

Hồ Chí Minh and the Leaders and People of China during the Resistance War against the United States

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Abstract: This article provides a qualitative approach to critically examine the interplay of personal and strategic relationships between Hồ Chí Minh and critical leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi, throughout the resistance war against the United States (1954-1975). The primary data were collected from archival materials of the Communist Parties of Vietnam and China, including meeting minutes, diplomatic correspondence, and political reports related to military and political aid decisions. Additionally, memoirs of the leaders and international studies provide a more comprehensive perspective. The research findings highlight that the personal relationship between Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders was instrumental in securing comprehensive support from China. This article provides novel insights by delving into the personal dimensions of international relations, an aspect often overlooked in previous studies that primarily focused on strategic and national policy levels. Furthermore, it offers a more holistic view of how these personal relationships significantly contributed to Vietnam's success in the resistance war against the U.S.

Keywords: Hồ Chí Minh, Vietnam Communist Party, Chinese Communist Party, China leaders, Vietnam-China relations.

Subject classification: Political Science.

1. Introduction

The resistance war against United States (1955-1975) stands as one of the most critical periods in modern Vietnamese history, highlighting the resolute struggle of the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of

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Vietnam (CPV). Vietnam's victory was not attributable solely to its internal strength but was significantly bolstered by substantial support from allied nations, particularly China. During this era, the relationship between Vietnam and China transcended mere neighborly ties, evolving into a close collaboration between the two Communist Parties, led respectively by President Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi.

In the context of the Cold War, the alliance between Vietnam and China was not predicated solely on a shared communist ideological foundation. It was consolidated through deep personal interactions between their leaders. As a talented leader and a skilled diplomat, President Hồ Chí Minh cultivated built a relationship of mutual trust and support with the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These interpersonal dynamics were strategic and played a crucial role in ensuring comprehensive military, economic, and political assistance from China for Vietnam's resistance war.

Hồ Chí Minh frequently engaged in diplomatic exchanges with Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi, establishing a resilient framework for cooperation between the two Parties. This collaboration proved vital to Vietnam's victory in the resistance war and ensured stability in Vietnam-China relations amidst the Cold War's heightened tensions. On numerous occasions, Mao Zedong emphasized the necessity of supporting Vietnam to counter U.S. expansionism in Southeast Asia, viewing it as a critical front in the broader global anti-imperialist struggle (Agency, 1964; Jian, 1995).

However, this relationship was not devoid of challenges. The competition for influence between China and the Soviet Union within the international communist movement presented significant hurdles for Vietnam in balancing its relations with these two powers. Hồ Chí Minh masterfully calibrated Vietnam's foreign policy to ensure both China and the Soviet Union continued to provide the necessary support for the resistance war. This balancing act was a remarkable diplomatic feat, underscoring Hồ Chí Minh's exceptional diplomatic capabilities in navigating relationships with strategic allies (Sebenius and Kogan, 2016; Christensen, 2011; Morris, 1999).

Additionally, the article examines the role of the Chinese people in supporting Vietnam's resistance. Support was not confined to government policies directives but rather extended into mass movements in China, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. These movements organized campaigns to mobilize essential provisions for Vietnam, such as food and medicine. Such movements reflected the profound solidarity between the people of the two nations in their shared anti-imperialist struggle (Path, 2016). This support stemmed from state policy and the empathy and internationalist spirit of the Chinese people toward Vietnam.

The primary objective of this article is to answer the question: How did the personal relationships between President Hồ Chí Minh and the leaders of the CCP influence China's military and political aid decisions for Vietnam during the period

of the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance? The article seeks to clarify the role of these personal relationships within the Cold War's complex international relations and the solidarity among socialist countries. Furthermore, it will examine the influence of Chinese mass movements in supporting Vietnam's resistance, broadening the perspective on the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

This research is essential as it fills a gap in previous studies, which often focused solely on strategic and national diplomatic policies, without delving deeply into the role of personal factors in shaping and strengthening Vietnam-China relations. Examining the personal relationships between President Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders provides a deeper understanding of critical decisions during the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. It offers a more comprehensive view of the role of individual leaders in international relations. In today's increasingly complex international landscape, analyzing the role of historical individuals can provide valuable lessons for researchers and policymakers.

2. Literature review

Numerous studies have focused on Vietnam-China relations during the period of the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance, particularly from political and military perspectives. However, most of these studies have not profoundly explored the role of personal relationships between high-ranking leaders - an element that this paper identifies as significantly influencing aid decisions and strategic cooperation.

Duiker (2020) provides a comprehensive account of Vietnam's military strategy within the context of receiving support from China. However, the author does not delve into the personal interactions between Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong - a factor crucial in strengthening bilateral relations and securing aid from China. Similarly, Sophie Quinn-Judge (2002) focuses on Hồ Chí Minh's activities in China, analyzing how he built relationships with Chinese revolutionaries. However, her work does not sufficiently address the roles of these leaders during the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance.

Other studies, such as Chen Jian (1995) and Qiang (2000) have analyzed China's military and economic assistance to Vietnam. However, these works primarily concentrate on strategic and national-level dynamics rather than personal relationships. In contrast, the present study offers a novel perspective by emphasizing the importance of personal ties between Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders like Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi. It demonstrates how these personal relationships influenced China's military and political aid decisions, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic relationship between the two nations.

Additionally, previous studies have paid insufficient attention to the role of

Chinese mass movements in supporting Vietnam. Path Kosal (2016) focuses on leadership-level decisions while overlooking popular participation. This paper expands the analysis by considering the role of the Chinese people in the struggle, offering a more holistic view of international support.

Thus, the article addresses a gap in prior research and introduces a new approach by highlighting the importance of personal relationships within the context of international relations. These findings help illuminate the role of personal connections in shaping diplomatic policies and national strategies, particularly during such a turbulent historical period as the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, focusing on historical document analysis to explore the personal relationships between Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders and to evaluate the impact of these relationships on China's aid policies for Vietnam during the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. A qualitative approach was chosen as it is well-suited for in-depth analysis of historical materials and personal interactions within the complex context of international relations during the Cold War.

The research data comprises archival documents such as meeting minutes, diplomatic correspondence, and internal directives from the Communist Parties of Vietnam and China. These are supplemented by published international studies and memoirs of the leaders involved. The study utilizes discourse analysis to elucidate how language was employed in negotiations and diplomatic exchanges to achieve consensus and build mutual trust. This process focuses on identifying strategic linguistic elements that reflect power and influence while comparing the strategic approaches and perspectives of the leaders in the context of Sino-Soviet competition.

In conjunction with comparative analysis, the study contrasts viewpoints from various sources to highlight differences and similarities in the portrayal of personal relationships between Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders and Vietnam's strategy to secure support from both superpowers. Through this combination of methods, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how personal relationships shaped diplomatic decisions and contributed to Vietnam's success in maintaining comprehensive aid from China.

Historical context and formation of relations

The relationship between Vietnam and China from 1954 to 1975 developed within the complex context of the Cold War, a period marked by the division of the world into two main power blocs: the Western bloc led by the United States and the socialist bloc spearheaded by the Soviet Union, alongside China's growing influence. Vietnam-China relations during this period encompassed both strategic cooperation and latent political tensions, particularly as China and the Soviet Union

began to compete for influence within the international communist movement (Lê Văn Thịnh, 2023; Vũ Dương Ninh, 2015).

In the 1920s, during his revolutionary activities in China, Hồ Chí Minh established close ties with several Chinese revolutionary leaders, including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. He actively participated in international communist organizations, where he met and collaborated with key figures of the Chinese communist movement (Wilson, 1965). The personal relationships formed during this period laid the groundwork for deeper cooperation between Vietnam and China in subsequent decades. This mutual understanding and respect served as a crucial foundation for the bilateral relationship, especially as Vietnam entered its resistance against the French and, subsequently, during the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance.

During the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance, Vietnam-China cooperation became more comprehensive, encompassing military, economic, and political aspects. Since 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, China began providing extensive support to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in its war against French colonial forces and later in its resistance against the U.S. (Jian, 1995). Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai recognized the strategic importance of supporting Vietnam in countering U.S. expansion in Southeast Asia, viewing it as a critical element of their broader strategy to curb imperialist influence in the Asia-Pacific region (Wilson, 2001).

In diplomatic meetings between Hồ Chí Minh and Chinese leaders such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, detailed discussions were held on military and strategic assistance required to confront U.S. forces. As a shrewd leader with a strategic vision, Hồ Chí Minh successfully built trust and forged close ties with Chinese leaders. His meetings with Mao Zedong often centered on aligning strategies to counter the U.S., including military aid, training, and logistical support for Vietnamese forces (Zhai, 2000).

The Vietnam-China relationship during the resistance was built not only on the political commonality of the two socialist states but also on the mutual understanding and trust between their leaders. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai regarded aiding Vietnam as a crucial component of China's global strategy to counter U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia. As a skilled diplomat, Zhou Enlai organized numerous diplomatic meetings and negotiations to ensure China's sustained international support for Vietnam's resistance (Jo, 2024). It marked a significant turning point in Vietnam-China relations, solidifying their strategic partnership in the following years.

Although the relationship was largely cooperative, challenges were inevitable. The rivalry between China and the Soviet Union within the international communist movement posed difficulties for Vietnam in balancing support from both powers. Nevertheless, through Hồ Chí Minh's adept diplomacy, Vietnam maintained support from China and the Soviet Union, ensuring the resources necessary for its anti-U.S. national salvation resistance (Duiker 2000; Nguyễn Danh

Tiên, 2022; Vũ Dương Huân, 2021; Lường Thị Lan, 2020).

Personal and political relations between Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong

The relationship between Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong was a pivotal factor in establishing political and military alliances between Vietnam and China throughout the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. Beyond their roles as leaders of two socialist nations, Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong shared a close camaraderie forged over decades of revolutionary activity. This personal bond laid a robust foundation for China's support and played a decisive role in shaping joint strategies to counter U.S. expansion in Southeast Asia (Hà Giang, 2022; Tiên Giang, 2021a, 2021b).

Since the 1920s, during his revolutionary work in China, Hồ Chí Minh had the opportunity to meet and collaborate with Mao Zedong. Both leaders shared a solid commitment to Marxist-Leninist principles and national liberation ideologies, facilitating a close personal relationship. Mao Zedong frequently respected Hồ Chí Minh as a steadfast and skilled leader of the Vietnamese revolutionary movement (Rolph, 1968; Duiker, 1972). This shared ideology and strategic alignment laid the groundwork for extensive political and military cooperation between the two countries (Gao, 2019).

Mao Zedong and Hồ Chí Minh held a global strategic vision for the anti-imperialist struggle, with their aligned viewpoints directly shaping military and political relations between the two nations. Mao Zedong viewed Vietnam's resistance as an integral part of China's overarching strategy to counter the U.S. in the region, believing that an independent, communist-led Vietnam would be a critical barrier against American influence. For this reason, Mao committed to providing comprehensive support to Vietnam (Zhai, 2000).

A pivotal moment in the Hồ Chí Minh-Mao relationship occurred in 1965 when the U.S. significantly intensified its military involvement in Vietnam. In response, Mao Zedong pledged total military aid to Vietnam, including the provision of weapons, ammunition, and training for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's forces. Historical records indicate that Mao directed China's military and political sectors to support Vietnam through material resources and strategic guidance (Jian, 1995; Zhai, 2000).

In discussions and correspondence, Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong exchanged detailed views on military strategy. Records from these meetings reveal a shared understanding of maintaining pressure on American forces through guerrilla warfare combined with traditional military tactics. Both leaders recognized that this struggle transcended the military sphere, representing a political and ideological confrontation between socialism and imperialism. Thus, military support could not be separated from fostering solidarity and resilience among the Vietnamese people (Karl, 2010; Zhai, 2000).

China's support for Vietnam during the 1960s extended beyond arms and funding. An essential aspect of this alliance was the strategic coordination between

the two countries. Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong discussed long-term military strategies to counter the U.S., including deploying local forces and Chinese volunteers to intensify pressure on American troops in South Vietnam (Duiker, 2000; Xiaobing Li, 2019b; Jian, 1995).

Mao Zedong particularly emphasized the value of guerrilla tactics and flexible strategies to erode American power. This approach aligned with China's overarching strategy of "attacking the enemy with continuous small conflicts" (Forgács, 2019). Hồ Chí Minh shared this view, enabling Vietnamese forces to sustain combat effectiveness under overwhelming military pressure from the U.S. (Tjandra & Risman, 2020; O'Dowd, 2013). This collaboration underscores how personal interaction directly influenced crucial military decisions, which cannot be solely explained by political or strategic factors.

A key reason for the strength of the Vietnam-China relationship was the personal trust between Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong. Both leaders understood that Vietnam's struggle was part of a broader global movement against imperialism. Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong's mutual trust and respect helped sustain collaboration between the two countries, even as tensions arose from Sino-Soviet competition within the international communist movement (Quinn-Judge, 2002; Zhai, 2000; Womack, 2010; Gao, 2019).

As a result, despite differences in perspective and approach, the personal relationship between Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong was crucial in ensuring continued Chinese support for Vietnam's resistance. This relationship was one of the key elements contributing to Vietnam's success in the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance while solidifying the strategic alliance between the two socialist nations amid the Cold War context (Ha, 2022; Zhai, 2000).

Diplomatic relations between Hồ Chí Minh and Zhou Enlai

Zhou Enlai, one of China's foremost statesmen of the 20th century, played a crucial role in maintaining and strengthening diplomatic ties between Vietnam and China during the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. As the Premier and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, Zhou was not only a high-ranking political figure but also a skilled diplomat who directly participated in critical negotiations concerning Vietnam, notably at the Geneva Conference in 1954 (Shubin, 2023; Qiang, 1992; Lê Văn Phong, 2024).

The 1954 Geneva Conference marked a pivotal moment in the history of Indochina, where world powers convened to discuss ending the First Indochina War. Representing China, Zhou Enlai held numerous informal diplomatic meetings with representatives from France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, working to secure a temporary division of Vietnam along the 17th parallel while ensuring Vietnam's interests were protected amidst international power struggles (Shubin, 2023; Qiang, 1992; Zhai, 2000; Lê Văn Phong, 2024).

The personal relationship between Zhou Enlai and Hồ Chí Minh was also an

essential factor contributing to the success of diplomatic efforts between their countries. Zhou not only saw Hồ Chí Minh as a strategic ally but also as a close comrade. This was evident in the frequent direct meetings between the two leaders, during which they discussed strategic issues related to war and international relations (Li & Fan, 2021; Wilson, 1965).

In these meetings, Hồ Chí Minh and Zhou Enlai discussed in detail the coordination of diplomatic efforts to secure international support for Vietnam's struggle against the United States. Zhou was crucial in connecting Vietnam with international allies, especially other socialist nations, to provide the necessary military and economic aid. Diplomatic records reveal Zhou's contributions to orchestrating international meetings and ensuring that agreements supporting Vietnam were upheld (Jian, 1995; Shen & Xia, 2010).

One of Zhou Enlai's notable skills was his flexible and adept negotiation style on the international stage. While Hồ Chí Minh concentrated on military strategy and internal organization, Zhou managed negotiations with global powers, particularly at international conferences like Geneva. Zhou wielded diplomacy as a tool to achieve the political goals of China and Vietnam without escalating tensions with other nations (Qiang, 1992).

At the Geneva Conference, Zhou adeptly managed pressures from France and the United States while steadfastly supporting Vietnam's fight for independence. During the negotiations, he skillfully persuaded the parties to agree on a temporary division of Vietnam, granting Hồ Chí Minh and his comrades additional time to consolidate their forces and continue the struggle for national reunification. Although dividing Vietnam into two regions was a challenging agreement, Zhou Enlai ensured it provided favourable conditions for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the next phase of its struggle (Zhai, 2000; Shubin, 2023).

The diplomatic relationship between Hồ Chí Minh and Zhou Enlai brought significant advantages to Vietnam throughout the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. China provided essential military and economic aid and acted as a vital diplomatic partner, helping Vietnam secure support from the international community. As China's principal diplomat, Zhou used his influence to protect Vietnam's interests in international negotiations and to uphold the close alliance between the two nations (Jian, 1998; Li & Fan, 2021). Despite challenges from international dynamics, this relationship demonstrated its resilience and indispensable role in securing Vietnam's ultimate victory against the United States (Ha, 2022).

As shown in Table 1, the personal relationships between Hồ Chí Minh and the Chinese leaders, such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, were instrumental in sustaining strong support for Vietnam's resistance.

Table 1: Multidimensional Relationships between Hồ Chí Minh and Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and the Chinese People in Sustaining Strong Support for Vietnam's Resistance

Leader / People	Relationship with Hồ Chí Minh	Contributions and Support	Notable Features of the Relationship
Mao Zedong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close comrade relationship since the 1920s, sharing communist and revolutionary ideals. - Bonded over shared anti-imperialist and anti-colonial strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive military aid commitment to Vietnam in the war against the U.S. - Discussion and consensus on military strategy against the U.S., particularly guerrilla warfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close personal relationship built on mutual trust, crucial for strategic cooperation between the two countries. - Mao Zedong viewed Vietnam's struggle as part of a global anti-imperialist strategy.
Zhou Enlai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close comrade with deep collaboration on strategic and diplomatic issues. - Support in international negotiations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key role at the 1954 Geneva Conference, ensuring Vietnam's interests were protected. - Close coordination in connecting Vietnam with the international community and socialist countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zhou Enlai was a skilled diplomat, adept at handling international relations, significantly contributing to sustained international support for Vietnam.
Liu Shaoqi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comrade relationship during his tenure as Chairman of the People's Republic of China. - Discussions on military and political aid strategies for Vietnam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of comprehensive aid policies for Vietnam, including military and logistical support. - Contributed to maintaining a good relationship between Vietnam and China amid Soviet rivalry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liu Shaoqi helped resolve tensions in Sino-Vietnamese relations due to Sino-Soviet competition. - Contributed to China's continuous support for Vietnam throughout the U.S. war.
Chinese People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong solidarity and support, extending beyond government level to popular movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organized mass campaigns to donate food, medicine, and supplies for Vietnam's resistance. - Demonstrations in support of Vietnam's struggle, showing strong internationalist spirit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support from the Chinese people played a vital role in Vietnam's success in the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. - Support was both material and a significant source of morale.

Liu Shaoqi and political support from China

Liu Shaoqi, Chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1959 to 1968, was one of the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and played a significant role in maintaining and strengthening China's political support for Vietnam during the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance. Amid the tensions between China and the Soviet Union within the international communist movement, Liu helped balance China's foreign policy and contributed substantially to advancing economic and military support policies for Vietnam (Tuo-bin, 2005).

During his tenure as Chairman, Liu Shaoqi was instrumental in promoting comprehensive support policies for Vietnam, including military and economic aid. Through meetings with Hồ Chí Minh and leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Liu Shaoqi expressed China's strong commitment to assisting Vietnam in resisting U.S. military intervention. The meetings between Liu Shaoqi and Hồ Chí Minh, especially in the early 1960s, led to critical agreements on supplying weapons, military training, and logistical support to the Vietnamese forces (Quyên, 2009).

Additionally, Liu Shaoqi engaged in diplomatic efforts to ensure that China remained a steadfast ally of Vietnam in its resistance efforts. He coordinated high-level discussions between the two nations and contributed to maintaining a stable alliance amid intensifying international competition. Liu understood that Vietnam's war was not merely a local conflict but part of a broader global struggle between communism and imperialism. Consequently, he prioritized maintaining a close relationship with Vietnam as a critical component of China's foreign policy (Jian 1995, 1998; Tiền Giang, 2021a).

The Sino-Soviet rivalry within the international communist movement during the 1960s presented significant challenges for Sino-Vietnamese relations. Although the Soviet Union also provided military and economic aid to Vietnam, the competition for influence between China and the Soviet Union introduced latent tensions in the relationship between these two allies. Liu Shaoqi was key in addressing these tensions, ensuring that China-Vietnam relations were not disrupted by broader conflicts within the communist movement (Lường Thị Lan, 2020; Xue-yuan, 2005; Khoo, 2010).

Liu utilized diplomatic channels to resolve disagreements while ensuring that China's support for Vietnam remained unaffected by its rivalry with the Soviet Union. Archival documents from Liu's meetings with Hồ Chí Minh indicate a shared commitment to prioritizing the anti-U.S. national salvation resistance and upholding the interests of the Vietnamese revolution over other international conflicts (Zhai, 2000). Liu was instrumental in shaping bilateral cooperation policies to maintain unity among revolutionary forces in the region (Vũ Dương Ninh, 2015).

Under Liu Shaoqi's leadership, China provided both military aid and robust political support for Vietnam on the international stage. Liu helped ensure that China would remain a reliable ally for Vietnam, regardless of shifting international

relations and pressures from the Soviet Union. He acted as a foreign policy coordinator, ensuring that China not only upheld its support for Vietnam but also explored new avenues for increased support as the conflict escalated (Nguyễn Phương Hoa, 2009; Zhai, 2000; Jian, 1995).

Documents from the 1960s reveal Liu Shaoqi's direct involvement in negotiations, ensuring that China would supply the necessary resources to support Vietnam's war effort. Despite the challenges of balancing relations with the Soviet Union and Vietnam, Liu successfully advocated for continuous aid policies for Vietnam, even during the most strained periods of the Cold War (Leighton, 1978; Nguyễn Phương Hoa, 2009; Nguyễn Thị Mai Hoa, 2018).

Liu Shaoqi's leadership in strengthening the China-Vietnam relationship left a lasting impact on Vietnam's resistance efforts. Although Liu fell out of favor in the late 1960s during China's Cultural Revolution, his efforts to secure military and political support for Vietnam helped build a solid foundation for the strategic relationship between the two nations. The crucial agreements reached during Liu's meetings with Hồ Chí Minh enabled Vietnam to sustain its strength in a prolonged war while ensuring China remained an essential strategic partner in the anti-U.S. resistance (Lường Thị Lan, 2020; , Duiker, 2000; Vũ Dương Ninh, 2015).

The different forms of Chinese support, including military and logistical aid, are summarized in Table 2, highlighting the critical role of personal influence in shaping China's aid decisions.

Table 2. Forms of Chinese Support for Vietnam and Hồ Chí Minh 's Personal Influence on Chinese Leaders in Shaping Aid Decisions

Chinese Leader	Type of Support	Human Resources Support	Material Resources Support	Hồ Chí Minh 's Personal Influence	Source
Mao Zedong	- Military and strategic support.	- Sent over 320,000 Chinese soldiers to train and support combat in Vietnam throughout the war. - More than 1,700 Chinese military advisors directly involved.	- Supplied 2 million tons of rice, 50,000 rifles, and thousands of tons of weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment. - Supported construction and maintenance of the Hồ Chí Minh Trail.	- Close personal relationship with Mao enabled Hồ Chí Minh to secure comprehensive military support. Mao viewed Vietnam's resistance as a crucial part of his strategy to counter the U.S.	Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69," The China Quarterly 142 (1995): 356-87.
Zhou Enlai	- Diplomatic and	- Participated in high-level negotiations at	- Through Zhou Enlai, China secured over	- Zhou's diplomatic skills and	Zhai Qiang, China and

Chinese Leader	Type of Support	Human Resources Support	Material Resources Support	Hồ Chí Minh 's Personal Influence	Source
	international strategic support.	the 1954 Geneva Conference, playing a primary role in securing international support for Vietnam.	300,000 tons of wartime supplies from other socialist allies.	collaboration with Hồ Chí Minh strengthened Vietnam's ties with allied nations, especially during international negotiations.	the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975 (London: Macmillan, 2000), 152-180.
Liu Shaoqi	- Political support and diplomatic balance amid Sino-Soviet tensions.	- Coordinated personnel, including thousands of support and political advisors, to ensure sustained Chinese support despite international tensions.	- Supplied hundreds of thousands of tons of weapons and logistics, including heavy weapons, tanks, artillery.	- Liu Shaoqi ensured that Chinese aid remained unaffected by Sino-Soviet tensions through his personal and political relationship with Hồ Chí Minh.	William J. Duiker, Ho Chi Minh: A Life (New York: Hachette Books, 2000), 475-499.
Chinese People	- Support from popular movements, beyond government-level aid.	- Chinese citizens donated millions of food rations and essential supplies to Vietnam from 1965-1975. - Tens of thousands of volunteer logistical workers helped support transportation routes such as the Hồ Chí Minh Trail.	- Volunteer convoys delivered hundreds of thousands of tons of supplies, medicine, and medical equipment to Vietnam through mass donation campaigns.	- Hồ Chí Minh fostered a strong solidarity relationship with the Chinese people, emphasizing the importance of international unity.	Path Kosal, "The Politics of China's Aid to North Vietnam, 1965-69," Diplomacy & Statecraft 27, No. 4 (2016): 682-700.

Beyond high-level political relationships between the two countries' leaders, Hồ Chí Minh fostered a deep bond with the Chinese people. This relationship extended beyond official diplomatic activities, evidenced by the interactions and cooperation between the citizens of both nations, particularly during the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles (Nguyễn Thị Hương, 2014).

During this period, China served as a crucial political and military partner for Vietnam and an essential source of support in Vietnam's resistance against the French and, later, the United States. Popular movements in China significantly contributed by supplying food, medicine, and essential supplies to Vietnam's resistance forces. For instance, from 1950 to 1954, transport convoys from China provided medical equipment, military uniforms, and other critical resources along strategic routes like the Hồ Chí Minh Trail (Li, 2019; Kraus, 2012; Jian, 1998). These popular movements in China provided material support and served as a bridge of solidarity, strengthening the bond between two nations united in their goal of resisting colonial oppression (Phan Sỹ Phúc, 2024; Nguyễn Phương Hoa, 2009).

A key event symbolizing this solidarity was the 1967 demonstration in Beijing, where thousands of Chinese citizens rallied to support Vietnam's war effort. This demonstration occurred amid Vietnam's intense struggle against the United States, and the backing from the Chinese people provided significant morale for Vietnam in its arduous fight. This event was a testament to the strong support of the Chinese populace for Vietnam and reflected the mutual solidarity and trust between the two socialist nations (Path, 2016; Jian, 1998; Luong Thi Hong, 2022; Nguyễn Thị Mai Hoa, 2018).

Hồ Chí Minh frequently underscored the importance of international solidarity in the independence struggles of oppressed nations. During his official and unofficial visits to China, he met not only with senior Chinese Communist Party leaders but also engaged with the broader Chinese public, who consistently showed support for Vietnam's revolutionary cause. It once again highlighted that the Vietnam-China relationship during this period was not solely based on strategic interests but was built on shared empathy and the common goal of national liberation (Nguyễn Xuân Trung, 2019; Gao, 2019).

The spirit of solidarity between the Vietnamese and Chinese people during the war is a testament to the mutual support among revolutionary movements in Asia. While the relationship between the two countries later experienced tensions due to historical and political shifts, the cooperation and mutual aid during the resistance period left a lasting impression on Vietnam-China diplomatic relations and in the hearts of both peoples.

Challenges and complexities in Vietnam-China relations

Although China played a significant role in supporting Vietnam's resistance against colonialism and imperialism, relations between the two countries were not always smooth and were marked by various challenges. Historical and geopolitical factors, coupled with shifts in the global power structure, added complexity to this

relationship, especially amid the rivalry between China and the Soviet Union within the international communist movement (Khoo, 2010; Xue-yuan, 2005; Jian, 1995; Pierre, 2007).

Throughout the First (1946-1954) and Second Indochina Wars (1955-1975), China and the Soviet Union were significant allies of Vietnam, providing military, financial, and diplomatic assistance. However, the Sino-Soviet split in the international communist movement, beginning in the late 1950s and extending through the 1960s, complicated Vietnam's efforts to maintain balanced and continuous relations with both powers. The confrontation between these two major socialist nations fractured the international communist movement, forcing Vietnam to adopt a delicate diplomatic strategy to avoid being caught between two competing powers (Pierre, 2007; Nguyễn Dy Niên, 2008; Xue-yuan, 2005; Gaiduk, 2003).

The competition between China and the Soviet Union within the communist movement strained bilateral relations and exerted immense pressure on allied countries, including Vietnam. With ambitions to lead revolutionary movements in Asia, China frequently urged Vietnam to align with its perspective, particularly on regarding military and diplomatic strategies against the United States. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union advocated a divergent approach, emphasizing diplomatic and peaceful solutions to conflicts. This divergence compelled Vietnam to adopt a nuanced strategy to retain support from both sides (Lê Văn Phong, 2024; Nguyễn Thị Mai, 2022; Leighton, 1978; You, 2023).

Hồ Chí Minh deftly managed these tensions with his strategic vision and diplomatic skills. He maintained partnerships with China and the Soviet Union, securing aid from both without becoming overly dependent on either. This balanced approach enabled Vietnam to sustain continuous support throughout the resistance while preserving autonomy in critical political and military decisions (Nguyễn Dy Niên, 2008; Szalontai, 2018). As Hồ Chí Minh emphasized, Vietnam's ultimate goal was not to serve the interests of any significant power but to achieve national liberation and defend independence. In the 1945 Declaration of Independence, he declared: "Vietnam has the right to enjoy freedom and independence, and it has become a free and independent country. The entire Vietnamese are determined to mobilize all their spirit, strength, life, and wealth to safeguard that independence and freedom" (Hồ Chí Minh, 2011: 3).

However, the tensions between China and the Soviet Union also presented significant challenges for Vietnam coordinating military and diplomatic support. This rivalry sometimes delayed aid or created discord in the implementation of war strategies. For example, in the late 1960s, when Sino-Soviet relations reached a peak of hostility, China implicitly criticized the Soviet Union for "betraying" the international revolutionary movement by seeking rapprochement with the United States, putting Vietnam in a difficult position to balance these interests (Lee, 1967; Gelber, 1970; King, 1964; Trương Thị Bích Hạnh, 2023).

Another factor complicating Vietnam-China relations during the resistance was China's geopolitical ambitions. Although China publicly supported Vietnam's

resistance, it also harbored its aspirations for influence in Indochina after the war. Some documents suggest that China sought to limit Soviet influence in the region by promoting an alliance primarily based on bilateral relations with Vietnam (Khoo, 2010; Xue-yuan, 2005).

Although Vietnam received substantial support from China in its struggle for independence, this relationship was not without its difficulties. The challenges of balancing relations between the two communist powers and complex geopolitical factors added complexity to Vietnam-China relations, especially in the post-war period. The lessons learned from coordinating relations with both China and the Soviet Union during the war enabled Vietnam to develop a prudent and skilful diplomatic foundation for managing international relations in the years that followed.

4. Conclusion

This study has shed light on the crucial role of the personal and political relationships between Hồ Chí Minh and critical Chinese Communist Party leaders, such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi, in securing China's military and political support for Vietnam throughout the Vietnam War. This support extended beyond military aid, encompassing essential supplies like food, medicine, and other necessities, and reflected the solid international solidarity between the two socialist nations. The personal relationships fostered trust and mutual support, laying a robust foundation for strategic cooperation during the most challenging phases of the war.

Hồ Chí Minh skillfully managed complex international relations, particularly in balancing Vietnam's ties between the two socialist powers, China and the Soviet Union. This approach enabled Vietnam to receive continuous support from both and safeguarded its autonomy in critical strategic decisions. Despite inevitable challenges in Vietnam-China relations, Hồ Chí Minh's flexible and forward-looking diplomacy enabled him to navigate these obstacles to secure Vietnam's resistance success.

The study highlights how personal relationships between leaders transcended political and military barriers, shaping critical decisions on aid and military strategy at pivotal moments. This finding offers a significant theoretical contribution, providing empirical evidence of the role of personal diplomacy during the Cold War and in international conflicts, a field of growing interest among modern scholars. Additionally, this study provides practical insights for policymakers in contemporary diplomacy, where personal relationships between leaders can significantly influence negotiation outcomes and international cooperation. Furthermore, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on Vietnam's resistance strategy by connecting personal, political, and military elements within the Vietnam-China relationship. It makes a substantive contribution to research on the role of individuals in international relations and warfare.

Furthermore, this study presents valuable practical lessons on personal diplomacy in maintaining alliances and safeguarding national interests. Hồ Chí

Minh's skilful balancing of relations with China and the Soviet Union serves as a model for modern policymakers in optimizing international relations amid significant power competition. The research also lays a foundation for further studies, from comparing the role of personal relationships in other resistance movements to more profound analyses of post-1975 Vietnam-China relations and the impact of Sino-Soviet rivalry on Vietnam. It expands our understanding of international history and provides practical lessons for countries leveraging personal diplomacy to achieve strategic goals in complex political contexts.

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