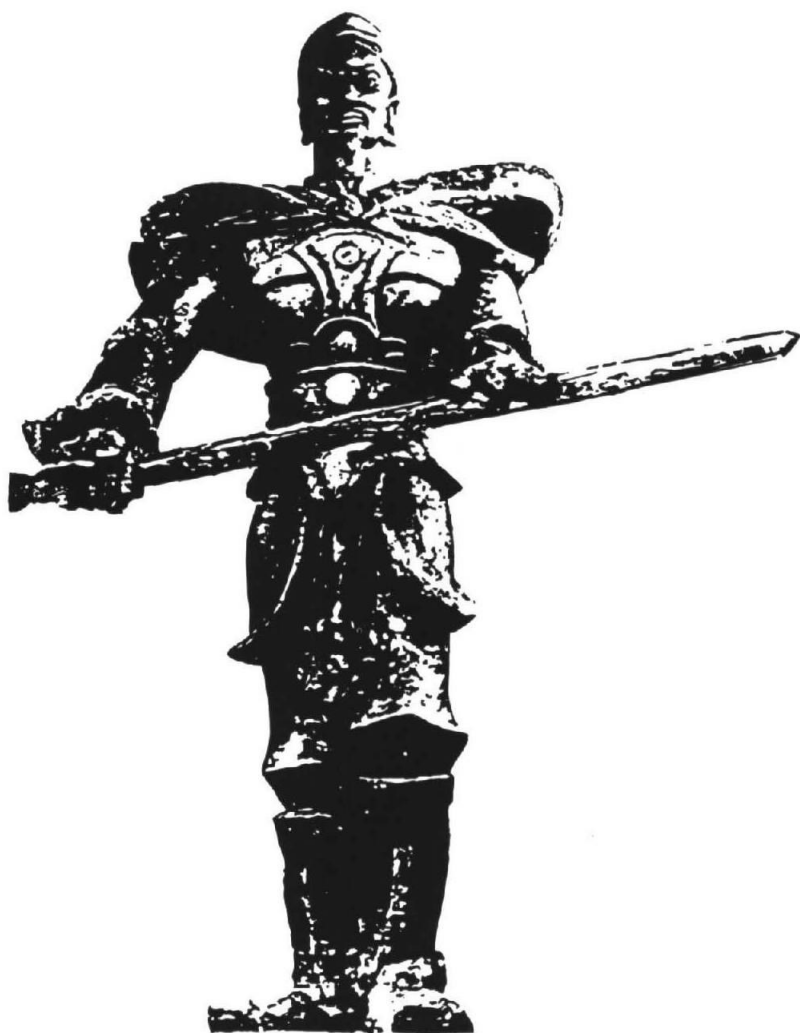


## Chapter 5. National Security



*National hero Ngo Quyen (A.D. 899-944), who defeated the Chinese fleet in A.D. 938 to end 1,000 years of Chinese domination*

IN THE LATE 1980s, Vietnam's leaders continued to define national security in the same broad, all-encompassing terms used by other Marxist-Leninist societies. The basic precept was that any effort to alter the status quo was a threat to national security and was to be dealt with quickly and decisively. The threat could come from ideas as well as from invading armies. According to this doctrine, responsibility for maintaining security rested with all the people and was not simply vested in the police, armed forces, or other coercive elements of the system. Finally, the achievement of national security was regarded as a function of proper communication with, and motivation of, the people by various party and government organs. This approach, a careful mix of compulsion and persuasion, created in communist Vietnam a social discipline that contributed to the success of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP, Viet Nam Cong San Dang) in the North and was extended to the South after unification in 1976.

## **Overview of National Security**

Official attitudes in Vietnam toward national security have arisen from an amalgam of the country's heritage, historical experience, internal sociopolitical strengths and weaknesses, and geopolitical position. They are also the product of a singular kind of leadership, which in 1987 was undergoing gradual change. The Vietnamese look back at the great events of their past and see themselves as victims of history. They perceive that Vietnam always has been threatened by formidable enemies, frequently has been beleaguered, and on occasion has only narrowly escaped destruction. For centuries China repeatedly sought to establish hegemony over Vietnam. A century of colonial control by the French was shaken off in 1954, following a long, bitter struggle that concluded by planting the seeds for still another struggle for complete unification of the country. In 1987 the Vietnamese perceived their country to be isolated, surrounded by hostile neighbors, and dependent on the Soviet Union in an intimate association that was a military alliance in all but name. Internally, the country was viewed as divided by geographic regionalism stemming from ancient cultural differences among the people of the North, Center, and South (see *The Chinese Millennium*, ch. 1). Regardless of their veracity, such perceptions were widely held in Hanoi and conditioned the leadership's thinking about national security.

## **The Tradition of Militancy**

Vietnam's past is characterized by a strongly martial spirit tempered by war, invasion, rebellion, insurgency, dissidence, and social sabotage. In their view, the Vietnamese have always lived in an armed camp. The first "deities" of Vietnam, before the time of recorded history, were not gods but generals. Vietnam's naval fleet in the ninth century supposedly was the largest on earth. In the tenth century, when its population could not have numbered more than 2 million, its army purportedly stood at 1 million. Asia's first military academy was founded in Hanoi in the thirteenth century. The fourteenth century produced Tran Hung Dao (1230-1300), the greatest of all Vietnam's many military geniuses, who was consistently able to win battles against vastly superior forces. According to tradition Nguyen Hue (also known as Emperor Quan Trung, 1742-92), another great military leader, fielded an army so disciplined that for the battle of Dong Da in 1789 he force-marched his troops 600 kilometers to fight an uninterrupted five-day battle that left "mountains of enemy dead." Vietnamese of all political views take pride in these figures from antiquity and seem particularly fond of those most clever in combat, such as the general who persuaded his opponent that he had two armies when the second was only a phantom. Those who sacrificed themselves on some grand battlefield are also fondly remembered. For instance, the Hai Ba Trung legend, reminiscent of the story of Jeanne D'Arc, originated early in the first century A.D. It tells of the two Trung sisters, who led their army in a futile effort against a vastly superior Chinese force. Defeated, they drowned themselves in a Hanoi lake. Members of a thriving mystic cult continued to worship the lake in the 1980s despite official disapproval. Vietnam's standard histories depict the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as times of continual rebellion predating the rise of post-World War II Asian nationalism. The century of French colonialism is described as one long, unbroken battle involving virtually all Vietnamese.

Contemporary Hanoi historians describe Vietnam's national tradition as one in which every Vietnamese is a soldier. They cite the famed historical record, *Annam Chu Luoc* (Description of Annam, by Le Tac, circa 1340): "During the Tran dynasty all the people fought the enemy. Everyone was a soldier, which is why they were able to defeat the savage enemy. This is the general experience throughout the people's entire history." This tradition is said to arise not from militarism, but rather from a spirit of *chinh nghĩa* (just cause), which connotes highly moral behavior rooted in rationality, compassion, and responsibility. The historians assert

that the spirit of *chinh nghĩa* sustained the Vietnamese in their long struggle against the Sinicization (*Han-hwa*) efforts of the Han Chinese, and later against French colonialism and American neocolonialism. Drawn from this, then, is a special kind of martial spirit, both ferocious and virtuous. It is because of *chinh nghĩa* that the Vietnamese have been victorious, while usually outnumbered and outgunned. *Chinh nghĩa* is the mystique that imparts unique fighting capabilities to the Vietnamese: first, it mobilizes the people and turns every inhabitant into a soldier; second, it applies the principles of “knowing how to fight the strong by the weak, the great numbers by the small numbers, the large by the small.”

Just as Prussia has been Europe's most fought-over ground, Vietnam is Asia's. For centuries the Vietnamese battled the Chinese, the French, the Americans, the Khmer, and again the Chinese. In between they battled the Thai, the Burmese, the Lao, the Cham, the Montagnards, and each other in regional and dynastic combat. In the view of Vietnam's neighbors, Vietnamese campaigns since the fifteenth century have been offensive rather than defensive. But Vietnamese school children are taught that in these wars the Vietnamese always were the victim, never the aggressor. With respect to Vietnam's national security, the point is not whether Vietnamese perceptions are factually correct, but that the Vietnamese act on them.

In Hanoi's view, Vietnam faced an extraordinarily difficult and complex geopolitical scene in the 1980s, one that was filled with both external and internal dangers; in meeting these threats the country suffered from some strategic weaknesses and enjoyed certain strategic strengths. The conclusion appeared to be that Vietnam could deal with these dangers because of its confidence that its strengths outweighed its weaknesses and that, regardless of the threat presented, the Vietnamese cause, as in the past, would prove triumphant. The ruling Political Bureau and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN—see Glossary) High Command long ago developed several firm policies to achieve this end: that Vietnam must remain more or less permanently mobilized for war; that it must maintain as large a standing army as the system can support; that, as far as it is able, it must be self-sufficient in protecting itself and not rely on outside assistance or alliance; and that internally it must maintain a tightly organized, highly disciplined society capable of maintaining a high level of militant spirit among the general population.

This threat perception, and the leadership's response to it, have had the net effect of creating in Vietnam a praetorian society

dedicated to the preservation of the existing order. It makes the Vietnamese, as Premier Pham Van Dong observed to a Western journalist, “incurable romantics.” The society in the 1980s looked back at the First Indochina War (also known as the Viet Minh War—see Glossary) and Second Indochina War (see Glossary) as an era of high deeds and heroism contrasting unfavorably with humdrum postwar life.

### **Strategic Thinking**

The central factor in Hanoi’s strategic thinking, applicable to both external and internal threats, is the VCP’s concept of *dau tranh* (struggle). Briefly stated, *dau tranh* strategy is the sustained application of total military and nonmilitary force over long periods of time in pursuit of an objective. Its chief characteristic is its conceptual breadth, for it is of greater scope than ordinary warfare and requires the total mobilization of a society’s resources and psychic energies. The strategy, it is held, is unique to Vietnam because of its close association with the sources of Vietnamese national security strengths. Since the mid-1970s, journals published in Hanoi on military theory have defined these strengths as the heritage of unity and patriotism, the supportive collectivist state system, the technologically and “spiritually” developed armed forces, a superior strategy (the *dau tranh* strategy), the undeviating justice of Vietnam’s cause, and the support of the world’s “progressive forces.” The leadership’s faith in these strengths emboldens it to take an implacable approach to world affairs and to treat external activities, such as diplomacy, like quasi-military campaigns.

The aim of the *dau tranh* concept is to put warfare into a new conceptual framework. Its essence is the idea of people not merely as combatants or supporters but as weapons of war to be designed, forged, and hurled into battle—hence the term *people’s war*. All people, even children, are regarded as instruments of *dau tranh*. Operationally the strategy has two arms or pincers—armed *dau tranh* and political *dau tranh*. The two always work together to close on and crush the enemy. Political *dau tranh* is not politics but a mobilizing and motivating program operating in a gray area between war and politics. Specifically, it consists of three *van* (action) programs: the all-important *dich van* (action among the enemy) includes activities directed against the foreign enemy in his home country, the *dan van* (action among the people) includes activities conducted in a liberated area, and the *binh van* (action among the military) includes nonmilitary activities against the enemy’s military forces. Of the three, the *dich van* program is particularly novel because it seeks to shape outside perception and, beyond this, to persuade

outsiders not only that the Vietnamese will be successful in their struggle but that they deserve to be. Strategically, it seeks to undercut the enemy's war effort at home and its diplomacy worldwide. Tactically, it attempts to limit the enemy's military response by inhibiting the full use of his military potential.

*Dau tranh* strategy defines the enemy narrowly—imperialists, militarists, landlords—but does not tar all in the enemy camp. Some are considered merely to have been misled, while others are regarded as foreign patriots who nevertheless support Hanoi's cause. In this way, *dau tranh* not only changes the definition of a combatant but also revises the rules of warfare. It asserts that the final test need not be military, and that the decisive action may take place away from the battlefield.

The strategy requires the support of tremendous organizational resources as it seeks always to realize the ideal of total mobilization and motivation. It also requires meticulous attention to the mundane details of war and politics, such as logistics and administration.

The great utility of *dau tranh* strategy, as evidenced by forty years of use against the French, the Americans, and the Chinese, is twofold: it can cloud the enemy's perceptions and it can nullify his power. In the judgment of the Vietnamese leadership, it has proved to be highly effective in confounding the enemy's strategic response because it engenders misperception in the enemy camp. Vietnam's leaders have said that the nature of the Second Indochina War was never seen clearly either by the South Vietnamese or by the Americans. *Dau tranh* strategy, in effect, dictates the enemy's counterstrategy, even to the extent of forcing him to fight under unfavorable conditions. In circumscribing the enemy's military response by altering his perception of the war, *dau tranh's* guiding principle is that military force must always be politically clothed. Every battle must be cast in terms of a political act. When this is not possible—as in a purely tactical engagement, such as that with United States forces at Khe Sanh in early 1968—the attack must be made to seem a military action for a political purpose (see *The Second Indochina War*, ch. 1). Theoretically, violence or military action defined or perceived as political becomes more acceptable to all parties, participant and onlooker alike.

After the Second Indochina War, the *dau tranh* concept served the Vietnamese less well. It was employed, more by accident than by design, against the invading Chinese during the brief border war in 1979 and worked fairly well. It did not prove workable in Cambodia, however, and was for the most part abandoned there. Interestingly, many of its techniques were borrowed by the

Cambodian resistance forces and used against the Vietnamese-supported Khmer People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (KPRAF), as well as against PAVN forces in Cambodia. Vietnam's experience in Cambodia inspired Hanoi to scrutinize the strategy more closely in order to assess its application to future needs. However, the strategy's past success weighed heavily in the assessment, and Vietnamese leaders in 1987 continued to place confidence in its viability.

PAVN generals, in 1987, were in the process of evaluating Vietnam's position in the world and reviewing the nature of its future strategic requirements. Vietnamese publications on the subject in the 1980s stressed continuity in strategic thinking and the need to treat the future as a logical extension of the past. The twin pillars with which the strategic planners sought to serve future national interests were, first, to exploit Vietnam's innate skill in strategic defense and, second, to capitalize on the party's ability to anchor the strategic process successfully in the people.

Four major themes could be discerned in Hanoi's strategic thinking in the mid-1980s. The first was the recognition that PAVN must be prepared to fight both limited, small-scale, orthodox wars and protracted, guerrilla wars. As a practical matter, renewed attention was given to preparing for warfare in mountainous terrain (Vietnam is 40 percent mountainous and 75 percent forested—see Geography, ch. 2).

The second theme was an increasing emphasis on military technology. This resulted from PAVN's experience with the United States military machine in the Second Indochina War and with the war in Cambodia, as well as from the influence of Soviet military advisers.

The third theme was a return to orthodox *dau tranh* strategy. This occurred partly as a result of the successes scored by Pol Pot's Cambodian guerrillas and partly as a result of the success of PAVN paramilitary forces against the invading Chinese. The counter-insurgency effort in Cambodia, for example, was regarded as simply a limited, small-scale, high-technology war. Another war against China, according to Vietnamese definitions, would require (as, indeed, the previous one had required) a mixture of orthodox limited-war strategy and elements of *dau tranh* strategy. The PAVN high command, in opposition to earlier practice, appeared increasingly to believe that high-technology warfare in the mountains was possible.

The fourth theme was the acknowledgment that the strategy in Cambodia and the strategy designed for use against China depended on continued support from the Soviet Union. In order to meet Vietnam's future external security needs, Hanoi's leadership probably



will be led to conclude that it must eventually develop a new or revised strategic concept that is not overly dependent on past strategies or simple alliance with the Soviet Union. At the end of 1987, however, the leaders in PAVN and the Political Bureau appeared to have undiminished faith in the efficacy of their past doctrines and in the connection with Moscow. As long as they remained in power, a markedly new Vietnamese strategic approach to national security seemed unlikely.

### **Security Concerns**

Victory did not bring Vietnam the security that Hanoi leaders had assumed would be theirs in the postwar world. Vietnam in the 1980s was beleaguered, in some ways more so than North Vietnam had been during the Second Indochina War. It feared invasion, which it had not feared then, and Vietnamese society in what was formerly North Vietnam was far more restive and dispirited than it had been even during the darkest days of the war. Newly acquired South Vietnam remained largely unassimilated. Hanoi's chief instrument for assuring internal security and tranquility, the VCP, had seriously declined in effectiveness, tarnished by a decade of failure. The party's wartime reputation for being virtually omnipotent was all but gone. In addition, Hanoi's victory in the spring of 1975 had radically altered geopolitics, not only for Vietnam and Indochina, but also for all of Asia. It had precipitated drastic changes in relations among several of the nations of the Pacific, and some of these changes had severe consequences for Vietnam.

In the 1980s, Hanoi regarded itself as a major force in Asia for the first time in history. Vietnam's population of about 60 million made it the thirteenth largest of the world's 126 nations, and the third largest of the communist nations (see *Population*, ch. 2). It was strategically located at a crossroads of Asia and had considerable natural wealth and economic potential. It also had a large, battle-hardened, and well-equipped army. Ironically, the strengthened Vietnamese geopolitical position that resulted from victory in war became something of a postwar weakness, for it thrust on an unprepared Hanoi leadership tasks in national security planning that it was ill-prepared to handle. For decades Hanoi's security planners had been totally preoccupied with their struggle within the Indochina peninsula and had ignored the world beyond. With victory they were required for the first time to look outward and examine their nation's strategic position; to estimate potential threats and determine possible enemies and allies; to think in terms of strategic manpower, fire power, and weapons systems; and to plan strategies accordingly. Despite their great experience in

warfare, they were relative novices in peace; their performance in the first postwar decade did not prove impressive.

Vietnam suffered from other remediable liabilities, in addition to inexperienced strategic planners. These included an army still oriented toward guerrilla infantry; an inability to project air and naval forces over long distances; the lack of logistics and transport systems required by a modern armed force (particularly, lack of air transport); a low level of technical competence in the officer corps; and a shortage of good, reliable equipment and weapons. Hanoi's strategic planners, and their Soviet advisers, clearly recognized that new weapons systems were required for the vastly changed security conditions facing Vietnam. Efforts were undertaken to develop the Vietnamese navy, and new Soviet-built ships arrived to be added to the fleet captured in the South. Vietnam was also rumored to be creating a submarine force. Hanoi's vaunted military strongpoint, its divisions of light infantry, however, required conversion to a more orthodox high-technology force in order to become militarily credible in the region. Hanoi's military journals indicated that ambitious research and development projects were underway, but a significant upgrading of military technology was unlikely. In the late 1980s, Vietnam was at least a decade and a half away from a nuclear weapons delivery system—unless the Soviet Union were to provide a crash development program, which was considered unlikely.

In the meantime, Vietnam remained a nation fully mobilized for war. This was a condition that eventually would require a change to a peacetime mode, accompanied by some demobilization of PAVN and the reallocation of most resources to the task of economic development, if the country were to keep pace with its Asian neighbors. The fact that PAVN continued to grow, in fact to double in size in the decade after 1975, was a government concession to entrenched PAVN interests as well as to internal and external security fears, many of them brought on by the fact that Vietnam had not renounced warfare as a foreign policy option. In any event, hard decisions lay ahead for the Hanoi leadership concerning the armed forces' share of the annual governmental budget, the ultimate size and deployment of PAVN, the kind of air and naval power to be developed, the levels of military spending, and the development of indigenous sources of military hardware.

Vietnam in 1987 faced only one truly credible external threat—China (see *The Chinese Millennium and Nine Centuries of Independence*, ch. 1). The complex Sino-Vietnamese relationship, dating back two thousand years, is deeply rooted in the Confucian concept of pupil-teacher. Thus, any issues under contention or

problems that exist between the two on the surface normally are transcended by this basic relationship. Much of the behavior demonstrated by the two since 1975—including Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and China's subsequent "lesson" to Vietnam—is, in fact, traceable to the workings of this deep-rooted historic association (see *Foreign Relations*, ch. 4). Victory in the Indochina War left Hanoi leaders determined to change the centuries-old relationship. The Vietnamese sought to end the notion of the rimland barbarian's obligation to pay deference to the Middle Kingdom. They felt the tutelary relationship should give way to one of greater equality. The Chinese, however, considered that nothing significant had changed and that the original condition of mutual obligation should continue. For the Chinese, the touchstone would always be the Sino-Soviet dispute and the need to reduce Soviet influence in Hanoi. Most important for China was the nature and future of the Soviet presence in Indochina. Beijing tried several approaches to induce Hanoi to maintain its distance from Moscow. However, none was successful. In the 1980s it pursued what might be called a campaign of protracted intimidation—military, diplomatic, and psychological pressure—on the Vietnamese, calculating that eventually Hanoi would seek some accommodation.

In the minds of Hanoi's strategic planners, Vietnam's two Indochina neighbors posed nearly as large an external security threat as did China. Strategically, Cambodia and Laos represented weak flanks where internal anticommunist forces could challenge the local regimes and threaten Vietnam itself. Geography increased this threat. Vietnam is an extraordinarily narrow country—at its "waist" near Dong Hoi it is only forty kilometers across—and could be cut in half militarily with relative ease either through an amphibious landing on its coast or through an invasion from Laos. It is also a long country, with some 8,000 kilometers of border and coastline to defend. For these reasons Hanoi was prepared to do whatever was necessary to achieve a secure, cooperative, non-threatening Laos and Cambodia.

External security threats to Vietnam from the Southeast Asia region were also possible. Just as the relationship with China was tied to Hanoi's Cambodian and Laotian policies, so the relationship with Cambodia and Laos was bound up with policies toward the six nations comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Vietnamese security goals in Southeast Asia in the 1980s appeared to be the elimination of any United States military presence; the diminution of American influence; a general balance of superpower activity in the region; and, possibly, the unified economic development of the region. PAVN dwarfed

all of its ASEAN neighbors' armed forces and, in fact, was larger than all six combined. Its size and continued growth provided Hanoi's neighbors with legitimate cause for worry. PAVN, given the advantage of terrain, was sufficiently powerful to battle the Chinese army to a stalemate for a prolonged period, although not indefinitely. The composition of PAVN—large numbers of infantry with only guerrilla war experience, limited air power, and virtually no offensive naval capability—meant that Vietnam could not, however, project force over a long distance and could not, for instance, offer a credible threat even to Indonesia. Probably it could not even defend its holdings in the Spratly Islands against a determined Chinese assault (see fig. 1).

In strict strategic terms, PAVN was not as threatening to most of Vietnam's neighbors as its size suggested. Thailand, however, was a clear exception. PAVN had the military capability to crush Thailand's small, lightly equipped armed force in frontal battle. It could invade and occupy Thailand quickly, although most certainly that action would trigger the same kind of resistance encountered in Cambodia. Furthermore, such an invasion would incur the wrath of China and the displeasure of the Soviet Union, and would probably precipitate military support from the ASEAN states and the United States. In the long run, PAVN will be a credible threat to its remaining neighbors only when it develops adequate air and naval strength. Vietnam's acquisition of such a capability, however, will depend more on Moscow's inclinations than Hanoi's.

## **The Armed Forces**

PAVN is a singular military establishment. (The full name is occasionally translated Vietnam People's Army, or VPA). Its singularity of purpose as well as form is a function of its Vietnamese cultural heritage, a centuries-old martial spirit, a history of messianic military leadership possessing extraordinary insight, and four decades of combat experience.

In the 1980s, PAVN was characterized by a sense of newly acquired destiny, a feeling of international prowess, and the real limitations imposed by economic stagnation, diplomatic isolation, and uncertainty regarding its closest ally, the Soviet Union. It was in the middle of a debate over the proper use of force (whether it should be applied nakedly as in Cambodia or in the more traditional manner prescribed by "revolutionary force" doctrine) and was determined to modernize its organization, including reforming the officer corps and renewing the never-ending internal battle against inefficiency and corruption. Finally, PAVN was faced with the prospect of an inevitable generational change of military

leadership. In 1987 PAVN numbered about 2.9 million personnel, including its Paramilitary Force, making it the third largest armed force in the world. Nevertheless, it was well integrated into Vietnamese society and enjoyed a good working relationship with both the government and the VCP. It was tightly controlled, chiefly by various mechanisms in the hands of the VCP apparatus within it.

At the same time, PAVN was limited by critical weaknesses: it was technologically underdeveloped because it lacked various kinds of modern equipment, weapons, and training; its officer and non-commissioned officer corps were overaged; and it was highly dependent on outside military sources because there were no indigenous arms factories of any importance in Vietnam.

The purpose to which PAVN has been dedicated over the years has varied greatly and has turned chiefly on the demands of the party. Its basic functions are similar to those of armed forces everywhere: to defend Vietnam's territorial integrity, to support its foreign policy and strategic goals where appropriate, to contribute to the maintenance of its internal security, and to assist in its economic development. These aims are set forth in Section IV (Articles 50 through 52) of the 1980 Constitution.

In the first several years after the end of the Second Indochina War, PAVN's performance was tested twice—in Cambodia and along Vietnam's northern border with China. Its ability to maintain internal security has been tested continuously, although to a lesser degree.

## **History**

PAVN's progenitor was a collection of guerrilla bands, many of them composed of ethnic minority highlanders, assembled in Indochina during World War II and armed and encouraged by the Allied Forces as opposition to the Japanese army, which had occupied much of Southeast Asia. A few of these guerrilla bands were organized by the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), as the VCP was known at the time (see *Development of the Vietnamese Communist Party*, ch. 4).

Near the end of the war, the ICP began to experiment with a new kind of military force, called Armed Propaganda units. The first of these units was created in the mountains of northern Vietnam near the China border. The armed propaganda team was the brainchild of Ho Chi Minh (known then as Nguyen Ai Quoc) and a thirty-two-year-old Hanoi history teacher named Vo Nguyen Giap. It was designed both to engage in combat and to do organizational and mobilization work in the villages. Armed propaganda teams shaped the character of the subsequently formed PAVN.

On September 2, 1945, when Ho Chi Minh officially proclaimed the independence of the nation and announced the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), a Ministry of National Defense was created and the ministerial portfolio was given to a noncommunist, a measure that reflected the apparently broadly nationalistic composition of the new government. Giap, at the time the second most powerful communist figure, became minister of the interior. A year later the National Defense Council (NDC) was created, and Giap was made chairman, giving him more direct control of the Viet Minh armed force (see Glossary), the precursor to PAVN. When the French returned to Indochina, the newly formed Viet Minh—consisting of approximately 1,000 men in 13 infantry companies—was driven into the hills behind Hanoi.

The Viet Minh's military force, which fought the French for eight years, was a united-front army, meaning it was communist-influenced but was not entirely communist. For much of the First Indochina War, it was essentially an irregular force, growing to about 60,000 at the end of the first year of the war and to about 380,000 in 1954. Only about a third of these were considered regulars; the remainder were "regional" or "local" forces. This system was the forerunner of the three-elements concept of the armed forces—regulars, regionals (or territorials), and locals—which has been retained in PAVN. The regular force was organized into about 30 infantry battalions of 600 men each and 8 heavy-weapons battalions. Many of the early units were organized along ethnic lines. A preponderance of the day-to-day battles in the First Indochina War were fought by PAVN regional forces and local militia units. Regulars were used sparingly and were committed only to battles of strategic importance, such as the 1950 campaign to push French forces back from the China border region, the attempted capture of Hanoi in 1951, and the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

In 1954, at the end of the First Indochina War, PAVN was still a united-front military force. It remained for the party to "regularize" it. Control mechanisms were introduced gradually and perfected, reorganization was undertaken, military elements were enlarged, support units were added, and formal regulations on military service were developed. A tight system of party controls was introduced, military schools were opened and military assistance was solicited from abroad, chiefly from China. A directive of the Twelfth Plenum of the Central Committee (Second National Party Congress), issued in March 1957, established universal military conscription. By 1965 PAVN numbered 400,000; by 1975, 650,000. Of the approximately 2.9 million in uniform in 1987, about



*Vo Nguyen Giap with Viet Minh troops, 1946*  
*Courtesy Indochina Archives*

1.1 million served in the PAVN Regular Force and 1.8 million served in the Paramilitary Force.

In 1959 the VCP (known at the time as the Vietnam Workers' Party—VWP, or Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam) decided to launch an armed struggle in the South in the name of unification of the fatherland. Part of the effort involved creation of a united-front organization, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (or Viet Cong, see Glossary) and a united-front armed force, initially called the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and later renamed the People's Liberation Armed Force (PLAF). The mission of the PLAF was to liberate the South in order to permit its unification with North Vietnam, and Hanoi began supplying this force with doctrinal know-how and key personnel. In keeping with a principle of people's war that called on combatants to be self-sustaining, North Vietnamese leaders also admonished the PLAF to be self-supporting and self-contained and not to rely on, or make requests of, Hanoi. Then and later, however, authorities always stood ready to meet any critical need of their southern brethren.

Until 1965 the war in the South was on the shoulders of the PLAF. Its rapid escalation in 1965, however, introduced PAVN troops to the South in ever-increasing numbers, and the burden of the war shifted to them. In 1972 in the so-called Easter offensive, about 90 percent of the combat was carried out by northern

regulars. The final campaign in April 1975 was fought almost entirely by PAVN troops. At the time, almost all PAVN infantry divisions were outside North Vietnam in Laos, in Cambodia, or, overwhelmingly, in South Vietnam. After the war, the remnant PLAF force was disbanded, and its members were either demobilized or transferred to PAVN units.

Throughout its developmental period, from the earliest proto-military organizations of the 1930s until the late 1970s, PAVN was heavily influenced by China and by Chinese military thought and doctrine. The original party-led armed force, the Viet Minh army, was created by the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and fielded from China. Later, it was nurtured and funded largely by the Chinese Communist Party. Military manuals were of Chinese origin, first Nationalist then Communist, and in the early years nearly all imported logistic assistance came either directly from China or—if from the Soviet Union—through China and with Chinese cooperation. During the Second Indochina War, Chinese antiaircraft troops and Chinese railroad and warehousing personnel served in Vietnam.

### *Postwar Development*

The chief changes in PAVN after April 1975 were enormous growth, augmented by increased war-making capability and fire power, and development away from a guerrilla-oriented infantry toward a more orthodox modern armed force. Hanoi's public statements indicated there would be a significant demobilization of PAVN immediately after the war and that many PAVN units would be converted into economic development teams. Within a few weeks, however, PAVN units were engaged in a border war in Cambodia with one-time ally the Khmer Rouge (see Glossary) and were preparing to defend Vietnam's northern border against China.

Following the end of the Second Indochina War, PAVN was in worse condition than was generally realized. Having been decimated by ten years of combat, it was in organizational disarray, with a logistics system that was nearly worn out. Both PAVN and the country were suffering from war weariness, and restructuring and rebuilding were hampered in part because the war's sudden ending had precluded planning for the postwar world. Vietnamese military journals acknowledged at the time that the new situation required the transformation of PAVN from an army of revolutionary soldiers fighting with guerrilla tactics into an orthodox armed force that could defend existing institutions and fixed installations from internal and external threats. It was a new and broader task, and Ho Chi Minh's observation made at the end of the First



*South Vietnamese soldier  
guarding Viet Minh captive,  
First Indochina War  
Courtesy New York Times,  
Paris Collection,  
National Archives*



Indochina War was frequently quoted: “Before we had only the night and the jungle. Now we have the sky and the water.”

Several problems had to be addressed. These included the dual-control system, i.e., the ill-defined division of authority between the military command structure and the party leadership within the armed forces, or between the military commander and the political commissar; the lack of esprit de corps among the rank and file, a general malaise termed “post-war mentality”; and the officer corps’ inadequate military knowledge and insufficient military technological skills for the kind of war that had emerged in the 1970s. There were also policy conflicts over the conduct of large-scale combined or joint military operations and the nature of future military training, a lack of standardization of equipment, matériel shortages, administrative breakdowns, general inefficiency and lack of performance by basic military units, and an anachronistic party structure within PAVN stemming from an outmoded organizational structure and inappropriate or out-of-touch political commissars.

By 1978 the effort to restore PAVN had developed into the Great Campaign. This was a five-year program with five objectives: to increase the individual soldier’s sense of responsibility, discipline, dedication, attitude toward solidarity, and mastery of weapons, equipment, and vehicles; to encourage more frugal expenditure of fuel, supplies, and matériel; to improve PAVN’s officer corps, particularly at the basic unit level; to improve military-civilian

relations and heighten international solidarity; and to improve the material-spiritual life of soldiers. Of these, the most important was the program to improve the PAVN officer corps, the heart of which was a four-part statute called the Army Officers' Service Law, drafted in 1978 and officially promulgated in 1981. The Service Law, as it came to be called, established systematic new criteria for the selection and training of officers; defined PAVN officers' rights and military obligations; and overhauled, upgraded, and formally instituted a new PAVN reserve officer system. It also set up new regulations concerning officer promotions, assignments, and ranking systems.

The reorganization was a deliberate effort to professionalize the PAVN officer corps, in part by codifying the military hierarchy within PAVN, which had never been officially approved. Previous emphasis on egalitarianism had led to virtual denial of even the concept of rank. There were no officers, only cadres; no enlisted personnel; only combatants. Uniforms were devoid of insignia, and references to rank or title were avoided in conversation. With professionalization, distinctions emerged between officers and enlisted troops. Accompanying the basic law were directives from the Council of Ministers that dealt with PAVN ranks, uniforms, and insignia. A thirteen-rank officer system with appropriate titles was instituted. There were new designations for naval flag rank, which had previously carried generals' titles (although apparently naval officers below flag rank continued to bear army ranks). Under the new regulations, PAVN officers were distinguished as either line commanders, staff officers, political officers, administrative officers, or military-police officers. The new regulations additionally stipulated the use of unit insignia—bright red for infantry, sky blue for air force and air defense force, dark blue for navy, green for border defense, and light gray for specialist technicians—in all twenty-five separate services, each of which had its own emblem (see fig. 16).

Technological improvements for PAVN were instituted chiefly under the Great Campaign. Intensive technical training programs were begun. Heavy emphasis was placed on the training of surface-to-air missile (SAM) battery commanders, advanced air defense technicians, fighter pilots, radar technicians, communications-systems operators, and naval officers. The program was fully supported by the Soviet Union, which provided military aid and technical advisers and trainers. A costly developmental effort, it had not been long under way before events began to conspire against it.

Shortly after the Great Campaign was launched in 1978, Vietnam's disputes with Cambodia and China sharply intensified. On

March 5, 1979, the government issued a General Mobilization Order that established three “great tasks” for Vietnam: to enlarge the national defense structure, meaning to increase substantially the size of PAVN; to increase agricultural and industrial production in support of the war; and to develop better administrative systems in the party, PAVN, and the economic sector. The emphasis was on young Vietnamese, who were called to perform separate “great tasks,” i.e., “annihilate the enemy, develop the paramilitary system, do productive labor, insure internal security, and perform necessary ideological tasks.” The order required all able-bodied persons to work ten hours a day—eight hours in productive labor and two hours in military training. It also required universal participation in civil-defense exercises.

### *Conflict with Cambodia*

Serious trouble between Hanoi and the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot began at the end of the Second Indochina War when both PAVN troops and the Khmer Rouge engaged in “island grabbing” and seizures of each other’s territory, chiefly small areas in dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia for decades. What goaded Hanoi to take decisive action was Pol Pot’s determination to indoctrinate all Khmer with hatred for Vietnam, thus making Hanoi’s goal of eventual Indochinese federation even more difficult to accomplish. Vietnam’s Political Bureau had several options in “solving the Pol Pot problem,” as it was officially termed. Vietnam’s wartime relationship with the Khmer Rouge had been one of domination, in which control had been maintained through the intercession of native Khmers, numbering approximately five thousand, who had lived and trained in North Vietnam. The Political Bureau reasoned that by controlling the Khmer Rouge “five thousand” faction it could control the Khmer (Kampuchean) Communist Party, which in turn would control the Cambodian state and society. This strategy broke down when most of the Khmer communist cadres trained in Vietnam were executed by Pol Pot.


In another effort, the Political Bureau dispatched Le Duan to Phnom Penh soon after the end of the war for a stern meeting with Pol Pot, but his efforts to persuade or intimidate failed. A series of punitive military strikes followed with the objective of triggering the overthrow of Pol Pot. Some of these assaults, such as the one in the Parrot’s Beak (see Glossary) region in 1977, involved as many as 90,000 PAVN troops, but they came to nothing. There also were covert Vietnamese attempts to eliminate Pol Pot by bribing his bodyguards to assassinate him.

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

VIETNAM RANK	1	THIEU-UY	TRUNG-UY	THUONG-UY	DAI-UY	THIEU-TA	TRUNG-TA	THUONG-TA	DAI-TA	THIEU-TUONG	TRUNG-TUONG	THUONG-TUONG	DAI-TUONG
VIETNAM RANK	2									CHUAN DO DOC	PHO DO DOC	DO DOC	
ARMY, AIR FORCE AND NAVY													
ENGLISH TITLES	1	2D LIEUTENANT	1ST LIEUTENANT	CAPTAIN	SENIOR CAPTAIN	MAJOR	LIEUTENANT COLONEL	COLONEL	SENIOR COLONEL	MAJOR GENERAL	LIEUTENANT GENERAL	COLONEL GENERAL	SENIOR GENERAL
ENGLISH TITLES	2	ENSIGN	LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE	LIEUTENANT	SENIOR LIEUTENANT	LIEUTENANT COMMANDER	COMMANDER	CAPTAIN	UPPER CAPTAIN	REAR ADMIRAL	VICE ADMIRAL	ADMIRAL	SENIOR ADMIRAL

ENLISTED PERSONNEL

VIETNAM RANK	BINH NHI	BINH NHAT	HA-SI	TRUNG-SI	THUONG-SI
ARMY, AIR FORCE AND NAVY					
ENGLISH TITLES	BASIC PRIVATE	PRIVATE	PRIVATE 1ST CLASS	SERGEANT	SERGEANT 1ST CLASS
ENGLISH TITLES	SEAMAN RECRUIT	APPRENTICE SEAMAN	SEAMAN	STAFF SERGEANT	MASTER SERGEANT
				PETTY OFFICER 2D CLASS	CHIEF PETTY OFFICER


**CAP INSIGNIA**  
 ALL SERVICES WEAR THE SAME EMBLEM: A GOLD STAR SURROUNDED BY TWO SHEAVES OF RICE AND ONE HALF OF A GOLD WHEEL ON A RED BACKGROUND.

**VIETNAM OFFICER RANKS:** UP TO THUONG-TA HAVE SILVER STARS, STRIPES AND BUTTONS. THIEU-TUONG HAS SILVER STARS AND STRIPES. THIEU-TUONG HAS SILVER STRIPES AND GOLD BUTTON. ALL BACKGROUNDS ARE GOLD WITH PIPING IN RED FOR ARMY, BLUE FOR AIR FORCE, AND DARK BLUE FOR NAVY.

**VIETNAM ENLISTED RANKS:** ALL HAVE SILVER BUTTONS. ARMY HAS GREEN BACKGROUND WITH RED STRIPES AND PIPING. AIR FORCE HAS BLUE BACKGROUND WITH GOLD STRIPES. NAVY HAS DARK BLUE SHOULDER BOARDS WITH GOLD STRIPES.

**WITH THE EXCEPTION OF NAVAL FLAG RANK OFFICERS, VIETNAM'S OFFICER AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL USUALLY HAVE ARMY RANKS REGARDLESS OF THEIR SERVICE AFFILIATION. THUS AN ARMY PRIVATE 1ST CLASS, AN AIR FORCE AIRMAN 1ST CLASS, AND A NAVY SEAMAN COMMONLY SHARE THE ARMY DESIGNATION HA-SI; SIMILARLY AN ARMY COLONEL AND A NAVY CAPTAIN BEAR THE SINGLE ARMY RANK THUONG-TA.**

Figure 16. Rank Insignia of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), 1987

Finally, in early 1978, Hanoi returned to tested methods of revolutionary guerrilla warfare. Special PAVN teams recruited volunteers for a future Khmer liberation army from Khmer refugee camps in southern Vietnam. About 300 of the most promising were taken to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), installed in the former Cambodian embassy building, and organized into armed propaganda teams, with Khmer Rouge defector Heng Samrin in charge of training. The plan, according to program defectors, was to send armed propaganda teams, like the Kampuchea Liberation Front, into Cambodian provinces along the Vietnamese border to infiltrate Khmer villages and begin organization and mobilization work. A Radio Liberation broadcast unit would be established, a liberated area would be proclaimed, and eventually a Provisional Revolutionary Government of Kampuchea would be formed that would then dispatch emissaries abroad in search of support. In late 1978, however, this revolutionary guerrilla war strategy was suddenly abandoned in favor of a full-scale, blitzkrieg-style attack on Cambodia. Later it became evident that the idea for the attack had come from young PAVN officers, many of whom had been trained in Moscow, who had assured the Political Bureau that the matter could be resolved in a maximum of six months. The Political Bureau's decision to attempt a military solution in Cambodia was taken against the advice of General Giap and probably most of the other older PAVN generals.

PAVN struck across the Cambodian border from the Parrot's Beak area of Vietnam on Christmas Day 1978. The drive was characterized by a highly visible Soviet-style offensive with tank-led infantry that plunged suddenly across the border, drove to the Thai border, and then fanned out to occupy Cambodia within days. Heng Samrin and his 300 Khmer cadres proceeded to form a new government, called the People's Republic of Kampuchea, in Phnom Penh, and began building an army to take over from the occupying PAVN by 1990. The first indication to the PAVN high command in Hanoi that it was in fact trapped in a protracted conflict came in the summer of 1979, when a major pacification drive, launched by PAVN forces using some 170,000 troops, proved to be inconclusive. It was only in the wake of that drive that PAVN settled down to the slow task of pacifying Cambodia.

Officially, PAVN troops in Cambodia were volunteers, performing what were called their "internationalist duties." The number involved decreased over the years, from 220,000 in January 1979 to 140,000 in January 1987. As the war progressed, Hanoi officials increasingly portrayed it as a struggle against China and labeled the Khmer insurgent forces as Chinese surrogates. By late 1982,

they had begun to portray the war as a thing of the past, claiming that Vietnamese dominance had become irreversible, with only mopping up of scattered pockets of opposition yet to accomplish. The Cambodian resistance, however, continued, never able to challenge PAVN seriously, certainly not able to drive it from the country, but still gaining in strength. By 1987 the resistance was stronger than it had been at any time since 1979. To reduce strain on its system and to quiet outside criticism, PAVN lowered the profile of the war. There were fewer military sweeps into guerrilla lairs and greater use of artillery, more static guard duty, and less road patrolling. Military forces concentrated on keeping open the lines of communication, guarding the towns, and building up Phnom Penh's fledgling army—the Khmer People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (KPRAF). At the same time, increments of PAVN forces were withdrawn from Cambodia each year in what the Chinese press labeled the “annual semi-withdrawal performance.” By 1986 Hanoi was stating that all PAVN forces would be withdrawn from Cambodia by 1990, a decision officials insisted was “absolute and without conditions.” In retrospect, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia appears to have been a serious mistake. Apparently it was a decision hastily taken in the belief that a quick, successful takeover would force the Chinese to accept the new situation as a *fait accompli*. The undertaking was also based on the estimate that Pol Pot had neither the political base nor the military power to resist a traumatic assault, which would shatter his capability to govern and cause the Khmer people to rally overwhelmingly to the new government. Assumptions proved wrong, and the strategy failed. The invasion did not solve the Pol Pot problem, but rather bogged Vietnam down in a costly war that tarnished its image abroad and undermined relations with China that might otherwise have been salvaged. The war drained the economy and continued to be one of Vietnam's unsolved national security problems in late 1987.

### *Conflict with China*

China has posed a far more serious challenge to Vietnam's national security since the Second Indochina War, especially because of its twenty-nine-day incursion into Vietnam in February 1979, which, according to the Vietnamese, has continued as a “multifaceted war of sabotage.” China's 1979 invasion was a response to what China considered to be a collection of provocative actions and policies on Hanoi's part. These included Vietnamese intimacy with the Soviet Union, mistreatment of ethnic Chinese (Hoa—see Glossary) living in Vietnam, hegemonistic



*Vietnamese soldiers returning from duty on the Chinese border  
Courtesy Bill Herod*

“imperial dreams” in Southeast Asia, and spurning of Beijing’s attempt to repatriate Chinese residents of Vietnam to China. The Chinese attack came at dawn on the morning of February 17, and employed infantry, armor, and artillery. Air power was not employed then or at any time during the war. Within a day, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) had advanced some eight kilometers into Vietnam along a broad front. It then slowed and nearly stalled because of heavy Vietnamese resistance and difficulties within the Chinese supply system. On February 21, the advance resumed against Cao Bang in the far north and against the all-important regional hub of Lang Son. Chinese troops entered Cao Bang on February 27, but the city was not secured completely until March 2. Lang Son fell two days later. On March 5, the Chinese, saying Vietnam had been sufficiently chastised, announced that the campaign was over. The PLA withdrawal was completed on March 16.

Hanoi’s post-incursion depiction of the border war was that Beijing had sustained a military setback if not an outright defeat. Nevertheless, the attack confirmed Hanoi’s perception of China as a threat. The PAVN high command henceforth had to assume, for planning purposes, that the Chinese might come again and might not halt in the foothills but might drive on to Hanoi. By 1987 China had stationed nine armies (approximately 400,000

troops) in the Sino-Vietnamese border region, including one along the coast. It had also increased its landing craft fleet and was periodically staging amphibious landing exercises off Hainan Island, across from Vietnam, thereby demonstrating that a future attack might come from the sea.

In the early 1980s, China began pursuing what some observers have described as a semi-secret campaign against Vietnam that was more than a series of border incidents and less than a limited small-scale war. The Vietnamese called it a “multifaceted war of sabotage.” Hanoi officials have described the assaults as comprising steady harassment by artillery fire, intrusions on land by infantry patrols, naval intrusions, and mine planting both at sea and in the riverways. Chinese clandestine activity (the “sabotage” aspect) for the most part was directed against the ethnic minorities of the border region (see *Ethnic Groups and Languages*, ch. 2). According to the Hanoi press, teams of Chinese agents systematically sabotaged mountain agricultural production centers as well as lowland port, transportation, and communication facilities. Psychological warfare operations were an integral part of the campaign, as was what the Vietnamese called “economic warfare”—encouragement of Vietnamese villagers along the border to engage in smuggling, currency speculation, and hoarding of goods in short supply.

The Vietnamese responded to the Chinese campaign by turning the districts along the China border into “iron fortresses” manned by well-equipped and well-trained paramilitary troops. In all, an estimated 600,000 troops were assigned to counter Chinese operations and to stand ready for another Chinese invasion. The precise dimensions of the frontier operations were difficult to determine, but its monetary cost to Vietnam was considerable.

### **The Legal-Constitutional Basis of the Military**

The 1980 Constitution establishes the legal basis for PAVN in Section IV (Articles 50 through 52), titled Defense of the Socialist Homeland. Supervision of the armed forces is vested in the Council of State (see *The System of Government*, ch. 4). The Council of State, newly formed under the 1980 Constitution, assumes the equivalent authority of the previous National Assembly Standing Committee in that it can declare war and mobilize the country if the assembly is not in session. The Council chairman (Truong Chinh in 1987), according to the Constitution, concurrently chairs the National Defense Council (NDC)—retained from the 1959 constitution—and serves as commander in chief of PAVN. The latter function, however, is ceremonial. Under the Constitution, the role of the NDC is “to mobilize all forces and potentials of the



country to defend the homeland.” It thus is made explicitly responsible for what is the National Assembly’s implicit duty, mobilization in the broadest sense. By comparison with the previous constitution, the 1980 document gives the National Assembly (see Glossary) legal authority with respect to PAVN that is perhaps broader but is less clearly defined. For example, “The National Assembly has the duty and power . . . to decide on matters of war and peace,” but its chairmanship (under Nguyen Huu Tho in 1987) is a merely nominal position.

The highest operational authority over PAVN is exercised by the Council of Ministers, equivalent to a cabinet, which is responsible for “organizing national defense activities and building the people’s armed forces.” In 1987 the chairman of the Council of Ministers was Premier Pham Van Dong.

Basic national defense policy is fixed by the NDC, then transmitted first to the Ministry of National Defense and second to the PAVN High Command. As is common throughout the Vietnam ruling apparatus, there is a great deal of overlap because of “two hat” (or concurrent) assignments. The chairman of the NDC is the president of the State Council; the vice chairman is the prime minister. NDC members include the VCP secretary general, the chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee, the PAVN chief of staff, the minister of national defense, the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of interior, and the chairman of the State Planning Commission. In time of war, the NDC acts as a supreme headquarters for mobilizational purposes and is vested with the authority to command all manpower and other resources in the country (see fig. 17).

### **The Military’s Place in Society**

PAVN exerts a great deal of complicated direct and indirect influence both on party and government policy-making and on everyday non-military life. It is so well integrated into the social system that there is no precise point at which it can be said that the military ends and the civilian world begins.

By official definition, Vietnam is an egalitarian, proletarian-based classless society. This means that PAVN is not an army of the people—although it must serve all of the people—but that it is an army of the proletariat. Society is supposed to support PAVN as well as police it to assure that the armed forces meet the requirements of the new social order. Conversely, PAVN is charged with assuming, in alliance with the party, the leadership of the proletariat and of society in general. PAVN is expected to be all things to the people and special things to the party. It must both lead the people

and serve them. It must be loyal both to the political line and to the military line, even when these conflict. It must act as the vanguard of the party yet be scrupulously subservient to it.

Despite the praetorian qualities of Vietnamese society—the result of centuries of martial cultural influence—PAVN, like its predecessors, is not militaristic in the sense the term is understood in the West. Nor is there in Vietnam what might be called a military-industrial complex, that is, a coalition of military and political vested interests that are distinctly separate from the rest of the social system. Rather, the relationship of the military and the rest of the society is symbiotic, marked by a strong sense of material and psychological dependence. Society's responsibility to PAVN, which is rooted in the Constitution, requires that all of the people support the armed forces in all ways. PAVN's duties to society, in turn, incorporate political and economic responsibilities as well as defense of the country. Complicating this relationship is the party, which is neither civilian nor military but has some of the characteristics of both.

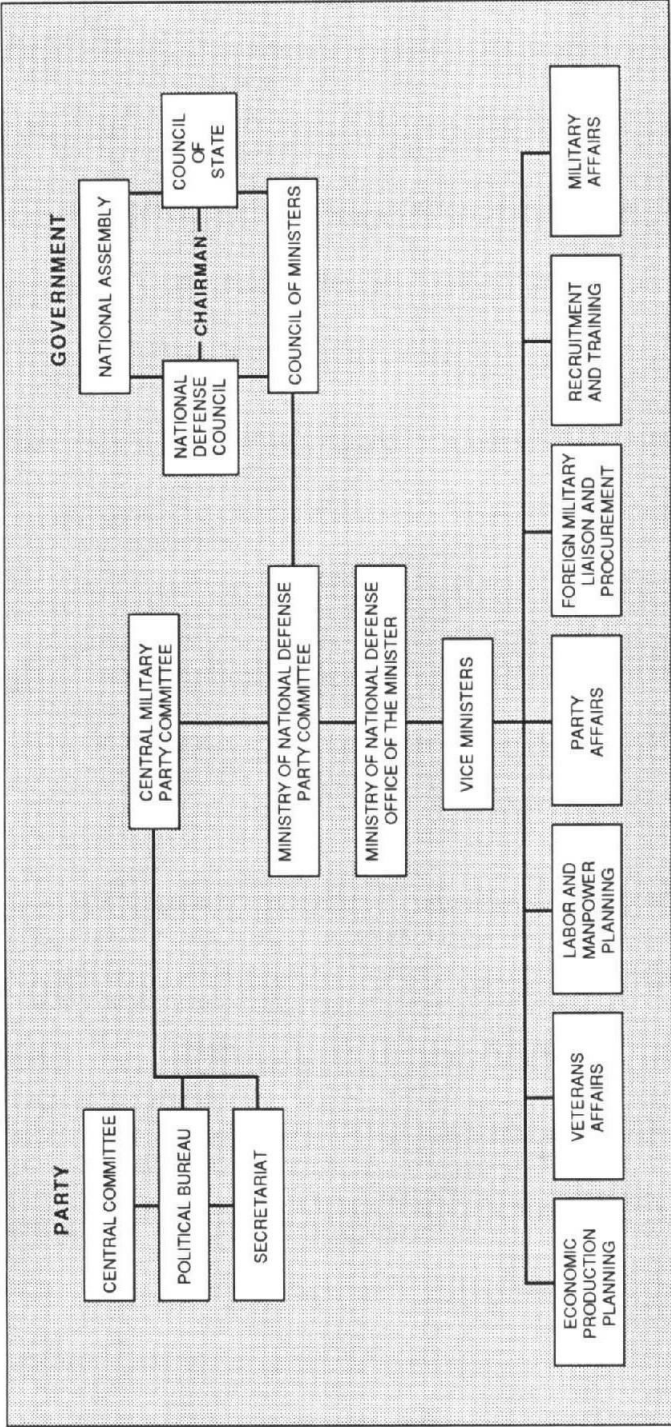
The chief obligation of the average citizen to PAVN is military service, which is universal and compulsory. This duty long predates the advent of communism to Vietnam. Conscription in traditional Vietnam was carried out in a manner similar to the requisitioning of *corvée* labor. Village councils were required to supply conscripts according to population ratio (one *linh* or soldier for every three to seven villagers, depending on the section of the country). The 1980 Constitution stipulates that "citizens are obliged to do military service" and "take part in the building of the national defense force." Article 52 mandates compulsory military service as part of the state's efforts to "stimulate the people's patriotism and revolutionary heroism." In December 1981, the National Assembly promulgated a new Military Obligation Law stating that "military obligation is mandated by law and is a glorious task for a citizen. . . . All male citizens from all rural areas, city districts, organs, state enterprises, and vocational schools from elementary to college level, regardless of the positions they hold, if they meet the induction criteria of the annual state draft plan, must serve in the armed forces for a limited time in accordance with the draft law." Under the law there are no exemptions to military service, although there can be deferments. This practice has led to charges that extensive corruption allows the sons of influential party and state officials one deferment after another.

The draft is administered by PAVN itself and is conducted chiefly by a corps of retired officers stationed in district offices throughout the country. The process begins with registration, which is

voluntary for all males at age sixteen and compulsory at seventeen. A woman may register if she is a member of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League. The draft age is from eighteen to twenty-seven. The enlistment period is three years for ordinary enlistees, four years for technical specialists and naval personnel, and two years for certain ethnic minorities. Youths who do not enlist and await the draft receive a military service classification, of which there are six. Draft calls are issued twice a year.

Since the beginning of the war in Cambodia, the draft call has been accompanied by enlistment campaigns to persuade youths to volunteer rather than wait for conscription. Recruitment drives have been conducted by PAVN veterans of the Cambodian war who have met with prospective soldiers in school yards, where they have presented lectures or shown films. A quota was set for each province, by village and urban ward, but often was not met. To make military service more equitable and attractive, a system of options was established, which included the "three selects program" and the "six opens program." The three who could "select," or have a voice in the draft process, were the family, the local mass organization (Vietnam Fatherland Front), and the production unit, such as a commune or factory. The "six opens program" involved the unrestricted posting of six elements of military conscription information in which there was a high level of public interest. This information included highlights of draft procedures, lists of draftees and deferments, and names of party officials, their children and their draft status. The purpose was to allow everyone to know who was and was not being drafted and why. A system of perquisites also was established as an inducement for families whose sons joined PAVN. The families were offered assistance in resolving their legal or class-status problems, in getting work papers or added food rations, and in obtaining permission to return from new economic zones (see Glossary).

The General Mobilization Order of March 5, 1979, in the wake of the Chinese invasion, suspended the voluntary enlistment periods. In 1987 the period of PAVN service was indefinite. The mobilization order also eased some restrictions on drafting southerners, such as the requirement that each draftee have a "clear history," meaning a proletarian background with no strong ties to the previous government or to its army, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN—see Glossary). After 1979 certain ARVN enlisted men and noncommissioned officers, chiefly technicians and military specialists (but not ex-ARVN officers) were drafted. Increasingly, draftees sent to Cambodia were from the South. The mobilization order also cracked down on draft resistance, which



Source: Based on information from Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, London, 1986, 88.

Figure 17. Military Organization, 1987

appeared to be widespread and even socially acceptable, especially in the South. A common method of draft avoidance was use of counterfeit military discharge papers, the fabrication of which was an extensive and lucrative enterprise; in 1981 two of five persons convicted of producing counterfeit discharges were sentenced to death in Haiphong. A common form of draft evasion was termed irregular compliance, i.e., the failure of a young man to register in the hope that the cumbersome bureaucracy would fail to catch up with him. In 1985 it was estimated that 20 percent of male youths in the South, and perhaps as many as 5 percent in the North, had not registered. Communes or factories, which did not want to lose the services of draftable individuals, may have tried to protect them from the local draft board. Because a quota system was employed, a common avoidance tactic was to supply a substitute known to be in bad health, who would then fail his physical examination. The People's Security Service (PSS) continually rounded up draft dodgers and deserters. Special teams called bandit hunters raided coffee shops, noodle stands, and other likely hangouts. Draft evaders faced a mandatory five-year jail sentence; deserters were returned to their military units for punishment. Measures were also taken against the families of inductees who failed to report. For instance, a draftee's family could be jailed, and the family's home or other property could be impounded until he reported for duty.

PAVN's chief function is to defend the homeland. Its second, equally important, function is to ensure the perpetuation of the existing sociopolitical system. It also has economic responsibilities and acts as a role model for the general population. PAVN's behavior is expected to instill the basic tenets of a Leninist system among the populace. It is expected to engage in class struggle and to eliminate antiproletarian sentiment in its ranks and in society in general. Individual soldiers are expected to set an example of proper socialist behavior by being dedicated, hard-working, incorruptible, and highly skilled in the performance of their duty. Above all, PAVN is expected to be a model of loyalty to the party and to Vietnam.

PAVN also is expected to bear a material responsibility in the economic sector. It is commonplace in Marxist-Leninist systems for the armed forces to contribute in some way to the economy. In Vietnam during the First Indochina War, PAVN units, mostly guerrilla bands, were forced to fend for themselves by living off the countryside and on the charity of friendly villagers. During the Second Indochina War, PAVN had a weak quartermaster system in the South and adopted what was called the "three-nine system," under which a PAVN unit was supplied with food for nine months

of the year but supported itself for the remaining three, usually by gardening or bartering (lumber traded for food, for example). Implicit in this system was the notion that it was proper for a soldier to engage in nonmilitary economic production activities, an idea that was increasingly challenged with the growth of professionalism in PAVN's ranks. After the Second Indochina War, PAVN was instructed to assume a greater economic role. The Fourth National Party Congress (December 1976) called on the military to "dedicate itself to the single strategic mission of carrying out the socialist revolution and building socialism." PAVN not only accepted this challenge but proceeded to stake out a central claim in the economic life of the country. PAVN's soldiers, said General Giap, would fight the "bloodless war" of economic development as the "shock troops" of the economic sector. Military units began operating state farms, mining coal, building roads and bridges, repairing vehicles, engaging in commercial fishing, and participating in countless other economic ventures. Although the invasion of Cambodia in 1978 followed by China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979 necessitated heavy reinforcement of the China border region and the allocation of resources for combat, an enlargement of PAVN in 1983 made it possible for the troops to resume most of their economic activities.

It was clear from the discussion of economic duties in Vietnam's military journals that not all PAVN generals were enthusiastic about the idea. The chief criticism was that it detracted from what was seen as the central PAVN mission—defense of Vietnam—which was regarded as a full-time task. Some military critics complained that economic duty "dissipate[d] the thoughts" of the soldiers, undermined military discipline, and was a cause of corruption. Troops themselves also complained of the arduous work involved, such as digging miles of irrigation ditches, the most hated assignment of all.

The armed forces, nevertheless, engaged in the production of weapons and military hardware, undertakings identified in the press as "national defense enterprises" and defined by PAVN as "production establishments of the armed forces." These included vehicle assembly plants, ordnance plants, and explosives factories. As in other societies with large standing armies, the question in Vietnam was whether it made sense economically for a military unit to engage in production: whether, for instance, it could grow rice more productively or build a bridge more efficiently than a civilian counterpart. Vietnamese officials appear to have decided in favor of military participation, for they incorporated PAVN production potential into long-range economic planning (see *Economic Roles of the Party and the Government*, ch. 3). Contingency plans existed

that called for PAVN units to sign production contracts with central-level ministries or provincial-level agencies, just as agricultural collectives or construction enterprises were required to do. Tapping the skilled manpower pool represented by PAVN may very well be the key to significant long-range economic development in Vietnam.

### **Party Control in the Military**

It is a fundamental tenet of any Marxist-Leninist system that the communist party must dominate the system's military. Lenin, it is said, coined the slogan, "the party controls the gun," reflecting a deep and abiding fear that political power can be lost to the armed forces.

The party's relationship with PAVN in Vietnam is one of neither coercion nor repression. Instead, the VCP and the armed forces are integrated and mutually dependent. Control is exercised by means of parallel military and party hierarchies that are both part of the overall political system. These parallel hierarchies may best be depicted by two pyramids: the VCP organization within PAVN, represented by the smaller pyramid, enclosed within the organization of the armed forces, represented by the larger pyramid. These two hierarchical pyramids may also be divided horizontally into levels of command. At each level, from the Ministry of National Defense to the infantry company, there is a military command structure and a corresponding party apparatus consisting of a political officer and party committee. VCP control of the military thus is not from the outside, but from within.

PAVN and the VCP worked together harmoniously over the years, more so perhaps than their counterpart institutions in China or the Soviet Union. Party-military relations in the early days of the First Indochina War were clear and unequivocal. Indochinese patriots faced a highly visible, commonly hated enemy, and the single goal that united all—to expel the French—was something each could understand and approve. Party representatives led the cause because they seemed to possess an inherent superiority. Young Viet Minh recruits, mostly from the villages, willingly deferred to the well-traveled, more experienced, better educated party cadres, who understood the complicated relationship between war and politics and always seemed to know what to do. Eventually, however, these perceptions changed, and by the 1980s the unquestioned acceptance of VCP superiority by the PAVN rank and file had dissipated. In its place there emerged a growing ambivalence fueled by resentment, not only of the party's postwar failures, but also of the privileged status enjoyed by party cadres and the party's

exclusive authority over both the military leadership in place and the manpower pool from which future officers were drawn. To some degree the PAVN high command shared this ambivalence, but senior PAVN leaders were in a difficult position. Although permitted to exercise great influence within the party, preservation of their privileged status at times required them to put party interests over those of the armed forces. In the postwar years, relations with the party increasingly placed a severe strain on the high command. Factionalism, however, a condition that existed both within the ranks of PAVN's military leadership and within PAVN's party apparatus, apparently did not create a problem between the two.

### *Divisive Issues*

During the postwar years, a number of nettlesome issues arose to trouble the generally symbiotic relationship between the armed forces and the party. A point of major contention was the dual command system, in which responsibility for a military unit was shared between its commander and political officer. During the First Indochina War, the military had been directed entirely by the party. What had counted chiefly in a leader was not military knowledge but political acumen, organizational skills, and the ability to persuade and motivate. However, as the war had increased in intensity, a need had developed for experienced combat officers. When the demand soon exhausted manpower pools, the party had been obliged to turn to large numbers of officers with military rather than party credentials to fill PAVN officer ranks. Fearing it would lose control, the party in 1952 introduced in PAVN the position of political commissar or political officer (borrowed from the Soviet Union and China), thereby creating the so-called two-commander system. It was dogma at the time, however, that even with two commanders neither was a purely military officer. A large part of officer training consisted of political orientation to military activity. Nevertheless, the division of power between the two officers was not clearly defined. In theory, they shared authority in tactical matters, but in reality they competed for power over the years. The system generated party-military friction, bitter jurisdictional disputes, sharp personality clashes, and confusion in authority. Despite its many flaws it endured for nearly three decades, surviving the Second Indochina War. As that conflict intensified in the early 1960s, however, the balance of power between the two figures began to favor the military officer.

Pressure to revise the role of the political officer and to end the dual command structure developed only after the Second Indochina War. Selected PAVN units were experimentally restructured in



1977 in such a way that the functions of military commander and political officer were combined in a single officer. Gradually, this system was extended throughout PAVN, but as a concession to the party, PAVN agreed that the authority formerly wielded by the political officer in company-, battalion-, and regimental-level units should be vested in the party committee at each level. The chief difficulty encountered in this plan was that a dual command became a multiple command. Party committees sending orders directly to specific military, logistic, or technical officers in a unit could bypass the military commander, with the result that PAVN units were run by committee. When this system was taken into Cambodia, it proved totally unworkable. In 1980 the arrangement was supplanted by a "one-man-command system." Authority was vested in the unit commander, who was responsible to higher authorities, including the party committee at his level, but who exercised actual control of his unit. A March 1982 party resolution endorsed this change but added a new arrangement that supported retaining the position of political officer as an institution but spelled out its subordinate status to the military commander. Still in the developmental stage in 1987, this new arrangement clearly established the authority of the military commander over the political officer, but left his authority with respect to the party committee somewhat ambiguous. The military commander was permitted greater latitude in initiating decisions, but remained ultimately accountable to the party for whatever actions he took.

A second major divisive issue between the party and PAVN was commonly termed the "red versus expert" argument. This doctrine, imported from China and reflective of Mao Zedong's thinking about the conduct of war, began with the assumption that warfare was a test of all adversarial strengths—ideological, economic, psychological, and spiritual, as well as military. It then asked successively which ranked higher in such a test—the material or the immaterial, men or weapons, and whether it was more important for the individual soldier to be ideologically motivated ("red") or technologically skilled in combat ("expert"). As expressed, the choice raised a false dichotomy, but it was an argument that raged within PAVN for decades. It was not simply a philosophical question, but a question that manifested itself in party-PAVN personnel relations, in strategic and tactical military planning, in officer selection, assignment, and promotion, and in training programs designed to produce the ideal soldier. The debate surfaced in Vietnam after the First Indochina War when a PAVN modernization program was launched. Part of that effort involved creating a series of specialized military schools and academies. Planning the course

work for these new institutions triggered a spirited dispute over the relative value and importance of military expertise and revolutionary consciousness. In 1987 an easy resolution of this dichotomy was still beyond reach. Even in a politicized military organization such as PAVN, nonprofessional influences, whether political, ideological, or social, were limited by the demands of the work itself. New technology, requiring the mastery of complicated weapons and military processes, increasingly demanded the soldier's attention and time.

### *The Model Soldier*

At a fundamental level, the "red-expert" debate concerned Vietnam's military ethos, the basic qualities and virtues of the model soldier. The prototypical, or composite, PAVN soldier in the 1970s and 1980s was twenty-three years old, had been born and raised in a village, was a member of the *ban co* class (poor for many generations), was unmarried, and had less than five years' formal education. His rural, agrarian background was the dominant influence in his thinking. He was one of five children and had lived his pre-army life in an extended family that included several generations of his immediate family as well as collateral relatives. He tended to resent outsiders as well as city people. His limited schooling made it difficult for him to cope with certain aspects of army life, for example, technical duties. He was raised as a nominal Buddhist but had always been subject to many direct and indirect Confucianist and Taoist influences. He was uninformed about the outside world, even other parts of Vietnam. He firmly believed in the importance and collective strength of the *ho* or extended family, and seldom questioned its demands on him, an attitude that served him well in his military career.

At the age of nine, the model future soldier joined the Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneers and spent much time involved in its activities. At sixteen, if he impressed his elders as being worthy, or if his family had influence, he became one of four youths (on an average) in his village to join the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League, participation in which led more or less automatically to admittance to the party as an adult. At twenty or twenty-one he was drafted, received two months' basic training, and was assigned to a unit. He did not particularly want to enter the army, nor did his parents wish it. However, he was obedient and accepted discipline easily. He had faith that PAVN and the state would treat him in a generally fair manner, which chiefly meant to him that they would assist him or his family if he was disabled or killed in battle. He was nonmaterialistic, got along easily on the bare

necessities of life, and regarded simplicity as a great virtue—a fortunate coincidence as he received little material reward; his pay per month averaged the price of a dozen bottles of beer. Despite extensive indoctrination by the party, the soldier was not politically conscious. Much of what he knew about politics consisted of slogans he had been obliged to memorize, the meanings of which he only dimly comprehended. Beyond his brief basic training he received little military training, but, if he was illiterate, he was taught to read. He was a survival-oriented, tough, disciplined combat fighter, who persevered with stubborn determination, often against hopeless odds. He could be stubbornly hostile, even rebellious on occasion, without regard to consequences. He knew little about strategy or tactics, but believed that warfare consisted largely of careful planning, meticulous preparation, and then sustained, intensive mass attack.

The party's contribution to this ethos of the model Vietnamese soldier was ideological. To his innate virtues of courage, tenacity, boldness, and cleverness, the party sought to add a commitment to revolutionary ideals. The party thus stimulated an ongoing debate, encompassing sociological, philosophical, psychological, and technological arguments over the fundamental relationship of ideology to technology in modern warfare, an understanding of which was the key to understanding the mind of the Vietnamese soldier. Over the years, the party debate pitted the revolutionary model, that is, the peasant soldier—perhaps ill-equipped but nevertheless infused with revolutionary zeal—against the expert model, the superbly trained but ideologically neutral military technician. The revolutionary model always dominated the debate and found many allies, some transient and some permanent, both inside and outside PAVN. Supporting the expert model, on the other hand, was a small, shifting collection of technologically minded military professionals and civilians. In late 1987, the “experts” in PAVN's general officer corps remained outnumbered, but they had gained the support of a powerful ally—the Soviet military advisers in Vietnam. In reality, the debate between preserving the revolutionary character of PAVN and building a thoroughly modern professional armed force was overtaken by the imperatives of military technology, and the issue became obsolete.

Finally, there were the PAVN-party vested-interest conflicts, in which what was best for the party was not always interpreted as best for PAVN. Subjects of conflict included party and state security controls over PAVN personnel, party use of the military for economic and other nonmilitary tasks, party use of political criteria in selecting generals and senior staff officers who planned grand

strategy or directed major military campaigns in the field, the role of the paramilitary, officer-enlisted relations and command authority of the militia within PAVN, and intermilitary and military-civilian relations.

### *Mechanisms of Control*

The VCP controls PAVN through an organizational and motivational mechanism that can monitor, guide, influence, and if necessary coerce. Its interest in the process is to ensure ideological purity and to improve military efficiency. Party cadres and members who are part of PAVN are charged with imparting to the ranks the proper ideological spirit and are responsible for ensuring good individual military performance. At their command is a set of impressive institutional instruments that promote loyalty and dedication to the party and work against deviationism, personalism (selfishness), and other negative phenomena. Essentially the effort is one of indoctrination, which can be divided into three specific functions.

The first of these functions is "information-liaison group" work and consists of discussion group meetings or lectures by political officers, who shore up existing beliefs and behavioral patterns and explain new party lines. The second is the *kiem thao* (self-criticism) session, which has no counterpart in noncommunist armies. *Kiem thao* requires "criticism and self-criticism from below to expose and eliminate shortcomings in work and to fight against a show of complacent well-being." Rooted in group dynamics, it is aimed at harnessing peer pressure. Thematic material in indoctrination sessions tends to focus on whatever is of major concern to the leadership at the moment (in 1987 it was the China threat). The *kiem thao* weekly session usually lasts about two hours and requires the individual to be constructively critical of himself, his peers, and his superiors. As such it gives the leadership insights into PAVN morale and provides a means of signaling present or potential problems. It also acts as a release valve, a means of reducing pressure, in circumstances for which no other remedy is available.

The third function is the "emulation movement," a party control mechanism used in PAVN and in Vietnamese society at large. It was borrowed from the Soviet Union and China and also has no counterpart in noncommunist systems. The "emulation movement" campaigns incite people to imitate standards established by the party. Most are short-run mobilization efforts, although some are semipermanent, having been in existence for a decade or more. Each is designed to serve a specific purpose. In PAVN the campaigns seek to heighten vigilance against spies

and counterrevolutionaries, reduce logistic expenditures, improve weapon and vehicle maintenance, or increase the individual soldier's sense of international solidarity. The "emulation movement" in PAVN is viewed as "an essential means of advancing the Revolution," which in practice means increasing unit solidarity, increasing the sense of discipline in the individual soldier, and improving military-civilian relations. The institution that runs these campaigns is a vast enterprise that requires the services of thousands of cadres who expend millions of man-hours in labor.

All of these control devices are supervised by the PAVN political officer, the figure who breathes life into the abstraction of the party. The political officer has no exact counterpart in noncommunist armies; some of his functions may be performed by the chaplain, the troop information and education officer or the special services officer in the armed forces of other nations, but his role in some respects is far more tangibly authoritative and significant. His duties are many and varied but chiefly involve political indoctrination, personal-problem solving, and maintenance of his unit's morale. He mobilizes the emotions and will through intensive moralistic exhortation, and he personalizes the impersonal party by representing the distant Political Bureau to the individual soldier. He is a figure of consequence who over the years has acquired a mystique of legendary proportions.

Within PAVN, party control of a different type is exercised through control of party membership. Party membership can be granted, denied, suspended, or removed permanently. The success or failure of a soldier's career is almost always determined by his having gained or failed to gain party membership. Weeding out of party members in PAVN takes place annually and averages about 1 percent of the total PAVN party membership, although in some units it can run as high as 6 percent. At the same time, intensive recruitment drives are held to induce soldiers to join the party. Prior to 1987, party members constituted 5 percent of PAVN; in 1987 the figure was between 10 and 20 percent.

## **Organization**

PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) is the formal name given to all elements of the Vietnamese armed forces; hence the designation PAVN (or People's) Navy and PAVN (or People's) Air Force. This usage is traceable to the 1954 Geneva Agreements under which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was permitted to keep such armed forces as it already possessed. To adhere to the letter of the agreements, DRV leaders immediately created a navy and air force, but listed these new services as part of PAVN.

Separate naval and air forces with distinct military identities evolved over the years, however, and traditional interservice rivalries quickly began to assert themselves (see fig. 18).

From their earliest days, the Vietnamese communists organized their armed forces into three basic categories described informally as "types of troops." Within the first category, the PAVN Regular Force ("main force troops"), are the army, the navy, and the air force. In 1987 the army consisted of about 1.2 million officers and enlisted personnel; the navy, about 15,000; and the air force, about 20,000. The second grouping, the Regional Force (or "territorial troops"), is organized geographically and consists chiefly of infantry units with limited mobility. In 1987 it totaled about 500,000. The third category, the PAVN Militia/Self-Defense Force (or "local troops"), is a semi-mobilized element organized by community (village, urban precinct) or economic enterprise (commune, factory, worksite). In 1987 it numbered about 1.2 million.

Military writers in Hanoi have tended to refer to the Regional and Militia/Self-Defense forces collectively as the Strategic Rear Force. The Regional Force is deployed at the provincial level and has units headquartered in each provincial capital, at the very least. The Militia/Self-Defense Force fulfills combat, combat support, and police functions from the district to the village level. The Regional and Militia/Self-Defense forces are two of about a dozen separate military organizations that constitute the Paramilitary Force, which is an integral part of PAVN.

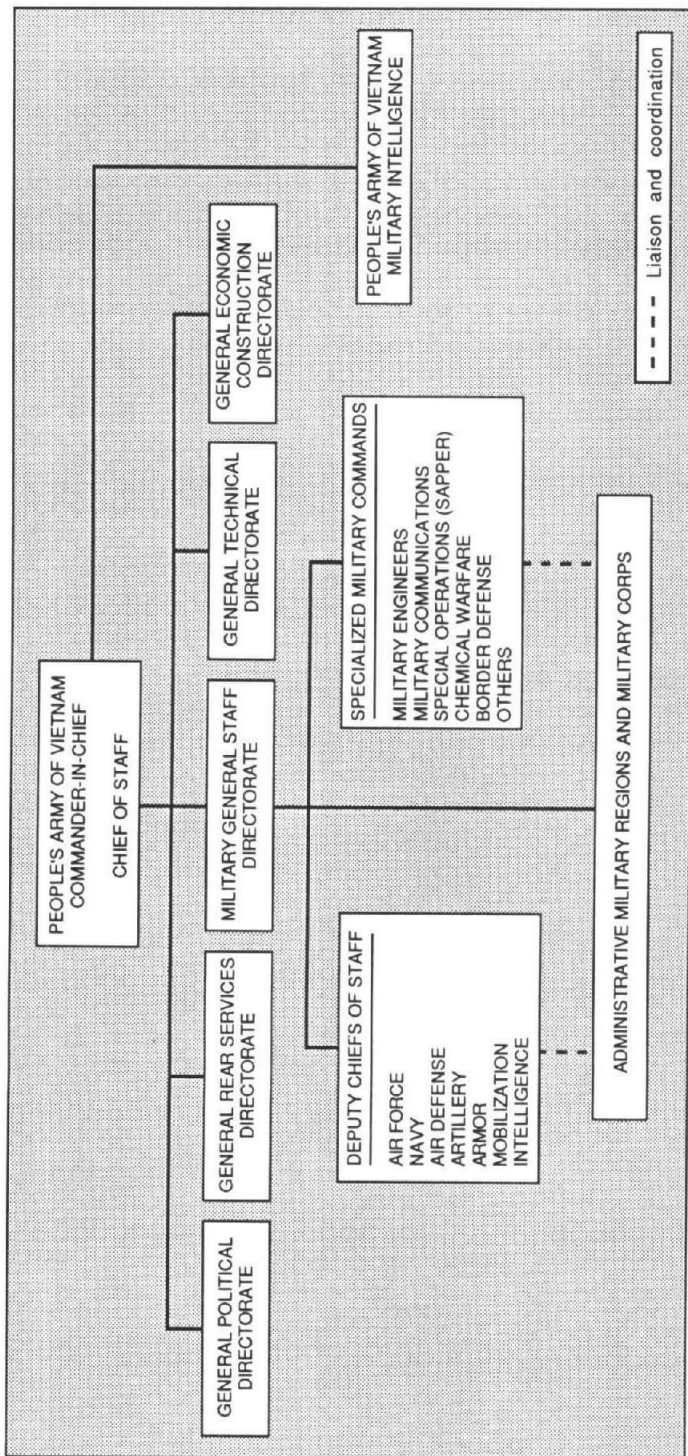
The Paramilitary Force has four functions: to defend its local area in time of war and to delay, not to halt, the enemy; to support PAVN regular units in combat; to maintain local security in peace and in wartime; and to engage in economic activity, chiefly food production and road-building. In the deployment of troops during wartime for the purpose of repelling a full-scale invasion, PAVN strategists make a doctrinal distinction between the Regular Force, which would use conventional tactics, and the Paramilitary Force, which would employ guerrilla tactics in "local people's warfare."

Backing up the Regular and Paramilitary Forces is a reserve of about 500,000 personnel designated the Tactical Rear Force. This semi-mobilized body is composed mainly of veterans and overage males, who in time of emergency would replace personnel in the Militia/Self-Defense Force. The latter would move up to the Regional Force, whose units might in turn be upgraded into the Regular Force.

Augmenting the Regular and Paramilitary Forces are two other military bodies whose status or functions appear anomalous. In the North, a "super" paramilitary force called the People's Guerrilla Force was created in 1979. It was described as a special combat organization with units deployed in villages along the China border and seacoast. However, in late 1987, little more was known about it. In the South, a somewhat better-known organization, designated the Armed Youth Assault Force (AYAF) or Youth Assault Force (YAF), is reported to perform paramilitary functions. The AYAF is organized along military lines (from platoon to brigade) and usually is commanded by retired PAVN officers. However, it appears to be more a party organization than a military body reporting through defense channels. Units at various echelons are under the supervision of local district party committees, and the chain of command apparently leads to Hanoi. AYAF strength in 1986 was estimated at 1.5 million.

In 1986 the PAVN chain of command was headed by the party-government military policy-making apparatus: the National Assembly, the Ministry of Defense, and the National Defense Council on the government side; and the Political Bureau of the VCP Central Committee and the Central Military Party Committee on the party side. Because of overlapping Political Bureau and Central Military Party Committee membership, the Central Military Party Committee could be regarded as the ultimate power for all military matters. It was reorganized in 1982 and consisted of a secretary, a first deputy secretary, two deputy secretaries, and six members. Under guidance from the Political Bureau or the Central Committee, the Central Military Party Committee translated the will of the party—expressed in broad political terms—into specific instructions for the military.

The Ministry of Defense Party Committee, at the very top of the Ministry of Defense, had an entirely military membership. It was the highest operational party arm that dealt directly with PAVN, and consisted of a secretary, the PAVN commander in chief, the chiefs of the five military general-directorates (Military General Staff Directorate, General Political Directorate, General Rear Services Directorate, General Technical Directorate, and General Economic Construction Directorate), and the senior political commissars of the major subordinate commands, that is, the air force, the navy, and the four theaters of operation (the China border, the coast from the China border to below Da Nang, Northern Vietnam and Northern Laos, and Cambodia). Its secretariat was composed of a secretary general, two deputies, and ten members. The committee administered other party committees from



Source: Based on information from Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, London, 1986, 88.

Figure 18. Organization of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), 1987



the military-theater level to the basic party-unit level. At the division level and above, party committees were sizable permanent institutions whose function was to interpret Political Bureau and Central Committee directives for their respective organizations.

The major services, such as the air force and navy, had at headquarters level a Command Party Committee with a secretariat headed by the top political officer for the service and including the heads of all departments. At the company level was the party chapter, or *chi bo* (see Glossary), run by an executive committee of two or three full-time officials and made up of a collection of party cells (*to dang*, see Glossary), each run by a cell leader. The leaders of party chapters communicated the party line, indoctrinated both party and nonparty members within PAVN, directed "emulation movement" drives and other motivational programs, recruited and purged the membership, and generally ensured the party's participation in all military matters.

The Ministry of Defense, organizationally, consisted of the Office of the Minister of Defense and offices of seven vice ministers of defense. These vice ministries were fairly small and for the most part coordinated the activities of the Ministry of Defense with other ministries and state organs whose activities concerned the armed forces (see fig. 17).

The highest level of authority for military operations in PAVN was the PAVN High Command, an institution encompassing the Office of the Commander in Chief, the five military directorates, and the offices of seven deputy chiefs of staff. The most important element of the High Command, under the chief of staff, was the Military General Staff Directorate, which can be likened to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States Department of Defense. At the next lower echelon were four other Military General Directorates that functioned roughly as staff sections of the high command. Also under the chief of staff were seven deputy chiefs of staff, whose purpose was liaison rather than command, and a number of specialized military commands. The PAVN Military Intelligence Department reported directly to the commander in chief (see fig. 18). It had personnel at lower levels of PAVN, and its chief responsibility appeared to be military intelligence activities within Vietnam and in Cambodia, where it reportedly had a large staff. It is not known whether this department operated outside Indochina.

The PAVN command structure was divided geographically into four military theaters and nine military regions or zones, including a Capital Military Region around Hanoi and Quang Ninh Province Special Region (see fig. 19). It was also divided tactically into military units ranging in descending order from corps to

divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. The military-theater designation was introduced in the midst of a postwar buildup when PAVN increased its regular force from 400,000 to about 1.2 million members and its divisions from 25 to 51 (38 infantry divisions and 13 support or economic construction divisions). The number of PAVN corps was also increased from six to eight. Creation of the military theater and the military corps was designed to facilitate what was called the combined arms strategy, meaning larger and more complex military operations that might include use of indigenous military forces from Cambodia and Laos.

A corps ranged in size from 30,000 to 50,000 troops and normally consisted of 4 infantry divisions plus service and support elements. A PAVN infantry division normally was composed of 3 infantry regiments (2,500 men each), 1 artillery regiment, 1 tank battalion, and the usual support elements. A regiment in turn was divided into battalions (600 men each) and the battalion into companies (200 men each).

As of mid-1986, the thirty-eight PAVN regular infantry divisions were assigned thus: nineteen in Cambodia, sixteen in Vietnam (ten in northern Vietnam, six in central and southern Vietnam), and three in Laos. Most of the thirteen economic construction divisions were in the China border region. A construction division was made up of older soldiers, including many who had fought in the South during the Second Indochina War. Each construction division was fully armed, had a specific tactical purpose, and continued to carry out its military training in addition to economic tasks, usually road building (see *The Military's Place in Society*, this ch.). These units carried the burden of the brief 1979 war with China and generally acquitted themselves well.

In 1987 PAVN's major combat services—artillery, armor, air defense, and special operations—were organized along standard lines, similar to armies elsewhere. Each consisted of a force whose commanding officer reported to the Military General Staff Directorate. A mystique surrounded the PAVN Special Operations Force, successor to the legendary Sapper Combat Arm of the First and Second Indochina Wars that specialized in sabotage and clandestine military operations. In 1987, the Special Operations Force consisted of two elements, the Sapper Command and the Airborne Command (the 305th Airborne Brigade). Reportedly there was a third element, an amphibious commando unit, about which little was known.

The Army in 1986 was estimated to maintain 1,600 Soviet-made T-34/-54/-55/-62, Type-59 tanks and 450 PT-76 and Type 60/63

light tanks. It was also equipped with an estimated 2,700 reconnaissance vehicles; approximately 600 artillery guns and howitzers; an unknown number of rocket launchers, mortars, and antitank weapons; and 3,000 air defense weapons.

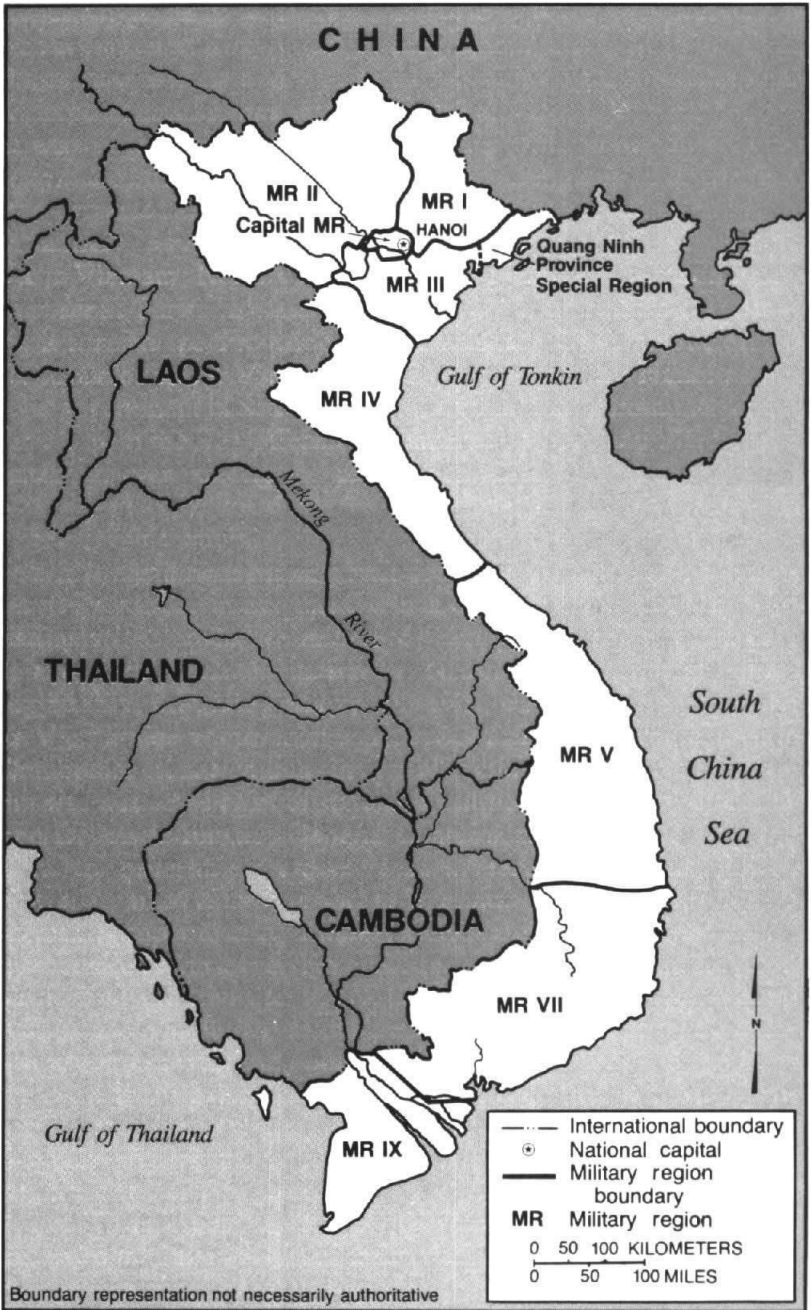
The PAVN Navy, begun in 1955 as the PAVN Riverine and Maritime Force, in 1959 became the Coastal Defense Force. Its "tradition day" is celebrated annually on August 5 to mark the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident in the Second Indochina War. The PAVN Navy began a buildup in the mid-1960s with the arrival of twenty-eight gunboats from China and thirty patrol torpedo boats from the Soviet Union. At the end of the Second Indochina War, it assumed the normal dual missions of a navy, that is, coastal defense and sea surveillance.

In 1986 the PAVN Navy continued to receive Soviet assistance and encouragement and was the largest naval force in Southeast Asia. Including some 1,300 former United States and South Vietnamese naval vessels, naval and civilian junks, and coasters, the PAVN Navy had a total of about 1,500 vessels. Its inventory contained two principal combat vessels, 192 patrol boats, 51 amphibious warfare ships, 104 landing ships, and 133 auxiliary craft.

The command structure of the PAVN Navy originated in Hanoi, where the commander in chief of naval forces was located. His office, the Naval Directorate, reported to the Military General Staff Directorate, i.e., the high command. The top operational Commander was the Commander, Vietnam Naval Forces, headquartered in Haiphong. The two posts were usually held by the same individual. Regulations issued in April 1982 established three flag-rank officers: rear admiral, equivalent to a major general; vice admiral, equivalent to a lieutenant general; and full admiral, equivalent to a colonel general.

Five naval regions made up the operational command. Headquartered at Haiphong, Vinh, Da Nang, Vung Tau, and Rach Gia, each region had two or more naval installations or facilities for which it was responsible. Within this structure were the naval fleets or naval groups, in turn divided into naval brigades. In 1987 the Ham Tu Fleet patrolled the northern Gulf of Tonkin as a strategic deterrent to China; its Chuong Duong Brigade was designed to oppose amphibious landings; its Kiet Brigade was assigned to defend the offshore islands and to perform troop transport duties. The Bach Dang Fleet served in the South. Its Ham Tu Naval Brigade (with 80 percent of its personnel South Vietnamese Navy veterans) operated almost entirely in Cambodian waters.

The PAVN Air Force fixed April 3, 1965, as its tradition day, the day when its pilots supposedly first engaged their United States



*Figure 19. Military Regions, 1986*

counterparts in a dogfight over North Vietnam, and celebrates it annually. The Soviet Union increased the PAVN air inventory late in the Second Indochina War and again in 1979 after the Chinese attack. As of 1985 it was estimated that the PAVN Air Force consisted of about 1,600 planes and 20,000 personnel, making it the largest air force in Southeast Asia (somewhere between China's and India's in size). The operational element of the PAVN Air Force was the air regiment, of which there were seventeen in 1987 grouped into air divisions and headquartered at Noi Bai (Hanoi), Da Nang, Tho Xuan, and Tan Son Nhut (Ho Chi Minh City). The air regiments included 7 attack fighter-plane regiments (450 planes); 4 basic and advanced training regiments (225 trainers); 3 cargo-transport regiments (350 planes); and 3 helicopter regiments (600 helicopters). One light bomber force (60 planes) existed separately from the air regiments. The commander of the Air Force, headquartered at Bac Mai Air Base outside Hanoi, reported to the General Staff Directorate of PAVN. Strategic use of the Vietnamese Air Force, from its inception until 1979, was entirely defensive. During the Second Indochina War it existed to defend North Vietnam from United States air attack, but after the war, and especially in 1979, it existed to defend Vietnam from attack by China. Although defense remained its primary strategic function, the air force increasingly developed an offensive capability after 1979—chiefly through its attack-helicopter regiments—for use in Cambodia and presumably, should the need arise, against China. The PAVN Air Force made a first tentative venture into space flight in 1981, when Lt. Col. Phan Tuan (son of former defense minister Vo Nguyen Giap) took part in the Soviet Union's Soyuz 37 mission, a linkup with the orbiting Soviet space laboratory, Salyut 6.

In 1987, the PAVN Border Defense Command was the newest military organization. Until 1979, responsibility for border security was vested in the People's Armed Public Security Force (PAPSF), under the control of the Ministry of Interior, and paramilitary units acted collectively as a border patrol. Border defense became a full-time task only with the rise of the China threat. As a result, the Border Defense Command was transferred to the Ministry of Defense in 1979 and divested of such responsibilities as dealing with smugglers and illegal border crossings so that it could devote full attention to border defenses. The command was organized into battalions and included a mixture of PAVN and paramilitary units. Their duties included operating border checkpoints, patrolling the border, operating boats in the coastal waterway network, maintaining security on nearby islands, and operating

roving border-area units (mostly composed of Montagnards) to guard against incursions by Chinese patrols.

### **Leadership**

PAVN's officer corps and its underlying concept of command have changed significantly since the first officer corps was formed in the 1930s. The initial leaders were a few dozen individuals chosen primarily for their ability to mobilize villagers and motivate troops, rather than for their tactical knowledge. As the corps developed, its lack of trained and experienced battlefield commanders was made the best of, and a premium was placed on collective military decision making (the dual command system) and on a military strategy that did not require a large number of military tacticians. Hierarchy among officers was played down, and the concept of "officer" was not applied. Leaders were cadres, and were required to guide the revolution, but it was not necessary that leaders be distinguished from one another, only from those they led (combatants). Cadres were either military, nonmilitary, or a mix of the two—it did not matter which; only cadre status was important. Gradually, military cadres evolved into PAVN officers, a trend that was intensified following the Second Indochina War when PAVN moved to develop a military structure to conform with other armed forces around the world. The influence of Soviet advisers and the growing importance of military technology accelerated the trend. Military professionalism, as a result, became one of the chief characteristics of the PAVN officer and soon distinguished him from military cadre, such as the political officer.

Although the exact size of the PAVN officer corps was not known in 1987, various estimates suggested it comprised about 180,000 officers, or roughly 15 percent of a force of approximately 1.2 million. In 1955 the officer corps reportedly had accounted for only 9.5 percent of a force of about 210,000.

The general officer corps in 1987 included the ranks of senior general, colonel general, lieutenant general, major general, and, in some cases, senior colonel, depending on the command held. The number of general officers totaled at least 450. The central feature of their interaction with one another was based on the Chinese political custom of *bung di* or faction-bashing, which highlighted factional infighting and reflected a broader power struggle within the party and within the system as a whole. Senior generals, colonel generals, and some lieutenant generals had their own constituencies, which in part they controlled and which in part controlled them. There were political alliances, some permanent and

*Women militia members in  
Hanoi just after the  
Chinese invasion, 1979  
Courtesy Bill Herod*



some temporary, as well as relations based on familial ties, past associations, common interests, and personalities.

The end of the Second Indochina War found the PAVN officer corps seriously debilitated. Its ranks had been thinned by battle casualties, and the remaining officers were for the most part over-aged and undereducated. An ambitious officer development program was launched as part of the “Great Campaign” (see History, this ch.). The officer training system was overhauled, modernized, and greatly expanded with the assistance of Soviet military advisers. The curriculum in officer-training schools was revised to introduce new leadership methods, modern managerial techniques, and greater use of technology in administering the armed forces. The age bulge was addressed by encouraging retirements, and, for the first time, specific retirement ages were established: for company-grade officers the age was set at thirty-eight; for majors, forty-three; for lieutenant colonels, forty-eight; for colonels, fifty-five; and for senior colonels and general officers, sixty. Modern military administration and management methods were introduced, especially in personnel matters, and greater attention was directed toward such concerns as officers’ pay, benefits, career development, uniforms, commendations, and intangible honors.

PAVN leaders were commonly believed to be men of implacable determination, indifferent to reverses and failures, enormously self-confident, and confident in their chosen strategy and their cause.

If there was a weakness in the ability of the individual PAVN officer, it was compensated for by the collective decision-making process that put several minds to work on a single problem. The net effect was a military leadership that could mobilize the Vietnamese soldier and instill in him the necessary discipline to fight repeatedly against overwhelming odds.

### **Administration**

PAVN's systems for dealing with administrative, managerial, logistic, and manpower problems remained rudimentary in 1987. Vietnam's two major military operations, against Cambodia and China, caused serious administrative difficulties to surface. Many were traceable to the condition of the Vietnamese economy, which in the late 1970s and 1980s had declined in virtually every sector (see Economic Setting, ch. 3). As more than one observer noted, Vietnam had stayed in the bicycle age while the rest of Asia had moved into the computer age. PAVN's logistic requirements suffered accordingly.

Vietnam's military budget remained a closely guarded secret and was doubly difficult to estimate because it was largely covered by Soviet military assistance that reportedly did not need to be repaid. According to a generally accepted estimate, about 50 percent of the state budget was devoted to national defense. Soviet military assistance to Vietnam has varied greatly from year to year depending on PAVN's precise needs. In the mid-1980s, it was authoritatively estimated to be the equivalent of at least US\$350 million per year.

Vietnam's manpower resources are relatively extensive. In 1987 its population was about 62 million, with approximately 6.5 million males of military-service age and 650,000 reaching draft age each year. Normally, 60 percent of those screened for military duty were found to be physically and mentally fit for full service. Other restrictions, such as those based on class, race, religion, and place of origin (i.e., the South), reduced the manpower pool somewhat. In 1986 PAVN was conscripting at the rate of about 300,000 annually.

To reassert discipline within PAVN ranks, a system of "military inspection and control" was instituted that served both judicial and police functions within PAVN. Under this system, the activities of enlisted men and officers were monitored to prevent wrongdoing (such as corruption) and to ensure continued discipline, obedience to orders, and adherence to PAVN regulations and state laws. This system was backed by a new code of military justice that regulated personal conduct. For enlisted personnel the code specified, in ascending order of severity, the following punishments for misconduct: censure, restriction to camp on days off (denial



of shore-leave in the case of naval personnel), warning, disciplinary detention of from one to ten days (not applied to female military personnel), assignment to a lesser position, demotion, discharge, and dismissal from military service. Officers were not subjected to disciplinary detention as noncommissioned officers and enlisted men were. The seven punishments for officers (in ascending order of severity) were censure, warning, assignment to a lesser position, dismissal from position, reduction in rank, deprivation of officers' insignia, and dismissal from military service.

The new regulations also established commendations and a series of incentive awards. Approximately 100,000 PAVN officers and enlisted men received medals and other commendations each year. PAVN pay has always been notoriously low. Although pay was increased in the 1978 overhaul of the armed forces, it remained below comparable income levels elsewhere in the society and was constantly undercut by high inflation. Pay was based on rank, length of service, size of family, and honors and awards received. Seniority pay (1 percent of base pay times years of service), family allowances, a 30-percent hardship-service bonus for those assigned to Cambodia, and a 10-percent cost-of-living bonus for those assigned to the South were added to base pay.

A veteran PAVN soldier who was discharged, retired, or demobilized became a "revolutionary retiree." In 1987 at least 50 percent and possibly 60 percent of all adult males in Vietnam had served in the armed forces.

The veteran in Vietnam has become a figure of increasing importance. Officially he has been viewed with a mixture of appreciation and obligation, but privately leaders have worried that the socioeconomic isolation of veterans could lead to the formation of a vested interest bloc. In general, veterans have been treated well by the society and have been provided with social welfare benefits. Vietnamese women were assigned a major place in the revolution by VCP cadres quite early. Several of the early PAVN military cadres were women, including the legendary Ha Thi Que, a military theorist who adapted Maoist guerrilla war strategy to Vietnam. The principle that women represent a potent source of support continued to be upheld in the 1980s. Military service for women was voluntary and was open to those over eighteen who were members of the VCP or party youth organizations. Estimates of the number of women in PAVN ranged from 5 to 15 percent of the 2.9-million-member force. Most held technical or administrative assignments, although, in earlier years, combat assignments in guerrilla units were common and command assignments were not unknown. For instance, the third-ranking general officer in the

PLAF during the war in the South was a woman. There were no confirmed reports of women in PAVN engaged in combat duty in Cambodia, although it is possible that some were there; and there was no general conscription program for women, although they were encouraged to volunteer and the VCP asserted that it was their duty to do so.

### **Foreign Military Relations**

In the 1950s and 1960s, the primary influence on PAVN was Chinese (see Foreign Relations, ch. 4). Early military thinking, organization, and strategy drew heavily on the Chinese, and particularly the Maoist, example, although Hanoi later officially denied Chinese influence and military assistance.

PAVN's dependence on the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s for weaponry, military hardware, and technical training assured the Soviets an influential role, if not always a dominant one, in the Vietnamese military's activity and development. At the end of the Second Indochina War, the Soviet Union was supplying about 75 percent of North Vietnam's military hardware (China about 15 percent and Eastern Europe about 10 percent). Without Soviet assistance, Vietnam would have been unable to defend itself against China in 1979. By the 1980s, the estimate was that the Soviets provided 97 percent of such equipment and that the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Poland, and Czechoslovakia together supplied the remaining 3 percent (see Appendix A, table 9). Military aid to PAVN in 1987 was almost exclusively Soviet in origin. In the mid-1980s, the Soviets contributed some 15,000 military advisers and military aid estimated to range from US\$1.3 to US\$1.7 billion annually.

The Soviet Union's relations with PAVN allowed Moscow to establish a military presence on the Indochina Peninsula. Access to the naval and air facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang provided transit facilities for the Soviet Pacific Fleet and boosted Soviet intelligence-collecting efforts. The effect was to augment Moscow's military strength and facilitate global deployment of its forces.

The value of the relationship for Vietnam was logistic, not geopolitical. Hanoi had no arms factories, although it could make explosives and small armaments such as bullets, shells, and hand grenades. Sophisticated weaponry and equipment, mandatory for modern warfare, however, had to be imported.

The kind of Soviet military aid provided in the postwar years varied. In the first year or so, the Soviet Union routinely resupplied and replaced PAVN military inventories. After PAVN invaded Cambodia, the Soviets provided counterinsurgency aid,

such as helicopters, and after the Chinese invaded Vietnam, Moscow gave Hanoi military hardware for conventional limited warfare. An analysis of the weapons supplied reveals that the Soviets were interested not only in enhancing Vietnam's defensive capability against China but also in developing a joint Soviet-Vietnamese offensive capability. Soviet generals, determined to pass on to the Vietnamese some of the burden of containing China, assigned PAVN specific strategic missions and provided the military hardware required to perform them. In late 1987, PAVN had no significant military relations with any nation except the Soviet Union.

## **Internal Security**

Internal security was never much of a problem in North Vietnam; it was probably somewhat more tenuous in unified Vietnam. Unification, understandably, introduced new internal threats, which the regime in the 1980s was able to keep in check. As perceived in Hanoi theoretical journals, the most significant internal threat was the danger of counterrevolution, a possibility that had both internal and external implications. Hanoi feared that a resistance effort in Vietnam would mount an effective guerrilla war aided by outsiders who sought either to roll back communism in Indochina or to effect change in Hanoi's leadership. These outsiders might include not only foreign governments but also émigré Vietnamese seeking to destroy the ruling system.

There was widespread latent opposition to the regime, particularly in the South. In general it was low-level, widely scattered, and poorly organized and led. Opposition activities ranged from graffiti and similar token gestures to fairly large-sized guerrilla attacks in the Central Highlands. In the early 1980s, an active militant resistance force was estimated by observers abroad to number about 25,000 combatants. That figure tended to dwindle later in the decade. Given the extraordinary amount of social control in Vietnam, as in other Marxist-Leninist societies, it would be difficult for a resistance force to achieve sufficient size, strength, and cohesiveness to present a serious challenge to the existing system. The regime's strategy, therefore, was to keep the opposition off balance and prevent it from organizing.

Police, crime-detection, and law-enforcement activities tended to be treated collectively under the heading of "public security." These activities were conducted by overlapping, but tightly compartmentalized, institutions of control, separated by only hazy lines of jurisdiction. In particular, there was no sharp division between the internal security duties of PAVN forces and those of the civilian elements of the Ministry of Interior. This amorphous organization

of law enforcement and internal security work can be traced to the VCP's early heritage and its experiences in the First Indochina War when functional distinctions within the party organization were less pronounced. Contributing to it is the clandestine character of such activity and the penchant for secrecy and covert action endemic in Vietnamese culture. Both party and state have paid enormous attention to the maintenance of public order. Perhaps it is for this reason that internal security has always been well managed and security threats have always been contained. The methods employed are sophisticated, often subtle, and there is less use of naked repression than many outsiders believe.

Four clusters of agencies were responsible for crime prevention and the maintenance of public order and internal security under the 1985 Criminal Code. The enforcement bodies were the People's Security Force (PSF) or People's Police, operating chiefly in urban areas; the People's Public Security Force (PPSF), called the People's Security Service or PSS at the village level; the plain-clothes or secret police; and the People's Armed Security Force (PASF), a quasi-military organ, including some PAVN personnel, operating chiefly in the villages and rural areas and concerned both with crime and antistate activities. These agencies of control had the broad responsibility of mobilizing the general population to support internal security programs, in addition to performing internal auditing, inspection, and general monitoring of both party and state activity. The judiciary promoted security and law enforcement. The courts, i.e., the investigative elements of the judicial system, were charged with uncovering evidence in addition to prosecuting the accused.

These institutions were charged under the Criminal Code with protecting the public from crime, broadly defined as "any act dangerous to society." Supporting them, although independent of them, was the party apparatus, which reached to the most remote hamlets of the country. In the mid-1980s, both urban and rural geographic areas were divided into wards, sub-wards, and blocks and were administered by security cadres, who were aided and supported by the mass organizations. Each of the basic units (generally the ward or block) had a security committee. In addition, in key or sensitive areas, there was a special party unit (called Red Flag Security) also organized at the ward or block level. The philosophy of this internal security system was that self-implemented, self-motivated, social discipline was required for true internal security and that this was both the duty and the right of the individual citizen. An important characteristic of the public security sector was that, although it extended equally across the civilian (the

Ministry of Interior) and the military (PAVN, especially its paramilitary forces) sectors, the dominant influence was civilian and, ultimately, the party.

## **Problems**

North Vietnam, before and during the Second Indochina War, experienced few serious internal security challenges. Disorders were recorded, however, the most famous being the so-called Quynh Luu uprising in 1956, in which farmers in predominantly Roman Catholic Nghe An Province demonstrated and rioted against the agricultural collectivization program. During the war, however, and despite South Vietnamese and American clandestine efforts to provoke resistance to the Hanoi regime, little internal opposition resulted. After the war, security problems were experienced in the newly occupied South, and a rise in dissidence was recorded in the North. As far as can be determined, however, in neither case were the problems serious enough to be considered a challenge to the regime. In 1987 public attitudes in the south remained widely anticommunist and there was greatly increased antipathy for the party in the North. In official circles, these conditions were labeled negative phenomena and were explained in the press as rising criminal and counterrevolutionary activity caused by a decline in social responsibility.

The most dangerous negative phenomenon was organized internal resistance to the regime that occurred chiefly in, but was not limited to, the South. For the most part this resistance found expression in graffiti, antiparty poetry, outlaw theater, rumor mongering, and general disinformation efforts. Less common, but still in evidence, were more militant resistance elements, who attempted, but rarely succeeded in, sabotaging the transportation and communication systems, party and state facilities, and economic enterprises. Finally, there were the armed resistance groups, which engaged in guerrilla war. By far the most challenging resistance effort was carried on by the people of the Central Highlands in the South, who are usually called Montagnards (see *Ethnic Groups and Languages*, ch. 2). Many were associated with the organization known as the Unified Front for the Struggle of Oppressed Races (Front Unifié pour la Lutte des Races Opprimées—FULRO) and operated in the region known in the Hanoi press as the “nameless front,” that is, the area between Buon Me Thuot and Da Lat. They were supplied and supported by Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia and, through them, by the Chinese. Hanoi handled the Montagnards in the South after the Second Indochina War far less skillfully and effectively than it had managed the northern

Montagnards a generation earlier. The primary reason appeared to be that in the North in the mid-1950s the problem had been handled by trained party cadres, some of them Montagnards themselves, who had dealt carefully with their ethnic brethren. In the South in 1975 (because the war ended so unexpectedly), responsibility was given to combat troops, who were ill-prepared to handle such a sensitive problem. Since the war's end, large battles reportedly have taken place occasionally in the Highlands, some involving as many as 1,000 resistance fighters.

The Montagnard resistance has not represented a revolutionary movement in the modern sense because it has not tried to overthrow or change the government in Hanoi. Rather, the upland dwellers of southern Vietnam have sought autonomy, and they would settle for being left alone. In 1987 a stabilized condition of local accommodation appeared to have been achieved between local PAVN commanders in the "nameless front" region and indigenous Montagnard tribes.

The second most important resistance elements were the militant southern socioreligious sects called the Hoa Hao (see Glossary) and Cao Dai (see Glossary), whose total membership was more than a million (see Religion, ch. 2). The Hoa Hao sect is concentrated in Chau Doc Province and adjacent provinces. The Cao Dai is headquartered in Tay Ninh Province, and most of its followers live in this region. In the early years after the Second Indochina War, the two sects offered considerable armed resistance to the new government. By the mid-1980s, however, resistance had fallen off because it was widely believed local accommodation had been achieved.

A third resistance element comprised various nationalistic and patriotic groups, many of whom came under the generic term *chu quoc* or "national salvation." The bulk of these were members of the Dai Viet and the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, two militant anti-communist nationalist organizations dating from the 1930s, or were ARVN holdouts in the far south. Other resistance groups, with more exotic names, reported by émigrés included the Black Sail Group (Catholics in the Ho Nai region); the Black Dragon Force (ex-ARVN 7th-Division Catholic soldiers in the My Tho vicinity); the Yellow Crab Force (Cao Dai in Tay Ninh Province); the White Tigers (Hoa Hao in An Giang Province); the Laotian National Cobra Force (Vietnamese and Lao along the Laos-Vietnam border); and the Cambodian Border Force (a similar group in the Cambodia-Vietnam border region). Armed resistance, as practiced by these groups, commonly consisted of attacks on reeducation camps, remote military installations, and VCP offices. Reported resistance

activities during the 1980s included launching rocket attacks on a Phan Rang reeducation camp and on a Xuan Loc camp (during which 6,000 inmates escaped), dynamiting a Ho Chi Minh City water pumping station, detonating a bomb near that city's Continental Hotel, and throwing a grenade into the yard of the former United States ambassador's residence, which had been transformed into living quarters for several PAVN generals. There were also reports of road mining incidents and booby-trapped railroad switching equipment.

Catholics in Vietnam, who number almost 3 million, have represented a significant potential resistance force of increasing concern to Hanoi officials. Initial policy was to control the church as an institution, while allowing free religious expression. In the late 1970s, however, all religious groups increasingly were harassed, and attendance at religious services was discouraged. A few well publicized trials of clergy followed. By the mid-1980s, it was apparent that the initial tolerance for religion had waned. Some observers, including church officials in the Vatican, speculated that Hanoi officials were concerned because of the growing appeal of religion to the young.

Intellectual dissent also was reported to be increasing in the mid-1980s. Fueled by the obvious failure of the party and state to solve the country's more pressing economic problems, intellectual dissent took the form of psychological warfare conducted by literary and cultural figures and ordinary people alike. There had been a similar outbreak of intellectual dissent in North Vietnam in the 1956-58 period, when the regime experimented, to its regret, with a "hundred flowers movement" similar to that in China. In the late 1980s, the most common medium was graffiti such as "Born in the North to Die in Cambodia" and "Nothing is More Precious than Independence and Liberty—Ho Chi Minh" (a famous Ho quotation used as an ironic commentary by southerners). The slogan *Phuc quoc*, or "restore national sovereignty," was reported to have been seen on walls in Ho Chi Minh City and in Hue. Propaganda leaflets also were scattered along city sidewalks at night or left in schoolroom desks, and underground literary societies were founded, including the Hanoi Barefoot Literary Group, the Danang Han River Literary Society, the Ho Literary Society of Hue, and the Stone Cave and Literary Flame societies of Ho Chi Minh City. According to editorials in the official press, the writings of these subversive groups "depict resentment and incite antagonism" through the use of "ambiguous symbolism and double entendres." An example cited by *Lao Dong* (August 22, 1985) was the following excerpt from a poem: "Biting our lips, hating the North

wind/We lay with aching bones/Lamenting the West wind." Poets have been incarcerated for their works. A cause célèbre in 1984 was the arrest of a leading novelist, Doan Quoc Sy, of the Danang Han River Literary Society.

Resistance activity is supported by the nearly 1 million Vietnamese émigrés living abroad. There is a welter of supportive organizations—more than fifty in California alone—about which little reliable information is available. The broadest-based group is the Overseas Free Vietnam Association, which has chapters in the United States, Europe, and Australia.

### **Development of the Internal Security System**

During the First Indochina War, police and internal-security functions were regarded as a single activity. Security cadres and personnel had three duties: guarding Viet Minh facilities, high-level personnel, lines of communication, and troop movements; insuring public safety in the Viet Minh-controlled areas; and conducting counterintelligence and antisabotage work.

At the time of the DRV's formation in 1945, all of this activity was vested in the Ministry of Interior. Within the ministry was a large sub-element called the Directorate General for Security, concerned with counterrevolution. This arrangement was abolished in 1954, when the police and internal-security functions were separated and the Ministry of Public Security was created. After the takeover of the South in 1975, which imposed new internal security tasks, the two functions were again combined, this time into the Ministry of Interior, which was then vastly enlarged.

By the mid-1980s, the ministry was composed of seven major departments: the People's Police Department, responsible for general law enforcement; the Traffic Police Department, responsible for traffic control; the Public Security Department, responsible for general internal security; the Social Order Department, responsible for detention, the family registration system, immigration-emigration, border control, and port-of-entry security; the Public Security Forces, responsible for both law enforcement and internal security in the rural areas; the Counterespionage Department, chiefly responsible for investigative work and dossier compilation; and the Counterreactionary Department, chiefly responsible for investigation of religious organizations in the South.

Also in the ministry were smaller, more specialized offices under vice ministers, including those concerned with counterintelligence, foreign intelligence coordination (shared with PAVN intelligence agencies and primarily concerned with Cambodia and Laos), official communication systems operations (including mail



ensorship), political indoctrination of ministry personnel, and ethnic minorities' activities.

The Ministry of Interior was again enlarged and restructured in 1979, when, according to Hanoi, China launched its "multi-faceted war of sabotage." This brought increased and more systematic coordination with PAVN, especially in the China border region. The restructuring moved the ministry closer to the Soviet model of internal security organizations, a development undoubtedly encouraged by Soviet *Komitet Gosudavstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB, Committee of State Security) advisers. It is possible that in these shifts the ministry gained a certain degree of autonomy from the VCP.

Tran Quoc Hoan created Hanoi's state security system in the 1940s and ran it until he stepped down or was forced out in 1982. He then served as a director of the Central Committee's Proselytizing and Front Department. Hoan continued to publish extensively on security problems, and he remained an influential figure in the field until his death in late 1986. Pham Hung replaced Hoan as Minister of Interior in 1982 and served until December 1986, when he relinquished the post to Mai Chi Tho. Before his elevation to the ministry and the Political Bureau, Tho was in charge of security in southern Vietnam as the mayor of Ho Chi Minh City.

## **The Police**

Police functions, such as routine crime detection, apprehension of suspects, and enforcement of judicial orders, were vested in two elements that differed both conceptually and functionally. The PSF was a law enforcement agency in the same sense as the term is used in the West. It operated chiefly in urban rather than in rural areas and was first established in 1962. Its purpose was "to execute the laws of the state, maintain public order and security, protect public property, protect the lives and property of individuals, and prevent juvenile delinquency." These functions were expanded and made more specific in 1972, and again in 1976, by National Assembly directives authorizing the PSF to "arrest, temporarily detain, and temporarily release suspects; search people, homes, belongings, and mail; temporarily hold evidence; issue identification certificates, travel permits, and other documents; motivate citizens to observe the law and security measures; stop acts of sabotage; prevent juvenile delinquency; give aid to victims of accidents, including commandeering transportation to perform this function; and punish or carry out other compulsory measures against those who infringe on public order and security regulations." Fire fighting was also administered by the PSF. Members

of the PSF were admonished to “serve the people wholeheartedly, show bravery, and constantly demonstrate responsibility, revolutionary vigilance, and political and military professionalism.”

The second unit was the PASF, a combination of gendarmerie and police field force, which operated chiefly in the villages and rural areas. The PASF had a broader security function than the PSF, since its concern extended beyond criminal and illegal political activity to insurgency threats and transprovincial organized counterrevolutionary activity. It was a hybrid security institution composed of party security cadres and PAVN personnel whose duties were in a gray area between ordinary police work and guerrilla warfare. The PASF was similar to the militia of the Soviet Union, with a domain described as “inland security,” and functioned both as a protective and investigative body. PASF units guarded defense-industry installations, state and party offices, communication facilities, and important economic centers and supplied bodyguards for high-level officials. It was also charged with handling antigovernment conspiracies requiring sensitive political investigations and with investigating interprovincial crimes such as counterfeiting, smuggling, and hijacking.

PASF was created in March 1959 by combining several small party-security and PAVN special units. From the start it had a semimilitary character. In 1960, the Third National Party Congress assigned it the “leading mission of defense against counter-revolution” and stressed the political character of its work, which in part meant activities designed to make security measures more acceptable to the general public through what was termed PASF’s “people-motivating mission.” Its formation also relieved PAVN regular forces of certain border and coastal static-defense duties. In the decade that followed unification in 1976, it became something of a catch-all security institution.

The structure of the PASF was quasi-military—that is, it was organized by battalions and companies with administrative centers in provincial capitals. In 1987 the PASF was estimated to have at least 500 personnel in each province, with a total strength of at least 21,000. It was more heavily armed and more mobile than ordinary police.

The PASF headquarters in Hanoi was in a Ministry of Interior building, once the Don Thuy French Military Barracks on Hang Bai Street. It was divided into eight bureaus. The first handled administration, including personnel, supply, and housing. The second maintained criminal records and handled correspondence. The third was responsible for the Hanoi capital area and supervised crime detection, fire fighting, traffic control, and issuance of

identity cards. The fourth conducted investigations, including interrogations. The fifth handled incarceration of persons under arrest, including their detention while awaiting trial. The sixth controlled political and indoctrination training, as well as internal police affairs. The seventh handled budget and fiscal matters for the organization, and the eighth managed communication surveillance, censored mail, and controlled unauthorized publications.

PAVN's function is dual in nature, having been derived from the French concept of police duty, introduced in the colonial period, and the Soviet Union's idea of militia. It rests on the belief that all challenges to the regime should be treated as law-enforcement rather than military problems. Even in the suppression of insurgency movements such as *FULRO*, PAVN's responsibilities were carried out as an exercise in law enforcement rather than as a military enterprise.

PAVN shared command responsibilities with the Ministry of Interior over a host of specific police organizations, including Regional Police Force units operating out of the country's forty provincial capitals; the Border-Control Police or Port-of-Entry Police, established by the Ministry of Interior in 1981; and Naval Security units, which used armed civilian fishing boats to apprehend persons illegally leaving the country. In theory, all such organizations functioned under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior. Their place in PAVN's organizational structure, however, remained ambiguous.

Deputized, nonprofessional law-enforcement units were reportedly numerous, but they were only vaguely described in press reports. They included the People's Protection Squads (active in both street-patrol work and fire fighting), the Enterprise Protection Force (active in factories, government buildings, and communes), the Municipal Security Protection Force (active in major cities), the Neighborhood Protection Civil Guard Agency, the Capital Security Youth Assault Units, the Township Public Security Force, and the Civil Defense Force. Many of the personnel in these units served concurrently with the Paramilitary Force.

In addition, PAVN elements were detailed to police duty, usually on a temporary basis, and assigned chiefly in the South and along the China border. Their primary responsibilities in these areas were the prevention of smuggling and of illegal departures or entries.

The Ministry of Interior divided Vietnam into "security interzones," and the major cities—Hanoi, Haiphong, and Ho Chi Minh City—were allotted separate security status. The interzone headquarters coordinated law enforcement and internal security work with the judiciary, local military commanders, and provincial party

officials. Each of the interzone directors (as well as the director of the Hanoi Security Service) reported directly to the Ministry of Interior and the Political Bureau Secretariat.

The villages, which normally experienced little crime, had only rudimentary law enforcement, usually in the hands of a deputized nonprofessional working part-time and often without a regular salary. If a major crime occurred—for example, a murder—it was investigated by an official sent from the provincial capital.

The function of the nonprofessional deputized law-enforcement officer, indeed even his existence, was not formally established or codified. The position of the village deputy was conceived as a means by which local authority could organize the village to police itself. Crime prevention and security became the responsibility of all, under the guidance of a local figure backed by the local party committee. This made for a pervasive surveillance system. It could also result in inept law enforcement and the accruing of enormous power by the deputy, who was privy to information gathered through the surveillance system.

### **Public Security**

Vietnam did not have a secret police force of the same kind as Nazi Germany's Gestapo. The PPSF (or PSS at the village level), a plainclothes internal security organization charged with handling sensitive security threats, bore the closest resemblance.

Actually, the secret police function in Vietnam appeared to be distributed among the Ministry of Interior, the party, PAVN, and the Paramilitary Force, with the PPSF as the pivotal element. The PPSF was more a party than a state organization, and observers believe that its chain of command ran from the district level through a hierarchy to the Political Bureau Secretariat in Hanoi. In its reporting responsibilities as an organ of the party, the PPSF largely bypassed or coordinated only laterally with the minister of interior, its nominal superior in the government hierarchy. This organizational arrangement was instituted in the early 1950s by two top party security figures, Le Giang and Tran Hieu, at the time the director and deputy director respectively of what was then the First Directorate for Security of the Ministry of Public Security. Some observers believe that the PPSF was in reality an institution of professional police and trained security agents disguised as ordinary party administrative cadres.

During the First Indochina War, the PPSF supervised the issue of travel permits and identification cards, checked on the movements of marine fishermen, identified strangers in the villages, and maintained family census and travel records. At one point it also

monitored and reported on public health, apparently in the belief that North Vietnam was to be subjected to chemical warfare attacks.

The PPSF assumed new importance in the late 1970s with the rise of the China threat and the increased prospect of a serious sabotage and espionage effort by outsiders. In order to cope with these developments, authorities in 1980 enlarged the hamlet-village-level structure. A nationwide system was instituted, with a PSS chief and two cadres detailed to every hamlet and a chief and five cadres assigned to each village. In many instances, they replaced PASF personnel. At the same time, higher recruitment standards were established (for education and age), a six-month training program was introduced, and an effort was made to create a more professional service with more sophisticated operations. In 1983 plans for putting the PPSF into uniform were announced, but in 1987 they had yet to be acted upon.

In the South, the PPSF (or PSS) was more or less under direct party control. Members wore yellow armbands with a red inscription, *Order and Security Control*, to differentiate them from PAVN security units, whose members wore red armbands with a yellow inscription, *Military Control*, and from the PASF forces, whose red and blue arm bands bore the yellow legend *Order*.

The rise of the China threat highlighted certain weaknesses in the security system related to the proper division of labor between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of National Defense. In 1981 a concerted effort was launched to increase and improve coordination between the two ministries: they signed two inter-ministerial directives, one establishing the mechanism for systematic, joint security work and the other spelling out the respective duties of each in "the three tasks of maintaining political security, strengthening social discipline, and insuring public safety."

Under the new arrangement, there was unified recruiting for the two services. A recruit could choose the service he would enter and, in many instances, the province to which he would be assigned. PAVN made available to the Ministry of Interior some of its military hardware, including such highly desirable items as equipment used by special weapons and tactics teams. The Ministry of Interior relieved the Defense Ministry of its responsibility for guarding foreign missions in Hanoi and for supplying guards to the country's prisons. Personnel also were transferred, most from the Ministry of Interior to PAVN, and a new PAVN unit called the Police Protection Regiment was formed. Transfers from this ministry to strengthen PAVN units along the China border were probably due to the growing China threat, the nature and size of which was

perceived as simply beyond Ministry of Interior capabilities. Some PASF units were converted into PAVN Border Defense Command regiments, although their duties, like those of the Police Protection regiments, were not known in 1987.

Some observers noted that the net effect of the security reorganization initiated in 1981 was the Ministry of Interior's improved ability to check on the actions and loyalties of high-ranking PAVN generals. Others observed that PAVN authority now extended deeper into the civilian sector. The new arrangement also highlighted the underlying competition between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of National Defense with respect to security responsibilities and authority.

One other dimension of security activity was the use of youth and youth organizations for internal security purposes. Hanoi appeared to have calculated that young people tended to have greater loyalty to the existing order than their elders, and that they represented a vast manpower pool ideally suited to mass surveillance work. The mass media commonly referred to Vietnam's three security forces as PAVN, public security, and "fourth generation" youth (that is, the fourth generation since the founding of the VCP). The security role of youth was stressed more in southern Vietnam, where, through an umbrella youth group called the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the energies of the young were harnessed in the name of social improvement. Much of this activity was economic and related to various nation-building programs; some, however, concerned political security, social order, and safety, areas of activity commonly given the collective label of "revolutionary action against negativism."

RAM had a large corps of organizations from which to draw. In the mid-1980s, the total party youth force was about 4.5 million; this included the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League (2 million) and the organizations for those younger in age—the Vanguard Teenager Organization, the Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneers, and the Ho Chi Minh Children's Organization (2.5 million). A front organization called the Vietnam Youth Federation included about 10 million party and nonparty youth.

The most important RAM subgroup was the Ho Chi Minh Assault Youth Force (usually termed the AYF), the core of an amorphous organization called the Young Volunteers Force or Volunteer Service. The AYF was open to males seventeen to twenty-five years of age and females seventeen to twenty, who volunteered for two years' service (the males thus could escape the military draft). The AYF was organized along quasi-military lines and was assigned chiefly economic duties, mostly in the rural areas of the South.

Within the AYF were smaller organizations, such as the Assault Security Team and the Assault Control Team, which had security assignments. Some teams focused on ordinary crime; others were engaged in covert surveillance, particularly of other youth. The most elite of these were the Youth Union Red Flag teams, which were made up entirely of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League members. (AYF teams, by contrast, were a mix of party and non-party youth.) Red Flag teams were entrusted with the most sensitive assignments given to the young. The high point of AYF security activity apparently came in the few years immediately following the 1979 China incursion. After that, vigilance in security matters tapered off somewhat.

### **Law Enforcement**

Vietnamese legal thought with regard to the treatment of criminals is the result of three major influences: classic Confucianism, the Napoleonic Code, and Marxism-Leninism. The relevant Confucian concept is that society is to be governed not by law but by moral men and that crime is symptomatic of an absence of virtue that engenders conflict and disharmony. Most important, the Confucian ethic provides no principle of judicial administration. In imperial China, justice was an interpretation of the moment by the emperor and his mandarins, meaning that in every instance imperial will was superior to the law. The spirit of the law the French brought to Vietnam was that guilt should be determined by fair and impartial means and should be assigned appropriate punishment. However, French colonialism inculcated a view of the law as something to be manipulated and the courts as institutions to be bribed or subverted. The result was a general lack of respect for the judicial process. Marxism-Leninism added to this attitude the perspective that crime is a reflection of environmental factors that victimize the individual by turning him into a criminal. The proper remedy for this condition is to eliminate the causal factors while rehabilitating the criminal. The combination of the three legacies has produced in Vietnamese society a legal philosophy that is inquisitorial rather than adversarial, seeking reform rather than punishment. The system imposes on the individual and the state the responsibility of bringing all members of society to a condition of self-imposed moral rectitude in which behavior is defined in terms of collective, rather than individual, good. In contrast to the West, where law is the guarantor of rights that all may claim, in Vietnam the law concerns duties that all must fulfill.

Vietnamese law seeks to give the prisoner the right to reformation. In theory, at least, there are very few incorrigibles. It also

permits a relativist approach in fixing sentences, much more so than do the precedent-based systems of the West. Mitigating circumstances, such as whether the accused acted out of passion or premeditation, loom large as a factor in sentencing. Murder by stabbing is treated more leniently than murder by poison, for example, because the latter is perceived to require a greater degree of premeditation than the former. The personal circumstances of the accused are also a factor in determining punishment. In the administration of criminal justice in Vietnam, an effort is made to understand the criminal, his crime, and his reasons; and the notion of permanent or extended incarceration is rejected in favor of an effort to determine whether or not and, if so, how the criminal can be rehabilitated and restored to society.

Political crimes are treated less liberally, however. In such cases, the administration of justice can be arbitrary and harsh. Politics clearly plays a role in the arrest, trial, and sentencing procedures. The rationale for this policy, which is openly acknowledged, is that the revolution must be protected and that the individual may be sacrificed, perhaps even unjustly, for the common cause. The courts also take a more jaundiced view of the rehabilitation of political prisoners than of common criminals.

The court system was reorganized in 1981 into four basic levels: the Supreme People's Court; the provincial/municipal courts reporting to Hanoi; the local courts, chiefly at the district/precinct levels, reporting respectively to provincial or municipal governments; and military courts. In addition, a number of specialized courts were created. In judicial procedure the courts still owed much to the French example, particularly with respect to the role of the procurator, who had much broader responsibilities than the prosecutor or district attorney under the Anglo-Saxon system.

On January 1, 1986, a new Penal Code officially went into effect after nearly five years of preparation. It contained 280 articles divided into 12 chapters or sections. Unlike earlier laws, the new code included detailed sections on juvenile and military offenders. The first eight chapters defined jurisdiction and judicial procedures; distinguished among infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies; and outlined sentencing procedures. The last section, consisting of four chapters, defined specific crimes and fixed penalties. The code identified seven categories of legal punishment: warning, fine, reform without detention, house arrest, imprisonment, life imprisonment, and death. There was no parole, but remission of punishment was possible and the conditions for it appeared to be lenient (eligibility for remission of a life-imprisonment sentence began after seven years). In general, definitions of crime were broad, vague, and could



be interpreted so that virtually any antisocial word or deed was indictable. Penalties were stern and included capital punishment for a lengthy list of crimes. In 1986 Minister of Justice Phan Hien defended in writings and interviews the new code's long list of capital crimes, arguing that in general the code was liberal. He cited as evidence that polygamy was a crime, whereas adultery was not. Most serious crimes (all drawing the death penalty) were crimes endangering the national security, i.e., treason, "taking action to overthrow the people's government," espionage, rebellion, sabotage, terrorism, "undermining unity," spreading "anti-socialist" propaganda, "disrupting security," obstructing or inciting to obstruct state agencies' activities, hijacking, destroying important national security projects and property, and "crimes against humanity."

Upon arrest, an individual was taken first to a Ministry of Interior records office where he was fingerprinted and interrogated, and where his record was checked. He was then remanded to a detention cell to be held until his trial. Posting bail to obtain temporary release was not practiced, although in some instances release on one's own recognizance was permitted.

Trials themselves were brief, businesslike, and conducted in an informal, somewhat nonjudicial atmosphere. All participants were expected to seek justice rather than simply to observe the letter of the law. The defense was supposed to proceed in an objective manner, meaning it was expected to pursue the truth and not to engage in courtroom tactics "that distort the truth or conceal the guilty person's faults." The defendant was expected to confine his efforts to presenting facts that proved his innocence or that supported his plea to the tribunal for reduction of the gravity of the charge. In most trials, defense strategy was not directed toward exoneration but toward a sentence of reform without detention.

Sentences for nonpolitical crimes, and particularly for less serious felonies, tended to fall into three categories: reform without detention, reform with detention, and detention (i.e., an ordinary prison sentence). Perhaps half of the sentences imposed for these crimes were of the first category, and the remaining half were divided more or less equally between the other two categories. The system rested on the assumption that most criminals could be rehabilitated, but the procedure required that the individual petition the court for rehabilitation. The court might also sentence a person to loss of civil rights, an auxiliary penalty that deprived the individual of certain rights for a specific period of time (see *Social Control*, this ch.). Formal incarceration that resulted from judicial proceedings might be either in a prison or a work-reform camp (detention with

labor). Vietnamese prisons imposed confinement in a manner more or less like prisons anywhere in the world. Work reform camps incarcerated prisoners as well, but also required them to perform outside physical labor, constructing roads, clearing brush, and similar tasks on contract for the state. Beyond confinement arising from judicial proceedings, there was also administrative detention that did not involve the courts and was usually the result of action by party officials. Eligible for this type of incarceration was a host of offenders that included juvenile delinquents, foreigners (chiefly Laotians), northerners who had defected to the South during the war, and “enemies of the people” (those judged to be dangerous to society by virtue of their social, political, economic, or family background). The largest and best known facilities for administrative detention were the re-education camps and social-labor camps. Both were “educative” in purpose and both were designed for “social negatives.” The difference between the two, insofar as there was any, was that the re-education camp was for those whose attitudes, ideas, and beliefs required correction, while the social-labor camps were for those of “backward behavior,” such as draft dodgers, tax evaders, and persons who “spread social negativism.”

In official Hanoi thinking, there was a sharp difference between confinement as a result of judicial proceedings and administrative detention. Those who were incarcerated in a prison or a work-reform camp as the result of a court sentence were considered incorrigible or without social value. Prisoners confined under administrative detention were those for whom there was some hope of rehabilitation. While the individual inmate caught up in the system might find the distinction meaningless, it was important for an observer of the Vietnamese judicial and internal security system to bear in mind the distinction between the two institutions.

Detailed information on Vietnam’s prison system—the number and location of its prisons and the size of its prison population—has always been extraordinarily difficult to obtain, and much of the information available in 1987 was questionable. Hanoi had not published anything of consequence on the subject. Credible available data tended to combine statistics on prison, work-reform camps, and administrative detention facilities. Each of the forty Vietnamese provinces had at least one prison with a capacity ranging from about 1,000 to 5,000 inmates. Some provinces also had what were called model prisons, which resembled new economic zones in that, in the spirit of modern penology, they offered the prisoners financial incentives to engage in agricultural production. Most of the district capitals had small prisons or detention centers, and the PPSF (or PSS) operated detention cells in most villages

and some hamlets. In addition, there were perhaps a dozen central (or national) prisons that could hold as many as 40,000 inmates. The largest of these were the Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi (with a branch in Haiphong) and the Chi Hoa prison outside Ho Chi Minh City. The major cities also had detention centers (Hanoi had 18, which could hold 500 prisoners each) where individuals were held awaiting trial.

Life in a Vietnamese prison, as reported by ex-prisoners, was harsh. There were work details for those in prisons, as well as in the work-reform camps, that chiefly involved agricultural production for prison use. Rehabilitation lectures were held daily, and prisoners spent much time describing past behavior and thoughts in detail in their dossiers. Visitors were permitted only infrequently in most prisons. Discipline was strict, and prisons in particular were well guarded; usually there was 1 guard for every 250 prisoners. In general, the use of torture, corporal punishment, and what might be termed police brutality were no longer legal but were still condoned by officials and even accepted by the general public.

### **Social Control**

Under the Hanoi government, “control” was a legal term used both as a verb and a noun. “Control” meant use of state power to deal with individuals who committed either civil or political crimes judged not serious enough to warrant imprisonment, but serious enough to deserve reform without detention. “Control” referred also to the status of an individual under such sentence (also one released from prison but considered not fully reformed). Hence it combined the condition of being on parole with that of being in the custody of the court or under state surveillance. A person under “control” had to report periodically to local authorities to account for his activities and detail his efforts to reform. He was proscribed from certain occupations, including teaching, publishing, practicing medicine or pharmacy, and operating a restaurant, hotel, or bookstore. Such restrictions were deemed legal because one under “control” was considered to have already forfeited some of his civil rights, at least temporarily.

The mechanism of “control,” called the People’s Organ of Control, was hierarchically organized and formally defined by the 1980 Constitution (Articles 127, 138, and 141). At the top was the Supreme People’s Organ of Control, and at the bottom were the district and precinct organs of control. These institutions functioned to “control the observance of the law by the ministries, armed forces, state employees and citizens; to exercise the right of public prosecution; and to insure strict and uniform observance of the

law.” Their purview was “any act encroaching upon the interests of the State, the collective, or the lives, property, freedom, honor, and dignity of citizens.” The underlying justification for their existence was that major internal security problems developed because of a breakdown in social discipline and that restoration of discipline was best achieved with a system of self-control or self-discipline. The system was composed of many activities: physical control; re-education and reform; indoctrination, emulation, and motivation; and education. Its essence was organization and motivation, and in the hands of skilled cadres it could harness social pressure to induce new attitudes and ways of thinking.

### ***Population Relocation***

Massive relocation of the population, blandly called the “state redistribution of labor” program, began after reunification in 1976 and has been an integral part of the security effort. At least 5 million people have been uprooted in this process, known as “breaking the machine.” While partly economic in its motivation, the relocation’s main purpose has been to break up the existing social structure. In assigning individuals to new economic zones, for instance, care has been taken to scatter those from a single urban area or village to separate locations. The formation of new associations by these people was then supervised by the VCP, which used various mass movements and proletarian social organizations—augmented by communication and education programs intended to raise class consciousness—to help foster class struggle and to turn the middle and upper classes into social pariahs. This social ostracism was one of the reasons that many middle-class Vietnamese left the South after 1975 as “boat people” (see Glossary).

### ***Re-education Camps***

The re-education camp remained the predominant device of social “control” in the late 1980s. It was used to incarcerate members of certain social classes in order to coerce them to accept and conform to the new social norms. This type of camp was one feature of a broader effort to control the social deviant and to campaign against counterrevolution and the resistance. The concept of re-education was borrowed from the Chinese communists and was developed early in the First Indochina War, at least in part because the nomadic government of North Vietnam was unable to maintain orthodox prisons. The process was continued in the North in 1954, but it came fully to the world’s attention only after North Vietnam’s takeover of the South in 1975. The camps were administered by PAVN or the Ministry of Interior, but they were

not regarded as prisons and indeed were separate from the prison system. They were considered to be institutions where rehabilitation was accomplished through education and socially constructive labor. Only those who “deserved rehabilitation” (as opposed to those who deserved jail) were sent to the camps, where their political attitudes, work production records, and general behavior were closely monitored.

The re-education camp system, as it developed in the South, was both larger and more complex than its counterpart in the North. Three types of camps were created to serve three purposes—short-term re-education, long-term re-education, and permanent incarceration. The system was also organized into five levels.

There were two levels of short-term re-education. The first was the study camp or day study center which was located in or near a major urban center, often in a public park, and allowed attendees to return home each night. Courses, chiefly lectures to “teach socialism and unlearn the old ways lasted about thirty days.” They were attended mostly by southern proletarians and juvenile delinquents. These level-one camps, which instructed perhaps 500,000 people, were the most common kind in the South in the first few years after the end of the Second Indochina War, but were phased out near the end of the 1970s. The level-two camps were similar in purpose to level one camps, but they required full-time attendance for three to six months, during which time the inmate was obliged to supply his own food. Security was minimal, and it was possible simply to walk away from the camp, although later arrest was likely. During the 1970s, there were some 300 of these level-two camps in the South, with at least 200,000 inmates. Some level-two camps remained in the 1980s, although most had been phased out.

Long-term re-education was undertaken at level-three camps. Termed the collective reformatory, level three had thought reform as its purpose. Whereas re-education of individuals in the first two levels of camps was regarded chiefly as a matter of informing them of the “truth” and making them aware of facts about the new social order, reforming the thought of those in level-three camps required a process of deeper examination and analysis. The orientation was both more psychological and more intellectual. Although the inmate was apt to be better educated, and thus less susceptible to manipulation, than most Vietnamese, the system considered him salvageable. The level-three camps at their most prevalent, in the late 1970s, were found in every province in southern Vietnam and dealt with at least 50,000 persons. Although the camps were still in use both in the North and South, by 1987 the number had decreased.

The third type of re-education camp, the socialist-reform camp, was intended for permanent incarceration, and re-education involved indoctrination and forced labor. When these camps were first established in the South, individuals were assigned according to the probable time that each person's re-education would require. Level-four camp inmates were said to require three years and level-five camp inmates, five years. For this reason the two were commonly termed "three-year-sentence" and "five-year-sentence" camps. Their true purpose, it became apparent eventually, was to incarcerate certain southern individuals—including educators, legislators, province chiefs, writers, and supreme court judges—until the South was judged stable enough to permit their release. In 1987 at least 15,000 were still incarcerated in level-four and level-five camps. When the three-year or five-year period expired, they were simply sentenced to three or five more years of re-education.

Initially, the five levels of re-education were structured in ascending order of perceived individual recalcitrance and ascending length of incarceration. In 1987, however, only the level-three camp remained dedicated to its original purpose. The level-four and level-five camps were simply detention centers for those judged potentially dangerous to the system. Camp conditions were reportedly poor, with little food, no medicine, and a high death rate.

### ***Surveillance***

Perhaps the most effective instrument of social control in the 1980s was the "revolutionary vigilance" surveillance system, commonly called "the warden method." In theory at least, every hamlet, city block, state farm, factory, school, and state and party office had its own Revolutionary Vigilance Committee headed by a warden and made up of a team of neighbors, usually 25 to 40 households (120 to 300 persons). Institutionally, the Vigilance Committee was described as neither party nor state, but a form of alliance. Its purpose was to "help the government in all ways and aspects," specifically by monitoring the behavior of its members, reporting public opinion to higher authorities, and promoting various state and party policies and programs locally. The committee's authority was shored up by the *Ho Khau* registration system, which required each individual to have an identity card and each family to have a family registration certificate or residence permit (listing the names of all persons authorized to live at one address). Both identification cards and family registration certificates were checked frequently by security cadres.



*Gate to Ben Tre Re-education Camp  
Courtesy Bill Herod*

It is historical fact that social “control” as administered by the Vietnamese party and government worked impressively over the years to organize, mobilize, and motivate the society to serve the interests of national security. It produced an implacably determined military force and an internal security system that virtually policed itself. However, it was evident by the late 1980s that the system no longer worked as well as it once had. The Political Bureau acknowledged the influence of “negativism” that endangered the “quality of socialist life,” and military and security service professional journals emphasized the need to improve security methods, including “techniques for suppressing rebellions.” Although the spread of full-scale social unrest in Vietnam was not likely, the idea was no longer unthinkable.

What developed in Vietnam in the 1980s was not so much a rise in internal security consciousness on the part of the government as a change in public attitudes toward security problems. Military and public alertness to the dangers of counterrevolution, crime, and antisocial behavior diminished to the point of indifference. Nguyen Van Linh, before his appointment as VCP general secretary in 1986, complained that the “spirit of vigilance” was lagging in Vietnam and that “some individuals suffer[ed] from revolutionary vigilance paralysis.” Massive indoctrination campaigns, undertaken to correct this shortcoming by arousing public concern,

apparently met with indifferent results. The condition was symptomatic of a society that was beginning to be buffeted by the winds of change.

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The major source of research materials for this chapter was the Indochina Archive at the University of California at Berkeley. The archive has 2.5 million pages of documentary material, 15 percent of which relates directly to Vietnam's armed forces, internal security, law, and judiciary. Much of the archive is original source material from Vietnam, including official newspaper and journal articles translated and published by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and the Joint Publications Research Service of the United States Government.

*PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, by Douglas Pike, is the only book-length study of Vietnam's armed forces; William Turley has written several lengthy articles on the subject. Human rights violations in Vietnam have been dealt with in journal articles by Karl Jackson and Jacqueline Desbarats. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)



## Appendix A

### Table

- 1 Metric Conversion Coefficients and Factors
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Table 1. Metric Conversion Coefficients and Factors

When you know	Multiply by	To find
Millimeters .....	0.04	inches
Centimeters .....	0.39	inches
Meters .....	3.3	feet
Kilometers .....	0.62	miles
Hectares (10,000 m <sup>2</sup> ) .....	2.47	acres
Square kilometers .....	0.39	square miles
Cubic meters .....	35.3	cubic feet
Liters .....	0.26	gallons
Kilograms .....	2.2	pounds
Metric tons .....	0.98	long tons
.....	1.1	short tons
.....	2,204	pounds
Degrees Celsius .....	9	degrees Fahrenheit
(Centigrade)	divide by 5 and add 32	

*Table 2. Population, 1979, 1984, and 1988  
(in thousands)*

Place	1979 Census Population	Estimated 1984 Population	Estimated 1988 Population
<b>Municipalities</b>			
Hanoi .....	2,571	2,878	3,170
Haiphong .....	1,279	1,397	1,500
Ho Chi Minh City .....	3,420	3,564	3,685
<b>Provinces</b>			
An Giang .....	1,532	1,765	1,980
Bac Thai .....	815	903	980
Ben Tre .....	1,042	1,164	1,275
Binh Tri Thien .....	1,902	2,020	2,120
Cao Bang .....	480	540	595
Cuu Long .....	1,504	1,686	1,850
Dac Lac .....	490	611	735
Dong Nai .....	1,305	1,502	1,690
Dong Thap .....	1,183	1,314	1,430
Gia Lai-Kon Tum .....	596	692	785
Ha Bac .....	1,663	1,892	2,110
Ha Nam Ninh .....	2,781	3,061	3,315
Ha Son Binh .....	1,537	1,705	1,850
Ha Tuyen .....	782	881	975
Hai Hung .....	2,145	2,396	2,625
Hau Giang .....	2,233	2,495	2,735
Hoang Lien Son .....	778	866	950
Kien Giang .....	995	1,123	1,245
Lai Chau .....	322	378	432
Lam Dong .....	397	487	580
Lang Son .....	485	534	580
Long An .....	957	1,081	1,195
Minh Hai .....	1,220	1,550	1,900
Nghe Tinh .....	3,112	3,398	3,655
Nghia Binh .....	2,095	2,355	2,600
Phu Khanh .....	1,189	1,332	1,465
Quang Nam-Da Nang .....	1,530	1,678	1,810
Quang Ninh .....	750	812	870
Son La .....	488	562	635
Song Be .....	659	734	805
Tay Ninh .....	684	758	830
Thai Binh .....	1,506	1,653	1,790
Thanh Hoa .....	2,532	2,780	3,010
Thuan Hai .....	938	1,085	1,220
Tien Giang .....	1,265	1,388	1,505
Vinh Phu .....	1,488	1,656	1,805
<b>Special Zone</b>			
Vung Tau-Con Dao .....	92	94	98
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>52,742</b>	<b>58,770</b>	<b>64,385</b>

Table 3. Ethnic Composition, 1979

Ethnic group	Alternate names	Principal areas of residence (provinces)	Population <sup>1</sup>
Viet	Kinh	Throughout the nation	46,065,400
Hoa (Han, Chinese)	Trieu Chau, Phuc Kien, Quang Dong, Hai Nam, Ha, Xa Phang	Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Hau Giang, Dong Nai, Minh Hai, Kien Giang, Haiphong, Cuu Long	935,100
Tay	Tho, Ngan, Phen, Thu, Lao, Pa Zi	Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Tuyen, Bac Thai, Hoang Lien Son, Quang Ninh, Ha Bac, Lam Dong	901,800
Thai	Tai, Tai Khao (White Thai), Tay Dam (Black Thai), Tai Moui, Tai Thanh (Man Thanh), Hang Tong (Tai Muong), Pu Thay, Tho Da Bac	Son La, Nghe Tinh, Thanh Hoa, Lai Chau, Hoang Lien Son, Ha Son Binh, Lam Dong	766,700
Khmer	Cur, Cul, Cu, Tho, Khmer-Vietnamese, Khmer Krom	Hau Giang, Cuu Long, Kien Giang, Minh Hai, Ho Chi Minh City, Song Be, Tay Ninh	717,300
Muong	Mol, Muai, Moi, Moi Bi, Ao Ta (Au Ta)	Ha Son Binh, Thanh Hoa, Vinh Phu, Hoang Lien Son, Son La, Ha Nam Ninh	686,100
Nung	Xuong, Giang, Nung An, Phan Sinh, Nung Chao, Loi, Quy Rin, Khen Lai	Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Thai, Ha Tuyen, Ha Bac, Hoang Lien Son, Quang Ninh, Ho Chi Minh City, Lam Dong	559,700

Table 3. — Continued.

Ethnic group	Alternate names	Principal areas of residence (provinces)	Population <sup>1</sup>
Hmong (Meo)	Meo Hoa, Meo Xanh, Meo Do, Meo Den, Na Miec, Man Trang	Ha Tuyen, Hoang Lien Son, Lai Chau, Son La, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Nghe Tinh	411,100
Zao	Man, Dong, Trai, Xa, Ziu Mien, Kiem Mien, Quan Trang, Zao Do, Quan Chet, Lo Gang, Zao Tien, Thanh Thah Y, Lan Ten, Dai Ban, Tieu Ban, Coc Ngang, Coc Mun, Son Dau	Ha Tuyen, Hoang Lien Son, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Thai, Lai Chau, Son La, Ha Son Binh, Vinh Phu, Ha Bac, Thanh Hoa, Quang Ninh	346,800
Jarai	Giorai, Chorai, Tobuan, Hobau, Hdrung, Chor	Gia Lai-Kon Tum	184,500
Ede	Rhade, De, Kpa, Adham, Krung, Kutul, Dlic Rue, Blo, Epan, Mdhur, Bih	Dac Lac, Phu Khanh	140,900
Bahnar	Golar, Tolo, Gho long (Y-lang) Rengao, Ro Ngao, Kren, Roh, Kon Kde, A-la Kong, Kpang Kong, Bo Man	Gia Lai-Kon Tum, Nghia Binh, Phu Khanh	109,100
San Chay (Cao Lan-San Chi)	Cao Lan, Man Cao Lan, Hon Ban, San Chi (also called Son Tu but excludes the San Chi of Bao Lac and Cho Ra)	Bac Thai, Quang Ninh, Ha Bac, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Tuyen	77,100
Cham	Chiem Thanh, Hroi	Thuan Hai, An Giang, Ho Chi Minh City, Nghia Binh, Phu Khanh	77,000

Table 3. —Continued.

Ethnic group	Alternate names	Principal areas of residence (provinces)	Population
Sadang	Xo Teng, Hdang, To Trah, Mo Nam, Ha Lang, Ka Dong, Km Rang, Con Lan, Bri La, Tang	Gia Lai-Kon Tum, Quang Nam-Da Nang	73,100
Kohor	Xre, Nop (Tu-lop), Codon Chil, Lat (Lach), Trinh	Lam Dong, Thuan Hai	70,500
Hre	Cham Re, Chom, Krc, Luy	Nghia Binh	66,900
San Ziu	San Zeo, Trai, Trai Dat, Man Quan Coc	Bac Thai, Vinh Phu, Ha Bac, Quang Ninh, Ha Tuyen	65,800
Raglai	Ra Clay, Rai, Noang, La Oang	Thuan Hai, Phu Khanh	58,000
Muong	Phong, Nong, Pre, Bu Zang, Di Pri, Biat, Gar, Ro-lam, Chil	Dac Lac, Lam Dong, Song Be	46,000
Stueng	Xa dieng	Song Be, Tay Ninh	40,800
Bo Ru Van Kieu	Bru, Van Kieu, Mang Cong, Tri, Khua	Binh Tri Thien	33,100
Kho Mu	Khmu, Xe Cau, Mun Xen, Pu Thenh, Tenh, Tay Hay	Nghe Tinh, Son La, Lai Chau, Hoang Lien Son	32,100
Giay	Nhang, Dang, Pau Thin Pu, Na, Cui Chu, Xa	Hoang Lien Son, Ha Tuyen, Lai Chau	27,900
Ko Tu	Ka tu, Cao, Ha, Phuong, Ka Tang	Quang Nam-Da Nang, Binh Tri Thien	27,000

Table 3. —Continued.

Ethnic group	Alternate names	Principal areas of residence (provinces)	Population <sup>1</sup>
Tho	Keo, Mon, Cuoi, Ho, Dan Lai, Ly Ha, Tay Pong, Con Kha, Xa La Vang	Nghe Tinh, Thanh Hoa	24,900
Ta Oi	Toi Oi, Pa Co, Pa Hi (Ba Hi)	Binh Tri Thien	20,500
Ma	Chau Ma, Ma Ngan, Maxop Ma To, Ma Krung	Lam Dong, Dong Nai	20,300
Jehtrieng	Jeh, Gic, Dgieh, Tareh, Giang Ray, Pin, Trieng, Treng, Ta Rieng, Ve (Veh), La Ve, Ka Tang	Quang Nam-Da Nang, Gia Lai-Kon Tum	16,800
Co	Cor, Col, Cau, Trau	Nghia Binh, Quang Nam-Da Nang	16,800
Ha Nhi	U Ni, Xa U Ni	Lai Chau, Hoang Lien Son	9,400
Cho Ru	Chru, Che-ru, Chu	Lam Dong, Thuan Hai	7,700
Cho Ro	Zo Ro, Chau Ro	Dong Nai	7,100
Xing Mun	Puoc, Pua	Son La, Lai Chau	7,000
Phu La	Bo Kho Pa, Mu Zi Pa, Xa Pho, Pho, Va Xo Lao, Pu Zang	Hoang Lien Son, Lai Chau	6,900
Lao	Lao Boc, Lao Noi	Lai Chau, Son La, Thanh Hoa, Hoang Lien Son	6,800



Table 3. — Continued.

Ethnic group	Alternate names	Principal areas of residence (provinces)	Population <sup>1</sup>
La Chi	Cui Te, La Qua	Ha Tuyen	5,900
La Hu	Khu Xung, Co Xung, Kha Qay	Lai Chau	4,300
La Ha	Xa Khao, Khla Phlao	Lai Chau, Son La	3,200
Lu	Nhuon (Zuon)	Lai Chau	3,000
Chut	Sach, May, Ruc, Ma Lieng, A Rem, Tu Yang, Pa Leng, Xo Lang, To Hung, Cha Cu, Tac Cui, U Mo, Xa La Vang	Binh Tri Thien	3,000
Lo Lo	Mun Zi	Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Tuyen	2,700
Mang	Mang U, Xa La Vang	Lai Chau	2,400
Khang	Xa Khao, Xa Sua, Xa Don, Xa Dang, Xa Hoc, Xa Ai, Xa Bung, Quang Lam	Lai Chau, Son La	2,300
Pathen	Pa Hung, Tong	Ha Tuyen	2,200
Ngai	Xin, Le, Dan, Khanh Gia	Quang Ninh, Cao Bang, Lang Son	1,300
Boy	Chung Cha, Trong Gia, Tu Zi, Tu Zin	Hoang Lien Son, Ha Tuyen	1,300
Co Lao	none	Ha Tuyen	1,200

Table 3.—Continued.

Ethnic group	Alternate names	Principal areas of residence (provinces)	Population <sup>1</sup>
Cong	Xan Khong, Mong Nhe, Xa Xeng	Lai Chau	800
Si La	Cu De Xu, Kha Pe	Lai Chau	400
Pu Peo	Ka Beo, Pen Ti, Lo Lo	Ha Tuyen	300
Brau	Brao	Gia Lai-Kon Tum	100
O Du	Tay Hat	Nghe Tinh	100
Romam	n.a.	Gia Lai-Kon Tum	100
Other (including foreign residents)	.....		43,400
Total	.....		52,742,000

<sup>1</sup> 1979 census figures rounded to the nearest 100.

Source: Based on information from *Vietnam Courier*, [Hanoi], June 1987, 28-31; and Committee for Social Sciences, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam Social Sciences*, [Hanoi], March and April 1986, 172-76.

Table 4. *Economic Growth Rate, 1976-90*  
(in percentages)

Five-Year Plans	National Income		Agricultural Production		Industrial Production	
	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual
Second Five-Year Plan (1976-80) . . . . .	13-14	0.4	8-10	1.9	16-18	0.6
Third Five-Year Plan (1981-85) . . . . .	4.5-5	6.4	6.0-7	4.9	4.0-5	9.5
Fourth Five-Year Plan (1986-90)* . . . . .	8.0	4.3	6.2	1.4	9.0	5.6

\*Projected figures through 1987; actual figures for 1986.

Source: Based on information from Tetsusaburo Kimura, *Vietnam: International Relations and Economic Development*, Tokyo, 1987, 164-65.

Table 5. *National Income by Sector, Selected Years, 1975-85*  
(in percentages)

Sector	1975	1980	1982	1984	1985
Agriculture . . . . .	46.8	50.1	57.2	42.4	44.6
Industry . . . . .	24.0	19.9	25.3	32.8	32.4
Commerce . . . . .	13.5	18.2	10.5	12.8	17.9
Construction . . . . .	6.2	3.4	2.4	4.5	2.4
Transport and services . . . . .	4.0	4.1	2.2	2.8	0.9
Other . . . . .	5.5	4.3	2.4	4.7	1.8
TOTAL . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Based on information from *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik stranchnenou Soveta Ekonomicheskoi Vzaimopomoshchi* (Statistical Yearbook of Member Countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), Moscow, 1986, 42-43.

Table 6. *Agricultural and Industrial Production, 1975-84*  
(in millions of dong)\*

Year	Agriculture	Industry
1975	6,429.5	7,288.4
1976	7,087.8	8,208.9
1977	6,740.2	9,028.9
1978	6,743.6	9,520.1
1979	7,204.1	9,089.9
1980	7,622.5	8,218.4
1981	7,867.1	9,463.0
1982	81,135.6	72,095.0
1983	84,116.3	82,999.8
1984	89,331.8	88,995.2

\*1975-81 based on fixed 1970 prices; 1982-84 based on fixed 1982 prices.

Source: Based on information from Tong Cuc Thong Ke, *So Lieu Thong Ke, 1930-1984* (Statistical Data, 1930-1984), Hanoi, March 1985, 40-82; *Thong Ke* (Statistics), Hanoi, March 1985, 31-33; and Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Southeast Asia Report*, JPRS-SEA-85-100, June 1985, 96-97.

Table 7. *Rice Production, 1975-85*

Year	Production (million tons)	Area Cultivated (1,000 hectares)	Yield (100 kilograms/hectare)
1975	10.54	4,940	21.3
1976	11.87	5,314	22.3
1977	10.89	5,409	20.1
1978	10.04	5,442	18.5
1979	10.76	5,483	19.8
1980	11.68	5,544	21.1
1981	12.55	5,645	22.2
1982	14.17	5,709	24.8
1983	14.73	5,603	26.3
1984	15.61	5,671	27.5
1985*	16.50	5,750	28.7

\*Estimated.

Source: Based on information from Tong Cuc Thong Ke, *So Lieu Thong Ke, 1930-84* (Statistical Data, 1930-84), Hanoi, March 1985, 93.

Table 8. Electricity and Coal Production, Selected Years, 1975-85

	1975	1978	1980	1983	1984	1985
Electricity <sup>1</sup> .....	2428	3846	3680	4184	4853	5400
Coal <sup>2</sup> .....	5.20	6.00	5.30	6.20	4.90	6.00

<sup>1</sup> Millions of kilowatt hours.<sup>2</sup> Millions of tons.

Source: Based on information from *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik stran chlenov Soveta Ekonomicheskoi Vzaïmopomoshchi* (Statistical Yearbook of Member Countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), Moscow, 1986, 73, 74. Translation of Hanoi, Statistical General Department, Statistics Publishing House, *So Lieu Thong Ke, 1930-84, 1985*, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Southeast Asia Report, Reference Aid, Vietnam, Statistical Data 1930-84*, JPRS-SEA-86-108, June 25, 1986, 44.

Table 9. Soviet Economic and Military Assistance to Vietnam, 1978-86  
(in millions of United States dollars)

Year	Economic Assistance	Military Assistance	Total	Military Assistance as Percentage of Total
1978 .....	700-1,000	600-800	1,300-1,800	46.1-44.4
1979 .....	800-1,100	900-1,400	1,700-2,500	52.9-56.0
1980 .....	2,900-3,200	800-900	3,700-4,100	21.6-22.0
1981 .....	900	900-1,000	1,800-1,900	50.0-52.6
1982 .....	1,200	1,000	2,200	45.4
1983 .....	1,300	1,200	2,500	48.0
1984 .....	1,400	1,300	2,700	48.1
1985 .....	1,600	1,700	3,300	51.5
1986* .....	1,800	1,500	3,300	45.4

\*Estimated.

Source: Based on information from Douglas Pike, *Vietnam and the Soviet Union*, Boulder, Colorado, 1987, 139.

Table 10. Foreign Trade, 1976-86  
(in millions of United States dollars)

Year	Imports	Exports	Trade Balance
1976	825.9	215.0	- 610.9
1977	1,044.1	309.0	- 735.1
1978	1,465.8	406.7	- 1,059.1
1979	1,653.0	383.1	- 1,269.9
1980	1,576.7	398.6	- 1,178.1
1981	1,697.3	388.3	- 1,309.0
1982	1,599.6	479.7	- 1,119.9
1983	1,689.2	534.5	- 1,154.7
1984	1,802.5	570.5	- 1,232.0
1985	2,046.3	660.3	- 1,386.0
1986	2,506.9	739.5	- 1,767.4

Source: Based on information from International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*, Washington, 1987, 412-13.

Table 11. Trade with the Soviet Union, 1976-86  
(in millions of United States dollars)

Year	Imports	Exports	Trade Balance	Total	Trade with Soviet Union as Percentage of Total Foreign Trade
1976	308.4	84.4	- 224.0	392.8	37.7
1977	372.0	176.1	- 195.9	548.1	40.5
1978	446.4	222.5	- 223.9	668.9	35.7
1979	680.3	225.0	- 455.3	905.3	44.5
1980	700.1	242.4	- 457.7	942.5	47.7
1981	1,006.4	232.2	- 774.2	1,238.6	59.4
1982	1,107.4	284.4	- 823.0	1,391.8	66.9
1983	1,213.9	315.3	- 898.6	1,529.2	68.8
1984	1,230.1	316.0	- 914.1	1,546.1	65.2
1985	1,410.9	339.3	- 1,071.6	1,750.2	64.7
1986	1,878.1	419.2	- 1,458.9	2,297.3	70.8

Table 12. *Ministries, State Commissions, and Special Agencies of the Council of Ministers, 1987*

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<b>Ministries</b>	
Agriculture and Food Industry	Home Trade
Building	Information
Communications and Transportation	Interior
Culture	Justice
Education	Labor, War Invalids, and Social Welfare
Energy	Light Industry
Engineering and Metals	Marine Products
Finance	National Defense
Foreign Affairs	Public Health
Foreign Trade	Supply
Forestry	Water Conservancy
Higher and Vocational Education	

<b>State Commissions</b>	
Capital Construction Commission	State Planning Commission
Commission for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries	State Price Commission
State Inspection Commission	State Prize Commission
State Law Commission	State Science and Technology Commission
State Nationalities Commission	State Bank of Vietnam

<b>Special Agencies</b>	
<b>Commissions</b>	
Vietnam News Agency	Social Science Commission
Government Organization Commission	
<b>Departments</b>	
Chemicals General Department	Oil and Natural Gas General Department
Civil Aviation Department	Physical Education and Sports General Department
Food Administration Department	Political Tasks Department
Forestry Administration Department	Posts and Telecommunications Department
General Information Department	Railway General Department
General Rubber Department	Statistics General Department
Geography Department	Vocational Training General Department
Geology Department	
Land Management General Department	
Meteorology and Hydrology General Department	

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Source: Based on information from United States Central Intelligence Agency Directorate of Intelligence, *Directory of Officials of Vietnam*, Washington, July 1985, 27-52.





### Party Leaders in the 1980s

The Political Bureau elected during the Sixth National Party Congress in December 1986 consisted of thirteen full members and one alternate member. Five were new, one was appointed in June 1985, and the remainder were carried over from the previous Political Bureau, elected at the Fifth National Party Congress in 1982. The Political Bureau elected in 1982 numbered thirteen full and two alternate members. Between 1982 and 1986, one member died, three were voluntarily retired, three were removed, and one was promoted from alternate to full membership. Top party leadership during this period was therefore restricted to twenty-one individuals. The inner circle of party leadership, however, extended to a secondary, but nevertheless critical, tier of leadership represented by members of the Secretariat of the Central Committee who were not simultaneously members of the Political Bureau. In 1986 there were nine.

#### Political Bureau Members in December 1986

(Members listed in decreasing order of political importance.)

**Nguyen Van Linh**, elected Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP, Viet Nam Cong San Dang) general secretary in 1986, had been a rising political star since the end of the Second Indochina War. Born in the North in 1915, he had spent most of his political career in the South and much of that time underground in Saigon, where he worked closely with Le Duan in 1956. In 1960, because of his underground role in the South, he was elected secretly to the VCP's Central Committee. At war's end in 1975, Linh was appointed party secretary for Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) for a brief period, only to be replaced by Vo Van Kiet at the Fourth National Party Congress in 1976. In 1976 he was elected for the first time to the Political Bureau and ranked twelfth. He was dropped from the Political Bureau in 1982, however, apparently for his opposition to the rapid socialization of the South after the 1975 victory. He was renamed party secretary for Ho Chi Minh City in December 1981, where the success of his reformist economic policies gained the attention of the Political Bureau. Linh's reappointment in 1985, when he was ranked sixteenth, may have resulted from the intercession of then-party general secretary Le Duan and had the effect of strengthening the reform contingent of the VCP's leadership.

Following Le Duan's death in July 1986, he was returned to the Secretariat where he ranked immediately behind Duan's heir apparent, Truong Chinh. Before assuming the party's top position in December 1986, Linh advocated an end to discrimination against intellectuals who had served the former regime in South Vietnam and better treatment for Vietnam's Roman Catholics and the Chinese minority. He publicly thanked representatives of the Chinese community for their contribution to Vietnam.

**Pham Hung**, formerly ranked fourth in the Political Bureau, was promoted to the second-ranked position in December 1986. In June 1987, he was named to succeed Pham Van Dong as premier. Hung had been minister of interior from 1980 to 1986, and a vice premier since 1958. He began his career fighting the French in the South and directed the political campaign in the South during the Second Indochina War as head of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) and the Political Bureau's chief representative in South Vietnam from 1967 to 1975. His deputy during this period was Nguyen Van Linh. He was the first native South Vietnamese to attain senior party and government rank and was considered a hard-liner not because he was an ideologue but because he believed communist orthodoxy promoted better security. Although Hung was associated with the implementation of unpopular economic policies on money, prices, and wages, his career apparently suffered no lasting damage. He was born in 1912 and died on March 10, 1988, after having held the post of premier for only nine months.

**Vo Chi Cong**, who was ranked seventh in the 1982 Political Bureau and was promoted to third in 1986, was appointed to the largely ceremonial post of president in place of Truong Chinh in June 1987. His previous experience had been mainly in the field in Central Vietnam, and during the Second Indochina War he was a formal communist representative on the Hanoi-sponsored National Liberation Front central committee. From 1976 to 1980 Vo Chi Cong held the government posts of vice premier, minister of agriculture, and minister of fisheries, but reportedly he was fired from each post for administrative incompetence. A strong advocate of liberalization in agriculture, he was counted as being among Nguyen Van Linh's reform advocates on the Political Bureau and was an advocate for openness in the party. Cong was born in 1912.

**Do Muoi**, ranked eleventh on the Political Bureau in 1982 and fourth in 1986, directed the party's failed effort to socialize southern industry and commerce rapidly. Nevertheless, in 1986 he was identified with the reform program and subsequently was named to the Secretariat of the Central Committee as a resident economic expert. In 1984 he was called upon to explain the party's Sixth

Plenum resolution on reforming industrial management, and he has since spoken on behalf of agricultural reform. Following the death of Pham Hung in March 1988, he was named to replace Hung as premier. He was born in 1920 and established his career in Haiphong.

**Vo Van Kiet**, vice premier and chairman of the State Planning Commission in 1986, moved from the tenth to the fifth position on the Political Bureau. During the Second Indochina War, he worked with the Hanoi-controlled People's Revolutionary Party in the South; after the war, he became Ho Chi Minh City party secretary. In this capacity, Kiet initiated liberalized local trade and commerce policies that became the models for later national economic reforms. His rise in the party was comparatively rapid. Until the Fourth National Party Congress in 1976, when he appeared as an alternate member on the Political Bureau and as a member of the Central Committee, he had not been listed on any list of senior party officials. In company with Nguyen Van Linh, however, Kiet was initially elected to the Central Committee in 1960. Because of their sensitive positions in the South at the time, their Central Committee memberships were not revealed until after the war in 1976. He was an advocate of pragmatic economic reform, such as decentralized planning, loosened central controls, and socialization of the South without production disruption. The youngest Political Bureau member in 1986, he was born in 1922.

**Le Duc Anh**, formerly ranked twelfth on the Political Bureau and promoted to sixth in 1986, was appointed Minister of National Defense in early 1987. He was almost totally unknown until given full Political Bureau status in 1982. During the Second Indochina War, he worked closely with Vo Van Kiet and was deputy commander of the Ho Chi Minh City campaign; afterwards, he was appointed commanding general and political commissar of the military region bordering Cambodia. He commanded the Vietnamese task force that invaded Cambodia in 1978.

**Nguyen Duc Tam**, previously ranked thirteenth on the Political Bureau, was promoted in 1986 to seventh despite his position as head of the Organization Department of the Central Committee, which was the target of heavy criticism at the Sixth National Party Congress. His department was blamed for an unprecedented decline in the quality of party cadres. A protégé of Le Duc Tho, whom he replaced as head of the Organization Department, he built his career in his native Quang Ninh Province.

**Nguyen Co Thach**, promoted from alternate to full Political Bureau membership in 1986, was Vietnam's Minister of foreign affairs and ranked eighth on the Bureau. Immediately following

the Sixth National Party Congress, he was promoted to vice premier (deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers). Thach had been a career diplomat serving in diplomatic posts until his election to the Political Bureau as an alternate member in 1982, marking the first time that an official from a diplomatic background had entered the top party leadership. A protégé of Le Duc Tho, Thach was apparently a political moderate, although his support of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia demonstrated his alignment with official policy. Once a specialist on American affairs (he participated in the Paris negotiations to end the Second Indochina War with then-United States national security adviser Henry Kissinger), Thach became increasingly associated with Soviet and East European affairs and traveled to Moscow in 1978 with other top Vietnamese officials to sign the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. He was the first Political Bureau member after Ho Chi Minh to speak English, having learned it while serving in India in the late 1950s. According to one Western author, Thach's greatest value to the leadership may have been his ability to interpret the views of the English-speaking world. He was born in 1920.

**Dong Sy Nguyen**, promoted from alternate to full Political Bureau membership in 1986, was a cadre of surprising resilience. His election to the Political Bureau in 1982 was a surprise to most outsiders. Previously, Nguyen had been known as a middle-ranking communist and an unspectacular member of the Quartermasters and Engineers Corps of the armed forces. He was removed as minister of communications and transportation in June 1986 because of his alleged involvement with widespread corruption in that ministry.

**Tran Xuan Bach**, a relatively unknown official newly elevated to the Political Bureau in 1986, formerly headed the secret Vietnamese organization code-named "B-68," which supervised the administration of Cambodia. Bach was in Phnom Penh in 1979 as the personal secretary of Le Duc Tho, the Political Bureau member in charge of Cambodia at that time. In the early 1960s he led the Vietnam Fatherland Front, and from 1977 to 1982 he chaired the Central Committee cabinet. In 1982 he was elected a full member of the Central Committee and secretary of the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Following the Sixth National Party Congress in December 1986, he ranked third on the Secretariat and tenth on the Political Bureau.

**Nguyen Thanh Binh**, newly elected to the Political Bureau, was elected secretary of the Hanoi municipal party committee in 1986. Before that he had been a Central Committee secretary. A forceful advocate for the party's agricultural reforms and for the gradual

rather than rapid socialization of southern agriculture, Binh was a strong critic of the party's failure to revise agricultural policies.

**Doan Khue**, a new member of the Political Bureau in 1986, was first elected to the Central Committee in 1976, but was virtually unknown except for his military background. He was former commander and political officer of Military Region V (central Vietnam) of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), and in 1987 was appointed PAVN chief of staff.

**Mai Chi Tho**, the lowest ranking of the new full Political Bureau members, was appointed minister of interior in early 1987. He was a former Ho Chi Minh City deputy secretary and mayor and was believed to have overall responsibility for security in southern Vietnam. Having been a past subordinate of Nguyen Van Linh and Vo Van Kiet, Tho was a strong supporter of economic reform and increased openness in the party. He was born in 1916 and is a brother of Le Duc Tho.

**Dao Duy Tung**, named as an alternate member of the Political Bureau in 1986 and a full member in 1988, was criticized, nevertheless, in the political report of the Sixth National Party Congress for his leadership of the Propaganda and Training Department. During his tenure, the department was faulted for failing to meet the party's goals in carrying out propaganda and training work. First appointed deputy chief of the Propaganda and Training Department in 1974, he was promoted to chief in 1982. In 1976 he was elected an alternate member of the Central Committee, and he attained full membership in 1982. He was named editor-in-chief of *Tap Chi Cong San* (Communist Review) in 1977 and director of the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) in 1982. In 1986 he ranked fourth on the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

## **Political Bureau Members Voluntarily Retired in 1986**

**Truong Chinh** retired at age 79 as the incumbent VCP general secretary, having held the position for some five months following the death of Le Duan. Previously Chinh had ranked second on the Political Bureau and was chairman of the Council of State and of the National Defense Council, as well as chief of state. He stepped down as president in June 1987 and was succeeded by Vo Chi Cong. A founding member of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), Chinh was viewed by party colleagues as a theoretician and as the leader of the party ideologues. He initially opposed economic and liberal agricultural reforms and was firm in seeking to maintain Vietnam's "special relationship" with Laos and Cambodia. He suffered a brief eclipse from 1956 to 1958 for his leading role in the failed agrarian reform program in the North, but he retained a

strong following among party cadres. A firm believer in such Maoist theories as relying on poor and landless peasants to carry out revolution, he was the leader of a pro-Chinese element in the party hierarchy in the early 1970s. But after 1979 Chinh strongly condemned the Chinese, rejected the idea of emphasizing the role of the peasantry and ignoring the role of the working class, and supported Hanoi's alliance with Moscow as essential. As early as 1985 he publicly endorsed reform, but by 1986, nevertheless, he appeared out of step with the direction the party was beginning to take. He died September 30, 1988.

**Pham Van Dong**, the only one of the three retirees known to be ill when he stepped down, resigned from his number-two Political Bureau position, but retained his prime ministership until June 1987, when he was replaced by Pham Hung. Like Chinh, Dong was a founding member of the ICP, but he was a political moderate and probably the most popular of his generation of leaders. He was born in 1906.

**Le Duc Tho** was ranked fourth on the Political Bureau when he retired, but his rank belied his true power. Tho was a protégé of Le Duan and before Duan's death was arguably the most influential Political Bureau member and possibly the party chief's preferred successor. As an adviser to the Central Committee after his retirement, his influence probably remained considerable. Tho was also a founding member of the ICP; he apparently was at Pac Bo for the formation of the Viet Minh in 1940 and with Ho Chi Minh when the provisional government was established in Hanoi in August 1945. Like many of his generation of communists, he spent much of his early adulthood in prison. In 1950 Tho was sent south by the party, and in 1951 he helped establish the VCP's Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), where he assisted Le Duan. Later, he played the role of trouble-shooter for Duan, representing the party secretary in the South during the final offensive in 1975, on the Cambodian border when fighting erupted there in 1978, and on the Chinese border immediately before and after the Chinese invasion in 1979. Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia was apparently Tho's responsibility after 1978, and he headed Commission Sixty-Eight, the VCP special commission handling Cambodian affairs. In 1982 he emerged as a supporter of economic reform. His birth date is variously given as 1911 or 1912.

## **Political Bureau Members Removed in 1986**

**Van Tien Dung** was one of the most prominent casualties of the Sixth National Party Congress in 1986. He was minister of national defense and ranked sixth on the Political Bureau before being

dropped for his or his family's involvement in corruption scandals. He was, nevertheless, permitted to retain his seat on the Central Committee. PAVN had earlier given Dung a vote of no-confidence when it failed to elect him as one of the seventy-two delegates chosen for the Sixth Party Congress. Considered a government lame duck following the loss of his Political Bureau seat, he lost his defense post to his protégé, Le Duc Anh, shortly afterward. Dung had commanded the forces that won Hanoi's final victory over the Saigon government in 1975 and is credited with the "blooming lotus" technique of warfare, which was used to take Saigon and was used again in Cambodia four years later. The technique calls for troops first to assault the heart of a city in order to seize the enemy command center and then to proceed to occupy suburban areas at leisure. He was a formidable conservative, vocal in stressing the need for a strong defense, and an adamant supporter of the continued Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. He was born in 1917.

**To Huu**, fired as vice chairman of the Council of Ministers in June 1986, was reported to be responsible for a currency change in September 1985 that led to disastrous inflation. He had ranked ninth on the Political Bureau before his removal and had held more truly significant party and government positions than virtually any other senior Political Bureau member. As a protégé of Truong Chinh, Huu was a leader among the ideologues and an opponent of economic reforms. He had been in charge of party propaganda when tapped to be vice premier and, in the early 1980s, was a leading candidate to succeed Premier Pham Van Dong. Huu was born in 1920.

**Chu Huy Man** ranked eighth when removed from the Political Bureau and the Central Committee. Prior to the Sixth National Party Congress, he had headed the army's political department and reportedly was severely criticized by PAVN for his autocratic leadership style. Like Van Tien Dung, he was not initially elected to represent PAVN at the Sixth Party Congress. Man was a protégé of former Minister of National Defense Vo Nguyen Giap and one of the most important battlefield commanders during the Second Indochina War, most notably in the Central Highlands. He was born in 1920.

## **Political Bureau Members Deceased in 1986**

**Le Duan**, until his death in July 1986, was VCP general secretary; he had been elevated to the post following the 1969 death of Ho Chi Minh, who had groomed Duan as his successor beginning in the late 1950s. Under Duan's leadership, the war in the South was successfully concluded, the country was reunified,

Cambodia was invaded and occupied, relations with China were severed, and dependence upon the Soviet Union for economic and military aid increased dramatically. After initially supporting overly ambitious policies that worsened Vietnam's economic condition, he encouraged gradual political change coupled with moderate economic reforms. These included financial incentives for peasants and workers, some decentralization in planning, and a broadening of economic relations with the rest of the world. Le Duc Tho, Nguyen Van Linh, Pham Hung, and Vo Van Kiet were close colleagues. During his career, Duan was considered to be colorless, more an organizer than a diplomat. He never held a government position. In the spring of 1985, a year before his death, he was described in a series of articles in the party newspaper, *Nhan Dan* (*People's Daily*), as the architect of the 1975 victory in the South and as the dominant figure in Vietnamese communist history next to Ho Chi Minh. He was born in 1908.

### **Central Committee Secretariat Members in 1986**

Membership on the Secretariat of the Central Committee stood at thirteen in 1986. The four highest ranking members—Nguyen Van Linh, Nguyen Duc Tam, Tran Xuan Bach, and Dao Duy Tung—held concurrent positions on the Political Bureau and are described above. The remaining nine are listed below in order of decreasing political importance.

**Tran Kien**, also known as Nguyen Tuan Tai, was formerly secretary of party chapters in Haiphong, Gia Lai Kon Tum, Dac Lac Province, and Nghia Binh Province. He was first appointed secretary of the Secretariat of the Central Committee and chairman of the Central Control Commission in 1982 and reappointed in 1986. He was minister of forestry from 1979 to 1981.

**Le Phuoc Tho** was elected an alternate member of the Central Committee in 1976 and a full member in 1982. He was appointed a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee in 1986. At the Fifth National Party Congress in 1982, he was selected to address the congress on the subject of agriculture, and in 1987, he was listed in Soviet sources as head of the party's agriculture department.

**Nguyen Quyét**, a lieutenant general in PAVN in 1986, was appointed to full membership on the Central Committee at the Fourth National Party Congress in 1976 and reappointed in 1982 and 1986. In December 1986, at the Sixth National Party Congress, he was appointed to the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Previously he had been commander of the Capital Military Region, Hanoi, and commander of Military Region III. In 1986



he was a member of the Central Military Party Committee and deputy head of the General Political Department. He replaced Chu Huy Man as director of the General Political Department in February 1987.

**Dam Quang Trung**, an ethnic Tay, was a major general and commander of Military Region I (the Sino-Vietnamese border region) at the time of the Chinese invasion in 1979. He was promoted to lieutenant general in 1981. In 1976 he was elected to the Central Committee, and in 1982, while still commander of Military Region I, became a member of the Central Military Party Committee. He was a member of the National Assembly from 1976 to 1981 and in 1981 was appointed to the Council of State.

**Vu Oanh** was elected an alternate to the Central Committee at the Fourth National Party Congress in 1976. He was elevated to full membership in 1982 and assumed the directorship of the VCP's Agriculture Department, a position he continued to hold until 1987. He was elected to the Secretariat at the Sixth National Party Congress in December 1986.

**Nguyen Khanh**, elected as an alternate to the Central Committee in 1982, gained full membership and a seat on the Secretariat in 1986. Appointed chief of the Central Committee cabinet (replacing Tran Xuan Bach) and director of the General Affairs and Administration departments of the Central Committee in 1982, he assumed similar duties in the government when appointed general secretary and a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers in February 1987.

**Tran Quyet**, when appointed to the Secretariat at the Sixth National Party Congress in December 1986, had been a full member of the Central Committee since 1976. As a vice minister of Public Security from the mid-1960s and vice minister of Interior from 1975, he specialized in security matters. A northerner, he was sent to Ho Chi Minh City in 1976 to establish the Ministry of Interior's Permanent Office for South Vietnam as a measure to more firmly impose North Vietnamese control. Between 1975 and 1980, he was commander and political officer of the Ministry of Interior's People's Public Security Force and held the rank of lieutenant general.

**Tran Quoc Huong**, also known as Tran Nach Ban and Muoi Huong, was elected to full membership on the Central Committee in 1982, under the name Tran Nach Ban. A southerner, he was formerly a standing member of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee and head of its Organization Department. In 1983, under the name Tran Quoc Huong, he was appointed deputy secretary of the Hanoi Party Committee, and in 1986 was named to the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the VCP. His

government positions have included vice chairmanship of the State Inspection Commission, to which he was appointed in 1985, and chairmanship of the Vietnam Tourism General Department, which he assumed in 1986.

**Pham The Duyet**, previously a coal mine director in Quang Ninh Province and vice chairman and general secretary of the Vietnamese Confederation of Trade Unions, was elected a Central Committee alternate member at the Fifth National Party Congress in 1982. At the time of his election to full Central Committee membership at the Sixth National Party Congress in 1986 and his succeeding appointment to the Secretariat of the Central Committee, he was also acting chairman of the Confederation. In 1987 he was promoted to chairman.

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## Glossary

- Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)—The military ground forces of the South Vietnamese government (Republic of Vietnam) until its collapse in April 1975. ARVN originated in the Vietnamese military units raised by French authorities to defend the Associated State of Vietnam in the early 1950s. During the Second Indochina War (*q.v.*), it grew to over 1 million men and women organized into eleven army divisions (plus specialized units, such as Rangers and Special Forces) deployed in four Corps Tactical Zones (redesignated as Military Regions in 1971).
- Asian Development Bank (ADB)—Established in 1966, the ADB assists in economic development and promotes growth and cooperation in developing member countries. Membership includes both developed and developing countries in Asia and developed countries in the West.
- Black Flag forces—A band of mostly Chinese adventurers who fled to northern Vietnam after the collapse of the Taiping Rebellion (1851–64) in China. They eventually placed themselves at the service of the imperial court in Hue and fought the French forces in the 1883–84 Tonkin campaign.
- boat people—Refugees who fled Vietnam by sea after 1975. Many fell victim to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Thailand, drowned, or endured starvation and dehydration as a result of their escape in ill-equipped and undersized vessels. Those who reached safety in neighboring Southeast Asian countries were accorded temporary asylum in refugee camps while awaiting permanent resettlement in industrialized Western nations willing to accept them.
- bonze—A general term for a Buddhist monk (as opposed to the more specific *bhikku*, meaning an ordained monk).
- Cao Dai—Indigenous Vietnamese religion centered in Tay Ninh Province, southern Vietnam. It was founded and initially propagated by Ngo Van Chieu, a minor official who, in 1919, claimed to have had a series of revelations. The faith grew under the leadership of Le Van Trung, its first “pope” or Supreme Chief, chosen in 1925. Doctrinally, the religion is a syncretic blend of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Western nineteenth-century romanticism. Before the fall of Saigon, the Cao Dai had about 1 to 2 million adherents.

*chi bo*—A party chapter composed of a collection of party cells (*to dang*), the lowest organizational echelon of the Indochinese and later the Vietnamese Communist Party.

*chua*—A lord or prince. The hereditary title used by the Trinh and Nguyen families, who ruled Vietnam in the name of the emperor during the later Le Dynasty in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

Colombo Plan—Founded in 1951 and known as the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia until it was expanded in 1977 and called the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in Asia and the Pacific. It is an arrangement that permits a developing member country to approach a developed member country for assistance on a one-to-one basis. Assistance may be technical or in the form of capital or commodity aid.

Co Mat Vien—An advisory council set up by Emperor Minh Mang following the rebellion of Le Van Khoi in the 1830s.

Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin—Established in 1957 under the sponsorship of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Committee aims to develop water resources in the lower Mekong basin through improvements in hydroelectric power, irrigation, flood control, watershed management, and navigation. Its membership is limited to Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Communist International—Also called the Comintern or Third International, it was founded in Moscow in 1919 to coordinate the world communist movement. Officially disbanded in 1943, the Comintern was replaced from 1947 to 1954 by the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau), in which only the Soviet and the ruling East European communist parties (except for Yugoslavia, which was expelled in 1948) and the French and the Italian communist parties were represented. The Cominform was dissolved in 1956.

comprador—Vietnamese communist term (used originally in China to mean purchasing agent) applied disparagingly to the middleman who extracts a profit without engaging in economic production, that is, a “comprador capitalist.” The term is also applied to an entrepreneur in Cholon, Ho Chi Minh City’s predominantly Chinese sister city.

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)—Also abbreviated CEMA and CMEA, the organization was established in 1949 to promote economic cooperation among socialist bloc countries and is headquartered in Moscow. Its members in the



- 1980s included the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Cuba, Mongolia, and Vietnam.
- democratic centralism—A basic Marxist-Leninist organizational principle accepted by all communist parties, including the Vietnamese (most recently at the Fourth National Party Congress in December 1976). It prescribes a hierarchical framework of party structures purportedly established through democratic elections.
- dong (D)—Vietnam's monetary unit, which in mid-1989 had an exchange rate of US\$1 to D4,500.
- First Indochina War (1946–54)—The anticolonial conflict, also known as the Viet Minh War, between France and the Viet Minh, a Vietnamese communist-dominated coalition of Indochinese nationalist elements led by veteran revolutionary Ho Chi Minh. The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 marked the final episode of the war. The conflict was brought to an end officially by the Geneva Conference of July 1954 and its resulting agreements.
- fiscal year (FY)—January 1 to December 31.
- gross domestic product (GDP)—The value of domestic goods and services produced by an economy over a certain period, usually one year. Only output of goods for final consumption and investment is included because the values of primary and intermediate production are assumed to be included in final prices. Reductions for depreciation of physical assets are normally not included.
- Group of 77—Founded in 1964 as a forum for developing countries to negotiate with developed countries for development aid, the original 77 developing nations had expanded by the 1980s to include the 127 members of the Nonaligned Movement (*q. v.*).
- Hoa—Term applied by the Vietnamese to the ethnic Chinese residents of Vietnam.
- Hoa Hao—Indigenous Vietnamese religion centered in An Giang Province, southern Vietnam. It was founded in the 1930s by Huynh Phu So, the son of a village elder in Chau Doc Province. Doctrinally, the faith is a variant of Mahayana Buddhism, but allows no intermediary between man and the Supreme Being. Before the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Hoa Hao had more than 1 million adherents.
- Ho Chi Minh Trail—An intricate network of jungle trails, paths, and roads leading from the panhandle of northern Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia into the border provinces of southern Vietnam. At the height of the Second Indochina War

(*q. v.*), it was a major resupply artery for Hanoi's armed forces operating in South Vietnam.

**Indochina Federation**—A political concept, never fully realized, joining the three Indochinese states into a confederation, first proposed at the Indochinese Communist Party Central Committee meeting in October 1930. The government of France resurrected the term in 1946 to describe a limited internal self-government granted to the states of Vietnam (including Cochinchina), Laos, and Cambodia. In the 1980s, the term was used disparagingly by some observers and analysts to categorize Vietnam's military presence in, and influence over, Laos and Cambodia.

**International Monetary Fund (IMF)**—Established along with the World Bank in 1945, the IMF is a specialized agency affiliated with the United Nations and is responsible for stabilizing international exchange loans to its members (including industrialized and developing countries) when they experience balance of payments difficulties. These loans frequently carry conditions that require substantial internal economic adjustments by the recipients, most of which are developing countries.

**International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT)**—Established by two international agreements concluded at Washington, D.C. in August 1971, and effective in February 1973, INTELSAT was formed to carry forward the development, construction, operation, and maintenance of the global commercial telecommunications satellite system. In the 1980s, there were 109 signatory member nations and 30 nonsignatory user nations.

**Khmer Rouge**—The name given to the Cambodian communists by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the 1960s. Later, the term (although a misnomer) was applied to the insurgents of varying ideological backgrounds who opposed the Khmer Republic regime of Lon Nol. Between 1975 and 1978, it denoted the Democratic Kampuchea regime led by the radical Pol Pot faction of the Kampuchean (or Khmer) Communist Party. After being driven from Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, the Khmer Rouge went back to guerrilla warfare and joined forces with two noncommunist insurgent movements to form the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.

**missing-in-action (MIA)**—United States military term for servicemen who remained unaccounted for at the end of the Second Indochina War (*q. v.*). In the 1980s, rumors persisted that some MIAs were still alive and had been detained involuntarily in Vietnam after the war.

- National Assembly—The highest organ of government in Vietnam, according to the 1980 Constitution. The National Assembly is empowered with both constitutional and legislative authority. It can, theoretically at least, elect and remove members of upper-echelon government bodies, such as the Council of State and Council of Ministers; it may also pass laws, raise taxes, approve the state budget, and amend the constitution.
- new economic zones—Population resettlement scheme undertaken in southern Vietnam after 1975 to increase food production and alleviate population pressure in congested urban areas, especially Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). The sites selected for resettlement previously had been undeveloped or had been abandoned in the turbulence of war.
- Nonaligned Movement (NAM)—Formed as the result of a series of increasingly structured nonaligned conferences, the first of which met at Belgrade, Yugoslavia in September 1961, the NAM's purpose is to insure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nonaligned nations. In the 1980s, there were 127 member nations.
- Parrot's Beak—The part of the Cambodian province of Svay Rieng that juts into the southern Vietnamese provinces of Tay Ninh and Long An. During the South Vietnamese and United States incursion into Cambodia in 1970, and again during the Vietnamese invasion that drove the Khmer Rouge from power in 1978, the area was the scene of heavy fighting.
- People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN)—The military forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (until 1976) and, after reunification, of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. During the Second Indochina War (*q.v.*), PAVN bore the brunt of the fighting against the United States military forces in Vietnam, but was consistently able to recoup its losses and infiltrate units south by means of the Ho Chi Minh Trail (*q.v.*). Failing to topple the Saigon government during the Tet Offensive of 1968, PAVN undertook its first conventional invasion of South Vietnam in the Easter Offensive of 1972. This attempt ended in defeat, but PAVN's next effort, the Spring Offensive of 1975, quickly overran the ineffectual ARVN resistance and toppled the Saigon government, thereby bringing to a close the Second Indochina War.
- Produced National Income (PNI)—A measure of an economy's material production that excludes income generated by the service sector and depreciation on capital equipment. It is used to measure controlled or communist economies where accounting procedures may ignore the service sector as "unproductive."

Ruble—Monetary unit of the Soviet Union, which in mid-1989 had an exchange rate of US\$1 to Ruble 0.63.

search and destroy missions—Offensive military operations undertaken by United States combat units in Vietnam to find and neutralize the enemy, especially when the enemy's strength and disposition had not been fixed precisely. The capture and holding of territory during such operations was not a priority.

Second Indochina War (1954-75)—Armed conflict that pitted Viet Cong insurgents native to southern Vietnam and regular PAVN (*q.v.*) units with Chinese and Soviet logistical and matériel support on one side against ARVN (*q.v.*), United States, and smaller forces from the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Australia, Thailand and New Zealand on the other. Most of the ground fighting occurred in southern Vietnam. However, part of the conflict also involved an intensive air war over North Vietnam and Laos from 1965-73 and combat between competing indigenous forces in Laos and Cambodia.

*to dang*—A party cell, the lowest organizational echelon of the Indochinese and later the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Viet Cong—Contraction of the term Viet Nam Cong San (Vietnamese communists), the name applied by the governments of the United States and South Vietnam to the communist insurgents in rebellion against the latter government, beginning around 1957. The Vietnamese communists never used the term themselves, but referred to their movement as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (also known as the National Liberation Front), formally inaugurated in December 1960.

Viet Minh—Contraction of the term Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnam Independence League), a coalition of nationalist elements dominated by the communists and led by veteran revolutionary Ho Chi Minh. The movement first identified itself in May 1941, when it called for an uprising against the French colonial government. It proclaimed the independence of Vietnam on September 2, 1945, and led the anti-French guerrilla war that followed, until the victory at Dien Bien Phu brought the conflict to an end.

World Bank—The informal name used to designate a group of three affiliated international institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The IBRD, established in 1945, has the primary purpose of providing loans to developing countries for productive projects. The IDA, a legally separate loan fund

administered by the staff of the IBRD, was set up in 1960 to furnish credits to the poorest developing countries on much easier terms than those of conventional IBRD loans. The IFC, founded in 1956, supplements the activities of the IBRD through loans and assistance designed specifically to encourage the growth of productive private enterprises in less developed countries. The president and certain senior officers of the IBRD hold the same positions in the ICF. The three institutions are owned by the governments of the countries that subscribe their capital. To participate in the World Bank group, member states must first belong to the International Monetary Fund (*q.v.*).



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