

The Vietnam-Soviet Union-China Triangle Relations during the Vietnam War (1964-1973) from Vietnamese Source

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Although most diplomatic history is written as an account of relations between two nations, in reality many interactions in international relations involve more than simple bilateral exchanges. This paper is intended to remedy this weakness in the literature by analyzing the strategic triangle created by Vietnam, Soviet Union, and the Peoples' Republic of China during the Vietnam War (1964-1973).

A triangular framework is appropriate for this purpose because each of the bilateral links – Vietnam – Soviet Union; Vietnam – China; China – Soviet Union -- was affected by the third member of the triangle. Although both the Soviet Union and China claimed to be “doing their international proletarian duty” by supporting Vietnam in the war against the United States, at the same time both countries followed their own policy and interests.

The difficulty for Vietnam consisted in maintaining the support of both the Soviet Union and China for its construction of a socialist system in the North and its struggle for the national reunification in the South on the one hand, and in not becoming involved in the Sino-Soviet conflict on the other.

Based on Vietnamese sources, the paper tries to examine the complexity of this triangle relationship and argues that, although Vietnam achieved its aim, it was a pawn in a global ideological and power struggle among big powers.