



After countless foreign invasions and wars: Vietnam cultivates its neutrality – to its own advantage

This week, Vietnam celebrates the 50th anniversary of its reunification and independence. Here are some thoughts that are important in the current geopolitical environment.

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This week, Vietnam celebrates the 50th anniversary of its reunification and independence, which was preceded by years of bloody wars: first *the French War* from 1946 to 1954, then *the American War* from 1955 to 1975, known in the West as the Vietnam War. This war is actually still going on and continues to claim victims: People are still dying from unexploded American bombs and mines. And babies are still being born dead or with terrible deformities because the USA

sprayed highly toxic dioxin ("Agent Orange") during the war. The author himself supports a Vietnamese orphanage for children who have been so badly damaged by American dioxin that they will never be able to survive on their own:



Vietnamese orphanage supported by the author (Photo: Felix Abt)

Nevertheless, there is no longer any resentment towards the Americans. They are welcome in Vietnam and treated politely. A few decades ago, things were a little different: as I walked through the streets of Hanoi on the day of the terrorist attack (or was it perhaps an inside job to construct a pretext for the Iraq war?) on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, I was surprised by a loud concert of honking horns: the joy ("Schadenfreude") of the Vietnamese, who had been mistreated by the Americans and did not shy away from bombing hospitals in Hanoi during the war, was unmistakable.

Such spontaneous demonstrations, which were occasionally directed against China, were tolerated by the authorities, but not approved of. To this day, Vietnam's official policy is to maintain friendly relations with all nations. The Vietnamese are pragmatists: they do not want to forget history, but at the same time look to the future and strive for harmony and prosperity.

The history of Vietnam is a history of foreign invasions

The Vietnamese are proud of their past, which is a history of foreign invaders that they withstood. Twice the Mongols tried to overrun the country, but the Vietnamese successfully repelled them. Before and after that, there were other attacks from the north - from various Chinese dynasties. Women also distinguished themselves as heroes: The two Trung sisters or General Ba Trieu successfully led Vietnamese troops against the invaders. Trieu, who I also discuss in my video "[The Women Generals & Unique Heroes In Vietnam, Who Shaped History!](#)", declared: *"I will defeat the aggressors, reclaim our land, break the shackles of serfdom and not allow myself to become a man's concubine."*



**Lady Trieu Au,
Vietnamese General:**

***"I will defeat
the aggressors,
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General Ba Trieu (Illustration:Abt/ScreenshotVideo)

The Vietnamese kingdom of Dai Viet was also attacked several times from the south by the kingdom of Champa (192 to 1832 AD), which was located in what is now central and southern Vietnam. Among other things, the then Vietnamese capital Thang Long was devastated. The retaliation of the enraged Vietnamese was not long in coming: they overran the Champa kingdom and ended its rule - not least thanks to the superior military technology they received from their Chinese neighbors - and expanded their country to Central and South Vietnam from 1471.

During the Second World War, Vietnam was then invaded and occupied by Japan, and many of its inhabitants were oppressed, mistreated or murdered. However, as with China, relations with Japan have long since normalized.



Chinese President Xi Jinping has barely said goodbye to his state visit to Hanoi when a high-ranking government delegation arrives from Tokyo. The Vietnamese presidential palace is therefore currently decorated with Vietnamese and Japanese flags. (Photo: Felix Abt)

Vietnam's geographical location - its long coastline, proximity to China and fertile land - made it both a target and a buffer zone. Yet despite repeated invasions, Vietnam maintained a strong sense of identity, often absorbing foreign influences while fiercely resisting foreign domination.

Resistance to colonial powers

The Vietnamese also resisted colonization: first by the Chinese for almost a thousand years (111 BC - 939 AD and again 1407-1428), and later by the French for almost a hundred years (1862 - 1954). France treated Vietnam as a colony for economic gain. The country's population and resources were exploited for this purpose. To optimize its profit, France brought Western education to Vietnam, giving priority to the French language and neglecting Vietnamese language education, and built infrastructure according to its own needs (railroads, legal system). The most visible French heritage today is the baguette: a long, thin French loaf of bread known for its crispy crust and soft interior that is eaten everywhere in the rice stronghold of Vietnam.

However, it was China that long sought to assimilate Vietnam into its empire by introducing Confucianism, the Chinese language, architecture, bureaucracy and cultural practices. Civil service examinations, Confucian education and food exchanges were an important part of these efforts. The Chinese philosopher Confucius, who lived 2,500 years ago, preferred meritocracy to feudal class society.

He advocated education as the key means of promoting the prosperity of individuals regardless of their social background. It is no coincidence that every year Vietnamese students from modest backgrounds manage to study at top American universities such as Harvard, Yale and MIT and receive scholarships from them.



This building was erected by the local Vietnamese authorities in Ninh Binh in honor of Confucius and "to encourage young people to study hard". (Photo:Felix Abt)

Despite the divergences, Vietnam's geographical proximity to China makes cooperation inevitable. Professor Kishore Mahbubani, a former top diplomat from Singapore, quoted the remarks of a senior Vietnamese politician: *"Any Vietnamese who wants to become head of state must be able to stand up to China and get along with China at the same time."*

The Vietnamese are building artificial islands in the South China Sea to which they are laying territorial claims. They are doing this discreetly and inconspicuously, without the help of a foreign power - so as not to provoke the Chinese. Nor will they allow themselves to be used by the US as a battering ram against China. Nor would they allow themselves to be used by China against the USA.

No appeasement, but neutrality for the effective defense of one's own interests

The United States is Vietnam's largest export market with an export volume of around 110 billion dollars. China, however, is Vietnam's largest trading partner with a total trade turnover of 175.57 billion dollars in 2022. In contrast to pseudo-neutral Switzerland, which has imposed 2,250 sanctions against Russian citizens, companies and organizations in connection with the Ukraine conflict, Vietnam has

not imposed a single sanction against Russia. On the contrary: Vietnam and Russia maintain intensive contacts, with high-ranking Vietnamese and Russian politicians meeting regularly and developing economic and cultural relations.

Direct flights from Russian cities to Nha Trang are steadily increasing. Neutral Vietnam is benefiting from Russia, the European country with the strongest economic growth. And on posters throughout the city of Nha Trang in southern Vietnam - often referred to by tourists as the "beach capital" of Vietnam - Russian tourists have recently been warmly welcomed in Vietnamese:



Photo: Felix Abt

Switzerland's political and media elites have now forgotten that the Swiss Confederation has been spared from war as a neutral state since the Treaty of Paris in 1815 and has therefore been able to prosper as a naturally poor country - without natural resources, without sufficient agriculture to feed the population, without access to the sea. Vietnam is pursuing precisely this concept, which is being betrayed by the Swiss elite today: Hanoi is aware of the fact that Ukraine, or rather the regime that came to power in 2014 through a Western-backed coup against the democratically elected government, embarked on the path of destroying its own country [when it abandoned its constitutionally enshrined neutrality](#).



A good reason to celebrate: Vietnamese people go out and enjoy delicious food to mark the 50th anniversary of national reunification this week (Photo: Felix Abt)

The Vietnamese also know that the Philippines, which allowed the construction of American missile bases against China, risk the destruction of their country in the event of a conflict between the USA and China - as does the Chinese province of Taiwan, whose ruling separatists allowed the stationing of American soldiers. The most important lesson Vietnam learns from its own history and from studying the history of other countries is therefore this: Do not interfere in foreign affairs and do not make yourself an instrument of foreign interests!

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