness in helping Vietnam going beyond from the asymmetric tyranny with China to another approach to the issue.

Under the Constructivist paradigm, a power-based does not matter in analyzing states' behavior but identity attracts more credit to scholars. The following examination does not deny the role of power in Constructivism but it would focus to highlight the use of Vietnam's identity in multilateral cooperation to integrate its interests with other states. The aspect of Vietnam's diplomatic identity is shaped by ASEAN norms and principles that would be particularly examined under the aspect of conflict management. Vietnam's diplomacy as predominant instrument in dealing with China was successfully constructed as new collective identity based on ASEAN norms to replace the old one based on communist internationalism after Vietnam joined the association in 1995, few years after the collapse of communist community. The HD-981 does not remark a new thinking of Hanoi towards its collective identity but a deeper determination of using ASEAN norms of conflict management in dealing regional security. In fact, ASEAN norms had constituted a regional security culture that is popular in South East Asia issues. "ASEAN Way", said Acharya, "is associated with a high degree of discreteness, informality, pragmatism, expediency, consensus building, and non-

confrontational bargaining styles which are often contrasted with the adversarial posturing and legalistic decision-making procedures in Western multilateral negotiations” (Acharya 1998: 58). Hence, ASEAN’s key principles, which are enshrined in the ASEAN’s TAC (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia) and ASEAN’s Treaty, are comprised of ASEAN diplomatic practices such as consultation, consensus building, collective responsibilities and respect for diversity. Regardless of ASEAN’s weakness in inability to establish an official conflict management in South China Sea, ASEAN’s approach to the issue actually shares commonality to Vietnam’s perspective.

In fact, Vietnam’s regionalism process aims at 2 goals: building collective identity in conflict management in the region through strategic trust building process; promoting its concerned issues in ASEAN mechanisms and dialogues with major power that Vietnam does not have ability to initiate bilaterally. After the HD-981 incident, the earliest reaction of Hanoi, besides bilateral response to China, was reaching ASEAN members to call for consensus voice in the event, which later resulted in the ASEAN Ministers of Foreign Affairs joint statement on the situation in South China Sea (May 10- 2014). This was a notable response of ASEAN countries given the fact that ASEAN had suffered failure in publishing the same document in Cambodia in 2012 due to lack of consensus in their attitudes towards Chinese move in South China Sea. For Vietnam, one of the most important lessons to be learned from the ASEAN Way of conflict management over 20 years is to shelve disputes for cooperation and later settlement. Having acknowledge of non-viable situation when China disclaims its interests in South China Sea, Vietnam treats ASEAN as solid mechanism where Hanoi can attract major power attentions and interests into the region. In reality, the success of ASEAN to have the US, Russia, China, Korea, Japan and Australia as their dialogue partners (ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, EAS ADMM+) has created instruments for all ASEAN members to integrate their interests to regional major power’s concerns. Both members of ASEAN and major powers now see ASEAN-led mechanisms in managing regional issues as a playable field in which all countries can raise their voice to build up mutual understanding and strategic trust.

While territorial disputes are targeted objects for application of the ASEAN Way, particularly ones in South China Sea, Vietnam has another instruments to address its territorial disputes with China and the US in ASEAN’s terms besides bilateral track. The absorption of ASEAN norms of conflict management by the military would not only be a case for Vietnam’s internalization of ASEAN identity, it could help to reason Vietnam’s behaviour of modernization military without aiming at conflict but further cooperation and territorial dispute settlement. Since 2006, Vietnam has been involving in military to military interactions or cooperation between MODs in regional frameworks such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM), which aims at promoting and cooperating in defence and security fields through the enhancement of trust, transparency and openness. As analysed by a senior officer from MOFA Vietnam: “Vietnam sees military cooperation, rather than military actions that use force to threaten other countries,

with ASEAN's partners particularly the US and Japan as an important track to cooperate with them in region under ASEAN norms and identity" (Anonymous 2015).

While illustrating Vietnam's behaviours in absorbing ASEAN identity under Constructivist paradigm, Neorealist also can reveal some extents of Vietnam's internalization of ASEAN identity. First, Vietnam's choice to further integrate to ASEAN reflects its rational consciousness of increasing interests within ASEAN's frameworks. In a counter argument, Dosch (2006) assumes that ASEAN as the "golden cage" would redirect Vietnam's foreign policy away is actually not valid because of flexible norms of ASEAN that have never aimed at shaping members' policy but only creating foundation for states sharing their policy and concerns. Second, Vietnam benefits from employing ASEAN Way of conflict management in maintaining territorial and regime security in the context of power asymmetry. Hence, regional cooperation also provides chance to Vietnam to raise mutual understanding, confidence and trust with major powers, particularly to the US. In other words, under Neorealist interpretation, the integration to ASEAN helps Vietnam gaining power through cooperation with other states that Vietnam might not be able to initiate without collective power of ASEAN. In short, this process is an indirect instrument to balance the interests of Vietnam between the 2 majors.

Vietnam also has employed efforts to solve disputes in South China Sea with other countries in accordance with international law and norms. 20 years before the HD-981 incident, cited from Thao (2012), the Vietnamese National Assembly has ratified the UNCLOS of which states that: "...reaffirms the sovereignty of Vietnam over the two archipelagos of Hoang Sa [Paracels] and Truong Sa [Spratlys] and Vietnam advocates the settlement of differences related to Bien Dong [South China Sea] through peaceful negotiations, based on equity, understanding, and mutual respect in conformity with international law, especially the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982" (Thao 2012: 30). The ratification of UNCLOS has provided Vietnam legal foundation for its instruments against China's violence in South China Sea. First, under the case of HD-981, Vietnam emphasized China's violated move under UNCLOS principles which China should abide as its membership of the convention. Second, Vietnam attended on international norms such as equity, mutual respect in conducting behavior in the incident. For example, to banishing the oil rig from Vietnam's EEZ, Hanoi peacefully deployed Maritime Police and Fisheries Control ships while China used different forces including coast guard ships, maritime police ships, armed fishing boats, and naval vessels (e.g., corvettes, missile boats, landing ships) and surveillance and strike aircraft in the territorial waters and air zone of Vietnam. But the central question should be examined here is that would the application of international law and norms help Vietnam in dealing with China's behavior in South China Sea?

While Neorealism can barely exercising to answer this question, Constructivism can reveal several reasons for this Vietnam's instrument in

dealing with China. First, Vietnam's strategy is to illustrate China's violation international law and norms that would expose Beijing's contrary imagine of modern, responsible country embracing liberal norms and universal behaviors. This strategy proved its relevance when the US and other regional countries are sharing their common wills in calling China to abide international law and universal norms. Remarkably, a report from the US Congressional Research Service in 2008 had said a reversed story, that was the year when international community still embraced a imagine of the Sino-US cooperation at regional and international level in settling security difficulties, that "by downplaying many conflicting interests and working collaboratively with countries and regional organizations on such issues as territorial disputes and trade, Beijing has largely allayed South East Asian concerns that China poses a military or economic threat" (Congressional Research Service 2008: 1). For now, all these things have gone. Second, Vietnam's position on its instrument has been gradually evolved after the HD-981 incident that Vietnam has fastened its integration process into deeper regional and international structures. After the incident, Vietnam has increased its favor of the argument that the lack of exercising UNCLOS in South China Sea would not only hurt Vietnam's security interests but also show the fragmentation of states in understanding and applying the use of international law in settling disputes. In other words, the inability to find consensus in inteprating UNCLOS principles of their members, particularly between China and the others, is making situation in South China Sea further tempting. The evolution of Vietnam's thinking is illustrated from "economic integration" to "international integration" by comprehensive means, which emphasized in the No.22 Resolution of Politburo. In March 2015, reported by Saigon GP News, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung showed Vietnam determination by stating that Vietnam must "actively join the international community in shaping the common playing rules for the best interests of the nation in both the short- and long-term" (Saigon GP 2015).

Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter reveals the rationale of applying an integrated analysis in reasoning Vietnam's foreign policy in struments in South China Sea issues: Vietnam relies on diplomacy rather than military power in handling its situation in South China Sea. Given that Neorealism and Constructivism have their own approach to Vietnam's instruments, they have not negated but mutually reinforced each other analysis. Vietnam has employed comprehensive instruments at 3 diffrent levels from national level with internal and external strategies to regional level by the internalization of identity into ASEAN. Besides, Vietnam is integrating to international community with the appreciation of international law (UNCLOS) and norms in settling disputes in the region. In this case of HD-981 incident, Neorealism shows its advantage in highlighting the nature of Vietnam's strategy is self-help and balance of power and interest. The evidence of these instruments can be seen at national and regional level polities. From the perspective of Construcvism, Vietnam's instruments aim

at finding common identity to complement mutual understanding, strategic trust for cooperation in dealing with China in South China Sea. The result of exploration of the case of HD-981 from Vietnam's perspective proves that the 2 approaches come together with a synergy that would disclose a comprehensive analysis of Vietnam's foreign policy.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This last chapter appears to bring up the most crucial issue of the thesis- the explanation of applying an integrated analysis of the two dispositions of theory on Vietnam's foreign policy. Throughout the thesis, I have exercised my attempt in addressing Vietnam's foreign policy by using Neorealist perspective with the complementary of Constructivist one. As a development of the argument, the integrated approach has well-functioned when looking at the case of the HD-981 oil rig in 2014.

As Vietnamese diplomacy may be influenced by both power and identity factors, there is a phenomenal that we often see overlapping areas that a diplomatic maneuver could be addressed by either material or ideational paradigms. The idea of this thesis is that power and identity have their own positions in explaining states' foreign policy that should be combined into one concrete analysis in the study. This study applies the Neorealist and Constructivist paradigms to set up competing theoretical perspectives on Vietnam's foreign policy study. It does so by extracting from each of the paradigms a key concept in foreign policy analysis: national interest and national identity. Neorealism and Constructivism, respectively, see national interest and national identity as the prime mover of states' policy and behavior. For Neorealists, national interest is paramount and objectively defined by the power structure of the international system. In other words, structural constraints are prerequisite condition in shaping and consequently leading to the change of states' interest and policy. On the other hand, Constructivists also conscious of the salience of national interest in accounting for states' action, they argue that it should be embedded in social construction. Thus, national interests derive from state identity which provides a completely different perspective on international relations that international norms, rules and principles can have an impact on states' behavior. Besides, states' interests depend on how it views itself in relation to the others.

Proceeding from the Neorealist paradigm, Vietnam's foreign policy should be taken into account of its national interest which embeds in South East Asia structure. From the tenets of Neorealism, national survival, by both means of security and regime survival, is the ultimate goal of Vietnam. The case of South China Sea is relevant because Vietnam considers the Paracels and Spratlys archipelagos as their maritime territory in accordance with UNCLOS 1982 and China's determination to exercise their claim over South China Sea which also overlaps Vietnam's claim. The first factor of Vietnam's material structure is its bilateral relation with China that would be reflected by the term of asymmetric relations. As Vietnam seems "irrational" in competing with China in South China Sea because of its weakness in absolute power term, the analysis of Vietnam's foreign policy towards China should be seen in lenses of relative power, which basically about the

role of relations with other actors rather than natural resources. Second, the regional structure, which Vietnam is embedded in the case of South China Sea, is being dominated by the Sino-US relations. In fact, Vietnam enjoys the balancing strategy to the region of Washington because it could help to deter Beijing from increasing their provocative and assertive behavior in South China Sea. As a result of HD-981 incident, Vietnam has employed a self-help strategy by fastening its process of military modernization and deescalating economic dependence to China by seeking bilateral and multi-lateral FTA, especially the most recent TPP. Vietnam also seeks a balance of interest strategy that aims at China by supporting the presence of the US in the region. Nonetheless, Vietnam's instrument is not clearly applying a "balance of power theory" because Vietnam is not neither bandwagoning nor allying with the US to counter China. Actually, Vietnam hopes to see the balance in its relations with China and the US to creating foundation for its independence policy.

Constructivism examines Vietnam's foreign policy under the lenses of national identity. Because the study focuses on the aspect of Vietnam's instruments in dealing with China in South China Sea, it mostly emphasizes the role of collective identity as a key instrument for Vietnam in the internalization process of ASEAN identity. Besides, as Constructivism's interpretation of the important of international laws and norms in shaping structural constraints, Vietnam's determination to applying UNCLOS and other universal norms in the case of South China Sea could benefit to force China to conduct under international standard.

While the empirical analysis in this study only covers one aspect of Vietnam's foreign policy, its instruments in dealing with China in South China Sea, the central theses are likely to hold its position in future study. An integrated analysis on foreign policy can help to avoid bias of each approach to go beyond to a comprehensive understanding of states' foreign policy. Critics might rise when this integrated analysis does not bring along other functioned theories, yes, and I also believe that other aspect of states' foreign policy need to account of more positions such as Neo-liberal institutionalism or even Comparative Historical perspective and so on. However, the integrated analysis of Neorealism and Constructivism has done its job in understanding the selection of Vietnam's foreign policy instruments in the case of HD-981 towards China.

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