

SUMMARY

Vietnam in the Era of Western Powers

The book starts with an introduction and methodical note on the difference between descriptive and political writing and on the political role of history.

The first part is dedicated to the description of a global framework, the first experiences of Westerners with the area of present day Vietnam and the inner history of this country before its conquest by France. It is worth noting that the main destination of the first European legates sailing ships along Vietnam's shore was the empire of Mongols (including China). Also the first Christian missionaries, sent by the popes to East Asia, were officially invited by the great Mongolian khans. The development of religious and political interests of the Roman Church together with the development of seafaring, led to the development of the international relations between European and East Asian states – among them the main business target of Europeans and the sphere of their interest remained in China.

The Chinese empire was free of Mongolian dominance since 1368 and was again subjugated by another Altaic nation of Manchu since 1644. In fact, these changes did not have strong impact on the ethnicity of the local governance, which remained in the hands of Chinese population especially on the lower levels of public affairs (due to the low numbers of originally nomadic rulers). Also international relations between China and Vietnam remained of the same type, based on China's suzerainty over Vietnam on the one hand, but on the relative independence of Vietnam in inner governance and local policy to present day Laos and Cambodia on the other hand. The first part of the book describes the inner history of the end of the Lê and Mạc dynasties with relation to influential and finally dominant families of Trịnh and Nguyễn. After the expansion of Vietnamese to the south to the delta of Mekong River, the country was unified by the Tây Sơn dynasty followed by the victory of Nguyễns with the help of military advisers from France. During the 19th century the country under the Nguyễns rule was quickly

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developed according to the Chinese model, but the growth of economy was accompanied by restrictive policy towards foreign influences from Europe including the spheres of trade and Christianity. It is important to note that this type of attitude to foreign influences was not only adapted from China. Vietnamese like other nations in the neighborhood of the Chinese empire became especially sensitive and skilful in diplomatic and political affairs because of the long-time experience with their strong neighbor.

The second part of the book begins with the description of the most important events in the conquest of Vietnam by France and the war between France and China. In a series of treaties, the country was bound out of the Chinese suzerainty and became a French colony together with Laos and Cambodia. The colonial rule brought new changes into Vietnam, but their overview and evaluation indicate that the French policy deepened the poverty of the majority of population. Naturally, the restrictive attitude to Vietnamese nationalism also led to the growth of riots and predominant Vietnamese dissatisfaction with the foreign rule. Due to political reasons, more groups of Vietnamese nationalists had their base in China, and some of them had also an ideological support from the Soviet Union. The arrival of expanding Japanese worsened the situation in Vietnam, and the conditions of the French-Japanese “twofold” colonial dominance during the Second World War together with excessive export of rice led to extensive famine. The capitulation of Japan stimulated Vietnamese nationalists, and the declaration of independence and Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945 was later quickly connected with the Western fear of the global spreading of Soviet influence.

The third part of the book describes the most important events and international influences in the era of wars in Indochina from 1945 to 1975, including two decades of the division between the northern Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the southern Republic of Vietnam.

The fourth part covers the most recent history of the Vietnam Socialist Republic after its official unification in 1976. For diplomatic reasons, this part is mainly focused on the development and some analyses in the area of economy and foreign relations. The evolution of the Vietnamese government is limited on the enumeration of main personalities.

The final reflections cover two sections. The first section brings an attempt to define the main traits of political behaviour (including the role of language), which is of the same type on both lower and higher levels – the relations between individuals and their groups including states. The main guess is that the phenomenon of violence or the use of brutal force is essentially connected with vertical shifts between the subjects in their hierarchical relations. The second section brings an attempt to clarify some special features and sources of modern Vietnamese mentality.