

## **Chinese Diplomacy in the South-East-Asia-Region: An Eagle View of Inter-State Party Relations of Mainland-China and Three Communist States (North Korea, Vietnam and Laos)**

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**Abstract:** This study seeks to have an eagle view of Chinese contemporary diplomatic relations with her neighboring countries, within the South-East-Asia region. It analysis the five principles of Chinese foreign policy in her relations with the world, especially those states that have political, economic and communist ideological commonalities, such as Vietnam, North Korea and Laos among others. Findings show that Chinese diplomatic principles are built on a foundation of peaceful coexistence and cemented by the spirit of mutual respect and seeking common ground, while reserving differences. The study made the conclusion that so long the Chinese diplomatic principles perpetuate and other countries emulate such diplomatic tenets by ceasing to be belligerent, so long the international community would continue to have peaceful atmosphere within the framework of international politics. The study recommends a gradual and peaceful resolution of the South China sea impasse, between and among her neighbors inter alia.

**Key words:** Diplomacy, South-East-Asia, party relations, communist states, region, China

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### INTRODUCTION

The chemistry of Chinese diplomatic relations with countries in the South East Asia region is rather paternalistic in an outlook, maternal in characteristics and peaceful in conduct. This is primarily because these countries regard china as a mother and a father to them, relying holistically to her economic and political advantages from the angles of political support and relations; economic and commercial exchanges and even cultural exchanges. This study will focus on such paternal type of diplomatic relations between main-land China and her communist ideologically oriented countries within the region, by instrumentalising the communist party influence and party relations.

The relations that exist among these states however, emanates from the spirit of communism, led by communist parties and conducted by communist government and finally acted by communist actors or leaders. As a background however, we need to provide a prelude of the relations that exist between china, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos, which can be termed to be 3+1 diplomatic relations. China is North Korea's most important ally, biggest trading partner and main source of food, arms and fuel. In the hope of avoiding regime collapse and an uncontrolled influx of refugees across its 800 mile border with North Korea (Bajoria, 2008). China has helped sustain Kim Jong-Il regime and opposed harsh international economic sanctions. After Pyongyang tested a nuclear

weapon in October 2006. Experts say that China has reconsidered the nature of its alliance to include both pressure and inducements. But Beijing, arguably, continues to have more leverage over Pyongyang than any other nation and has played a central role in the ongoing Talks, which is clearly a multilateral framework aimed at denuclearizing North Korea (Bajoria, 2008).

While on the other hand, however, Vietnam's size and resources make it a politically and militarily predominant country in the Indo-China peninsula; Vietnam's geographical configuration with a coast-line of over 3,300 km (Subhash, 2005) in length gives it a strategic footing in the naval waters extending from China's doorstep in the Gulf of Tonkin, a long littoral on the South China Sea and ending with another dimension in the Gulf of Thailand. While, the above was earlier significant only to the United States and Japan in terms of lifeline sea lanes running parallel to the Vietnamese littoral, it is also increasingly becoming important to China. With China soon becoming a net importer of oil, the security of sea lanes becomes equally critical for China. In any future China containment policy of the United States, Vietnam is a prospective component on China's Southern periphery.

For China, now in a Cold War mode with the United States, Vietnam revives the prospect of the 1950 and 1960s of an entirely monolithic Communist dominated Western Pacific littoral. China is more prominent in this game and has made concerted efforts to build meaningful

political relations with Vietnam, in parallel to emerging as its largest trade partner. Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Vietnam from October 31 to November 2, 2005 needs to be analyzed in the above light (Subhash, 2005).

While, Laotian relation with China has traditionally consisted of trade and aid largely in road construction in the Northern provinces of Laos, without directly challenging the interests of Thailand or Vietnam in the central and southern regions. However, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 to unseat then prime minister Pol Pot, provoked China into a limited invasion of Vietnam approximately 19 km deep to teach Vietnam a lesson. Laos was caught in a dangerous bind, not wanting to further provoke China, but not able to oppose its special partner, Vietnam (Arthur, 2001). The Laotian leadership survived the dilemma by making slightly delayed pronouncements in support of Vietnam after some intraparty debate and by sharply reducing diplomatic relations with China to the *chargé d'affaires* level without a full break. The low point in Sino-Laotian relations came in 1979, with reports of Chinese assistance and training of Hmong resistance forces under General Vang Pao in China's Yunnan Province (Arthur, 2001).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is a product of literature materials, which envelope the use of library data such as text books, journals, periodicals, magazines, government reports and others. Since, the research deals with comparative diplomatic phenomenology, the methodology used in the research is the comparative methodology as used in international relations and politics. According to Macridis (2000), comparative methodology deals with: abstraction and concrete situations; it determines criteria of relevance of the particular components of social and political situations to the problem under study. The methodology emerged as a critique to the traditional methodology due to its dissatisfaction especially after the Second World War.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The development of communist parties in South-East Asia:** The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established in Shanghai by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao in June 1921 as a result of the political and revolutionary inspiration of the Russian federation. The original members of the party included: Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Lin Biao. Mao Zedong soon became the most important member of the CCP. He adapted the ideas of Lenin who had successfully achieved a revolution in Russia in 1917. He argued that in Asia it was

important to concentrate on the countryside rather than the towns, in order to create revolutionary elite (Lubell, 2002).

Accordingly, the Kuomintang gradually increased its power in China. Its leader, Sun Yat-sen died on 12 March, 1925. Chiang Kai-Shek eventually emerged as the most important figure in the organization (Lubell, 2002). He now carried out a purge that eliminated the communists from the organization. Those communists who survived managed to establish the Jiangxi Soviet. The nationalists now imposed a blockade and Mao Zedong decided to evacuate the area and establish a new stronghold in the North-west of China. In October 1934 Mao, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, Zhu De and some 100,000 men and their dependents headed west through mountainous areas. The marchers experienced terrible hardships. The most notable passages included the crossing of the suspension bridge over a deep gorge at Luting (May, 1935), travelling over the Tahsueh Shan mountains (August, 1935) and the swampland of Sikang (September, 1935). The marchers covered about fifty miles a day and reached Shensi on 20th October, 1935. It is estimated that only around 30,000 survived the 8,000 mile Long March (Lubell, 2002).

It was during the hegemonic and invasive era of expansionism that Japanese Army invaded the heartland of China in 1937. Chiang Kai-Shek was forced to move his capital from Nanking to Chungking. He lost control of the coastal regions and most of the major cities to Japan. In an effort to beat the Japanese he agreed to collaborate with Mao Zedong and his communist army. During the Second World War the communist guerrilla forces were well led by Zhu De and Lin Biao (Lubell, 2002). As soon as the Japanese surrendered, Communist forces began a war against the Kuomintang. The communists gradually gained control of the country and on 1st October, 1949, Mao Zedong announced the establishment of People's Republic of China. In 1958 Mao Zedong announced the Great Leap Forward, an attempt to increase agricultural and industrial production. This reform programme included the establishment of large agricultural communes containing as many as 75,000 people. The communes ran their own collective farms and factories. Each family received a share of the profits and also had a small private plot of land. However, 3 years of floods and bad harvests severely damaged levels of production. The scheme was also hurt by the decision of the Soviet Union to withdraw its large number of technical experts working in the country. In 1962 Mao's reform programme came to an end and the country resorted to a more traditional form of economic production (Lubell, 2002).

As a result of the failure on the Great Leap Forward, Mao retired from the post of chairman of the People's Republic of China. His place as head of state was taken by

Liu Shaoqi. Mao remained important in determining overall policy. In the early 1960s Mao became highly critical of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. He was appalled by the way Nikita Khrushchev backed down over the Cuban Missile Crisis. Mao Zedong became openly involved in politics in 1966 when with Lin Biao he initiated the Cultural Revolution. On 3rd September, 1966, Lin Biao made a speech where, he urged pupils in schools and colleges to criticize those party officials, who had been influenced by the ideas of Nikita Khrushchev (Lubell, 2002).

Mao was concerned by those party leaders such as Liu Shaoqi, who favoured the introduction of piecework, greater wage differentials and measures that sought to undermine collective farms and factories. In an attempt to dislodge those in power who favoured the Soviet model of communism, Mao galvanized students and young workers as his Red Guards to attack revisionists in the party. Mao told them the revolution was in danger and that they must do all they could to stop the emergence of a privileged class in China. He argued, this is what had happened in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev. Zhou Enlai at first gave his support to the campaign but became concerned when fighting broke out between the Red Guards and the revisionists. In order to achieve peace at the end of 1966, he called for an end to these attacks on party officials (Lubell, 2002). Mao Zedong remained in control of the Cultural Revolution and with the support of the army was able to oust the revisionists. The Cultural Revolution came to an end when, Liu Shaoqi resigned from all his posts on 13th October 1968. Lin Biao now became Mao's designated successor. Mao now gave his support to the Gang of Four: Jiang Qing (Mao's third wife), Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyan and Zhange Chungqiao. These four radicals occupied powerful positions in the Politburo after the Tenth Party Congress of 1973. Mao Zedong died in Beijing on 9th September, 1976. After the death of Mao the power of the Gang of Four declined dramatically. In 1980, they were found guilty of plotting against the state. Jiang Qing and Zhange Chungqiao, who were considered to be the leaders, were sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment). Wang Hongwen and Yao Wenyan received lengthy prison sentences (Lubell, 2002).

**The communist party of vietnam:** The Chinese communist party was 9 years older than the Vietnamese communist party (Viet Nam cong san Đang), which was established in 1930. The Party was founded by Ho Chi Minh and other political exiles living in China, which was first rooted at a conference in Hong Kong. At the Hong Kong conference two competing communist factions, Indochinese

Communist Party (Đông Duong cong san Đang) and the Communist Party of Annam (An Nam cong san Đang), merged. Although, the third Vietnamese communist group, the Indochinese Communist League (Đông Duong cong san lien Doan), had not been invited to the Hong Kong conference its members were allowed to become members of the new united party (Smith, 1998).

It was however, at its first plenum the party's name was altered to Indochinese Communist Party (Đang cong san Đông Duong), The First National Party Congress was secretly conducted in Macau in 1935. Similarly, a Comintern congress in Moscow adopted a policy towards a popular front against fascism and directed Communist movements around the world to collaborate with anti-fascist forces regardless of their orientation towards socialism. This required the ICP to regard all nationalist parties in Indochina as potential allies. The party was dissolved in 1945 and refounded as the Vietnam Workers' Party (Đang Lao dong Viet Nam) at the Second National Party Congress in Tuyen Quang in 1951. The Workers' Party of North Vietnam was merged with the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam to form the Communist Party of Vietnam At the 4th National Party Congress held in 1976 (Smith, 1998).

**The communist party of North-Korea:** The Communist Party of Korea was founded in 1925, by Kim Yong-bom and Pak Hon-yong during a secret meeting in Seoul. The secret meeting was a result of Japanese occupation regime, which vividly banned communist parties under the Peace Preservation Law. The party became the Korean section of the Communist International at the 6th congress of the international in Aug-Sep, 1928. But after only a few months as the Korean Comintern section, the perpetual feuds between rival factions that had plagued the party from its foundation led the Comintern to disband the Communist Party of Korea in December the same year. However, the party continued to exist through various party cells. Some communists, like Kim Il-sung went into exile in China, where they joined the Communist Party of China. In the early 1930s, Chinese and Korean communists began guerrilla activity against the Japanese forces (Lankov, 2001).

After the second World War and the liberation from Japanese rule, the situation for the Korean communists changed considerably. The country was divided into US and Soviet occupation zones and the working conditions for the party were very different in the two zones. In the US occupied South, the party leader Pak Hon-yong, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese and became active in Seoul upon his release in 1945. He reorganized a Central Committee, of which he became the Secretary. Being based in Seoul, he had limited contact with the Soviet

occupation forces in the North. The Soviet Red Army liberated Northern Korea from the Japanese occupation in August, 1945 (Lankov, 2001).

Most members of the Communist Party of Korea were in Southern Korea, which was occupied by the United States and there were very few Communist cadres in the Soviet occupied zone. The practice of the Soviets in most countries, it occupied after World War II was to rely on the domestic Communist Party to transform the occupied state into first a pro-soviet and then a Soviet style socialist state but this was initially difficult in what became North Korea because of the lack of a strong domestic Communist presence. The Soviets began to rely largely on exiled Communists who returned to Korea at the end of World War II as well as ethnic Koreans who were part of the large Korean community in the USSR and therefore, Soviet citizens (Lankov, 2001).

Kim Il-sung became a prominent figure of the party in the Northern areas. After his years as a guerilla leader, Kim Il-sung had moved to the Soviet Union (where, historians believe his son Kim Jong-Il was born in 1941) and had become a Captain in the Red Army. His battalion arrived in Pyongyang just as the Soviets were looking for a suitable person who could assume a leading role in North Korea. On October 13, 1945 the North Korea Bureau of the Communist Party of Korea was established (Lankov, 2001).

Though, technically under the control of the Seoul based party leadership, the North Korean Bureau was had little contact with Seoul and worked closely with the Soviet forces (termed the Soviet Civilian Authority). The first chairman of the Bureau was Kim Yong-bom who had been sent to Korea by the Comintern in the 1930s to conduct underground activity. Kim Il-sung was a member of the Bureau at its founding and replaced Kim Yong bom as chairman in December, 1945. Official North Korean historians later disputed this, claiming that Kim Il-sung had become its chairman from the onset of the Bureau. Moreover, official North Korean sources claim that the meeting was held on October 10 and it is regarded as the Party Foundation Day in North Korea, on which Kim Il sung formed the first genuine Marxist-Leninist party in the country (Lankov, 2001).

**The communist party of Laos:** It has its origin in the Indochinese Communist Party founded by Ho Chi Minh in 1930. The ICP was entirely Vietnamese at its inception but grew throughout French Indochina and was able to found a small Lao section in 1936. In the mid-1940s, a campaign to recruit Laotian members was instigated and in 1946 or 1947, Kaysone Phomvihan, a law student at the University of Hanoi, was recruited, along with Nouhak Phoumsavan (Arthur, 2001).

In 1973, a peace agreement was signed that brought the Pathet Lao into the government and was supposed to result in the Vietnamese leaving the country. The Vietnamese army did not leave. In early 1975, the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese began attacking government outposts again. Without the support of the US, the non-communists elements in the government had little choice other than to gradually allow the Pathet Lao to take power. In the spring of 1975, Pathet Lao forces consolidated their power throughout the country. The royal government fell in May 1975 and the LPRP took power. The LPRP on taking power showed itself to be closely connected to Vietnam. The LPRP signed a treaty of friendship, which allowed Vietnamese army units to base themselves in Laos and also brought political advisors from Vietnam into the country (Arthur, 2001). The LPRP economically isolated Laos by cutting off trade with all neighboring countries except for Vietnam. The LPRP has shown itself to be remarkably resilient. Transitions of power have tended to be smooth, the new generation of leaders has proven more open to reform and the Politburo now has some ethnic diversity. Organised opposition to the LPRP is weak (Arthur, 2001).

**The nature of chinese diplomatic relations with the three countries:** It is in the argument of David (2005) that the traditional underpinnings of international relations in Asia are undergoing profound change and the rise of China is a principal cause. China's new regional posture rests on the following four pillars:

- Participation in regional organizations
- Establishment of strategic partnerships and deepening of bilateral relations
- Expansion of regional economic ties
- Reduction of distrust and anxiety in the security sphere

On the other hand, however, the Chinese diplomatic principles as adopted by the CPC, one was derived from the principle of peaceful coexistence constructed by Lenin and the other four principles were formulated by Chairman Mao. Lenin upheld that the first socialist country should and could coexist peacefully with the surrounding capitalist world and strive for its existence and development. Chairman Mao formulated the other principles on April 30, 1949, almost half a year before the founding of the People's Republic as the guiding principles for new china's foreign policy (Huang, 1995). The principles of Chinese foreign policy, however are:

- Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty
- Non-aggression
- Non-interference in states' internal affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful co-existence

China has raised its profile in meetings with regional leaders. This new embrace of regional multilateralism was highlighted by China's hosting of the 2001 APEC meeting in Shanghai and the attention given by President Hu Jintao at the 2003 APEC meeting in Bangkok. Another example of China's efforts to raise its profile was Beijing's hosting of the 3rd International Conference of Asian Political Parties on Sep. 3-5, 2004. The meeting, organized by the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party, brought together 350 delegates from 81 political parties in 35 Asian countries, including eight heads of state. On the last day of the conference, the convocation agreed on a 12-point Beijing declaration on principles of cooperation (David, 2005).

**Sino-Korean relations:** China was stimulated to act in early 2003 by a drastic fear that North Korea might be the next target of US invasion after Iraq. China, on its effort to see the continuity of North Korea, it deployed a diplomatic strategy to bring Washington and Pyongyang to the same table in Beijing thrice in the space of 10 months: three party talks in April, 2003, six party talks in August 2003 and February 2004. The recommendations made from the Chinese diplomatic submissions were:

- Don't expect too much from Beijing
- Don't underestimate China's commitment to protect its own national interest
- Don't force China to choose sides
- Don't expect much movement from Pyongyang
- North Korean distrust of outsiders may be almost insurmountable
- Don't count on China to dissuade North Korea from going nuclear (Andrew, 2004)

China has assisted North Korea in fighting the Korean war. It was estimated that China lost about 360,000 lives including 130,000 wounded and noncombatant losses were >380,000 (Bonnie, 2009). China remained in what can be described as brother-in-arms relationship with North Korea even after the war. Due to an unprecedented relations of the two countries, the Chinese forces remained on the Korean peninsula for an additional 5 years (until 1958), assisting in national reconstruction projects. This however, culminates into signing a military

cooperation and assistance pact between the two countries in 1961. It was a kind of a de facto alliance formalized when the two signed a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance, which was committed to one country coming to the aid of the other if attacked (Andrews, 2004).

Despite the changing phases of international politics and economy; the Chinese ties with Seoul, especially in the 1980's and early 1990's. China sent a large delegation of athletes to South Korea for the 1986 Asian games and the subsequent attendance of the Seoul Olympics, coupled with the increasing trade and investment relations and formal establishment of full diplomatic relations with Seoul in 1992, it angered North Korea, but did not change the diplomatic historiography of the two or crumble their diplomatic ties (Andrew, 2004).

**Investment from China:** China has a direct interest in economic reform and recovery in the DPRK. Chinese business interests with support from Beijing are beginning to invest widely in the North Korean economy. Unlike, South Korean investors, Chinese are allowed to invest in enterprises fully integrated into the DPRK economy. They also have provided machinery and equipment to existing North Korean factories. Chinese investment in mineral extraction in the DPRK seems to represent an easing the DPRK constitutional ban against cultural infiltration. This has been interpreted to include international economic integration and globalization. However, Pyongyang seems to be treating investment from China as being not contaminated relative to those from South Korea or other nations (Dick, 2008). South Korean investments are carefully walled off from the average North Korean citizen.

Whereas, China has been able to invest in production facilities in various locations. According to Chinese sources, from January-October 2006, the Chinese side approved 19 new investments in the DPRK, with negotiated investment of \$66.67 million (Dick, 2008).

Cumulative investment up to the end of October 2006 included Chinese government approval of 49 investments in the DPRK with negotiated investment of \$135 million. The projects of the investment covered such fields as food products, medicine, light industry, electronics, chemical industry and minerals. Major Chinese investments involving mining and minerals in the DPRK according to Dick (2008) include the following:

China Tonghua Iron and Steel Group has invested 7 billion yuan (Approximately, \$875 million) in developing the DPRK's Musan Iron Mine. Two billion yuan (approximately, \$250 million) is to be used for the preliminary construction of communication facilities and

cables from Tonghua, China, to the DPRK's Musan area; 5 billion Yuan (approximately, \$625 million) is to be used mainly on technology and equipment in developing the mine as well as in Musan's overall planning). This mine is the largest open cut iron mine in Asia with verified iron rich ore reserves reaching seven billion tons (Bonnie, 2009).

On October 20, 2007; China's Tangshan Iron and Steel Company (China's third largest steel company) and the DPRK's Department of Foreign Economic Cooperation and Taep'ung International Investment Group signed a letter of cooperation intent. The two sides are to cooperate on the DPRK Kimch'aek Metallurgy Park Project and the DPRK So'ngjin Iron, Steel, Coal and Electricity Project. Tangshan is to build a steel smelting plant in the DPRK with an annual steel output of 1.5 million tons. It is to be jointly funded by the DPRK side and is to involve joint development and utilization of nearby iron ore.

The China Iron and Steel Group reportedly is ready to develop a Molybdenum mine in the DPRK with a goal of producing >10,000 tons of molybdenum concentrates per year. China and the DPRK have signed a PRC-DPRK Inter Governmental Agreement on Joint Development of Offshore Oil to pursue joint energy projects.

China's Jilin Province also has cooperated with the Hyesan Youth Copper Mine (containing the largest copper deposit in Asia), Manp'o Zinc and Lead Mine and the Hoery'ng Gold Mine in the DPRK. One project is to transmit electricity from Jilin's Changbai County to the DPRK in exchange for the gold, copper and other ores. The joint project is to install power transmission facilities with an estimated total investment of 220 million yuan (\$27.5 million).

China's Heshi Industry and Trade Company along with the International Mining Company have set up a joint venture with the DPRK's So'gyo'ng 4 Trade Company called the DPRK-China International Mining Company.

In October 2005 China Minmetals also signed with the DPRK side an Agreement on Establishing a Joint Venture in Coal Industry in the DPRK, which called for establishing a joint venture with the DPRK at the Ryongdu'ng Coal Mine.

On August 23, 2004 China's Zhaoyuan Shandong Guoda Gold Stockholding Company and the DPRK Committee for the Promotion of External Economic Cooperation agreed to establish a joint venture mining company to mine the gold in the DPRK's Mt. Sangnong and to ship all the mined gold concentrates to Zhaoyuan for smelting. The DPRK's Sangnong Gold Mine is estimated to have at least 150 tons of mineable gold.

However, due to a shortage of capital and backward technology, it has been in a state of semi-stoppage of production. Guoda is to provide equipment and technology and is to ship the mineral ores by sea to Zhaoyuan for smelting (Dick, 2008). Still on china-Korean relations, Esther (2006) has summarized the nature of the benefit derived by North Korea in her diplomatic relations with the mainland when she wrote:

Pyongyang is economically dependent on China, which provides most of its food and energy supplies. North Korea gets about 70% of its food and 70-80% of its fuel from China. Beijing is Pyongyang's largest trading partner and an estimated 300,000 North Koreans live in China, many of them migrant workers who send much needed remittances back home.

Politically, china has been the driving force of putting a stoppage against any form of international sanction on North Korea, at the same time, trying to concede North Korea to compromise with the world in issues pertaining her nuclear development. It is however, in this respect that Adam (2006) pointed out:

China has repeatedly blocked UN Security Council resolutions against North Korea, including some threatening sanctions. China has also hosted the Six-Party Talks, a series of meetings in which North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States have tried to resolve the security concerns associated with North Korea's nuclear weapons program. There and in other international forums.

The emergence of a soaring relationship between the two countries was manifest in the aftermath of Korean test of a nuclear technology. The test took China by surprise and was strongly opposed by Beijing. China viewed it as not only an act of defiance to the international community and a threat to regional stability, but specifically as an act of defiance toward China. In the aftermath of the test, China supported a UN Security Council resolution that condemned North Korea's action and imposed limited sanctions. Chinese officials privately admitted that their toolbox for managing the North Korea nuclear weapons challenge has relied too much on carrots in the past and now needs to include a combination of pressure and inducement (Bonnie, 2009).

**Sino-Vietnamese relations:** For >2000 years, Vietnam's development as a nation has been marked by one fixed and immutable factor the proximity of China. The relationship between the two countries is in many ways a family affair, with all the closeness of shared values and

bitterness of close rivalries. No country in Southeast Asia is culturally closer to China than Vietnam and no other country in the region has spent so long fending off Chinese domination, often at a terrible cost in lives, economic development and political compromise. China has been Vietnam's blessing and Vietnam's curse. It remains an intrusive cultural godfather, the giant to the North that is always there. Almost, a thousand years of Chinese occupation, between the Han conquest of Nam Viet in the 2nd century BC and the reassertion of Vietnamese independence as Dai Viet in AD 967, marked the Vietnamese so deeply that they became, in effect, an outpost of Chinese civilization in Southeast Asia (Andrew, 2007).

While, the other countries of Indochina are Theravada Buddhist, sharing cultural links with South Asia, Vietnam derived its predominant religion a mix of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism popularly known as tam giao or Three Religions from China. Until the introduction of romanized quoc ngu script in the 17th century, Vietnamese scholars wrote in Chinese characters or in chu nho, a Vietnamese derivative of Chinese characters. Over the centuries, Vietnam developed as a smaller version of the Middle Kingdom, a centralized, hierarchical state ruled by an all-powerful emperor living in a Forbidden City based on its namesake in Beijing and administered by a highly educated Confucian bureaucracy.

Both countries are deeply conscious of the cultural ties that bind them together and each is still deeply suspicious of the other. During the long centuries of Chinese occupation, the Vietnamese enthusiastically embraced many aspects of Chinese civilization, while at the same time fighting with an extraordinary vigor to maintain their cultural identity and regain their national independence Asia (Andrew, 2007).

Traditional friendship between China and Vietnam as well as the people of the two countries has enjoyed a long history. On January 18, 1950, the two countries established diplomatic relations. The Chinese Government and people rendered full support to the long-term revolutionary struggle of Vietnam against France and the US and provided Vietnam with huge military and economic aid. Vietnam regards China as its strong backing and the two countries have developed extensive cooperation in the political, military and economic fields. In late 1970s however, Sino-Vietnamese relations deteriorated. In November 1991, at the invitation of General Secretary Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party Do Muoi and Chairman of the Council of Minister Vo Van Kiet visited China and

both sides declared in end to the past and the start into the future. So that the party and state relations between the two countries were normalized (Sina, 2005).

Since then, the party and state relations between China and Vietnam have seen an overall restoration and in-depth development. There were frequent contacts and exchanges of visits between the leaders of the two countries and friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields between the two sides were continuously strengthened (Sina, 2005).

It was on October 8, 2004; the governments of the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam issued a joint communiqué. The full text of the communiqué as revealed by Phan (2000), is as follows:

At the invitation of Prime Minister Phan Van Khai of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Premier Wen Jiabao of the State Council of the People's Republic of China paid an official visit to Vietnam from October 6-7, 2004. During the visit, Premier Wen Jiabao held a talk with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and met with Secretary General Nong Duc Manh of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong and Chairman Nguyen Van An of the National Assembly. Leaders of the two countries exchanged views on strengthening bilateral relations and on international and regional affairs of common concern in a sincere, friendly and practical atmosphere and reached consensus in a variety of fields. The visit achieved full success.

Both sides are glad to see that guided by the principle of long-term stability, orientation to the future, good neighborliness and friendship and all-round cooperation defined by the leaders of the two countries Sino Vietnamese relations are developing rapidly, deeply and comprehensively. The leaders of both sides have exchanged visits frequently, mutual political trust is being strengthened, significant achievements have been made in the fields of economic and trade cooperation, major progresses have been realized in the settlement of such historical problems as boundary and territory and exchange and cooperation in other fields are also being expanded. The two sides support and coordinate with each other in both international and regional affairs.

Both sides believe that China and Vietnam have common strategic interest on many major issues. To maintain the stable, sound and smooth development of bilateral ties at a time of fundamental changes in the international situation is in the interest of the two countries and their people and conducive to regional and world peace and development as well. The governments of both countries, taking into account the overall situation and starting from a strategic perspective, are determined

to follow the above principle, carry on the traditional friendship, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, appropriately handle sensitive issues in a timely manner and constantly push the relationship between China and Vietnam to new levels.

Both sides agree to maintain frequent exchanges between leaders of the two countries, strengthen the friendly exchanges between their government agencies, local governments and civil organizations, strictly implement the cooperation documents signed by the ministries of foreign affairs, national defense and public security of both countries and effectively strengthen mutual understanding and trust. Both parties express willingness to deepen all-round cooperation, encourage and support their practical cooperation in the fields of economy and trade, technology, education and culture and try their best to seek and expand common interest. They also agree to enhance exchange of experiences in running the party and state and the theories and practices of socialism, promote the development of the Friendship Meeting of Chinese and Vietnamese Youth, accelerate exchanges of the youth of both countries and enhance publicity of the friendship between China and Vietnam.

Both sides are satisfied with the progress in their economic and trade relations and express commitment to continuing to deepen mutually beneficial coordination. They reach consensus on expanding transactions of bulk commodities, maintaining the rapid and sustained growth of bilateral trade so that the trade volume between the two countries can reach \$10 billion by 2010 and gradually narrow down imbalance in bilateral trade relations. Both sides note that they will accelerate the implementation of the already established cooperative projects, encourage and support businesses of both sides to conduct long term cooperation in major infrastructure and industrial programs and improve the quality of bilateral economic and trade cooperation. They also agree to establish an expert panel, under the framework of China Vietnam economic and trade cooperation commission, to discuss the feasibility of building the Kunming Laojie Hanoi Hai Phong Quang Ninh and Nanning Liangshan Hanoi Hai Phong Quang Ninh economic corridors and the Beibu Bay economic rim.

Both sides agree to jointly promote the development of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. Vietnam acknowledges China's complete market economy status and promises not to use Articles 15 and 16 of the protocol on Accession of China to the WTO and the 242 paragraph of the Working Party Report on China's Accession to the WTO. China recognizes the market economy status of Vietnam supports Vietnam's efforts to join the World

Trade Organization at the earliest date possible and is willing to make joint efforts with Vietnam in this regard. Both parties, in the spirit of being practical and flexible, will complete the negotiations on bilateral market access as soon as possible.

Both parties hold that the special meeting between the chief negotiators on the boundary issue of the two governments held in August 2004, the agreement on implementing the major consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and the minute of that meeting are conducive to furthering mutual trust, effectively preventing the emergence of boundary and territorial problems and tackling such problems in a timely manner, whenever they occur. Both parties agree to take effective measures to implement the minute as soon as possible.

Both sides agree to accelerate the process of boundary survey and the erection of boundary markers along the land border between China and Vietnam. Related government departments and local governments of the two countries will be required to work hard to strengthen mutual trust and cooperate sincerely so as to accomplish the survey and erection of boundary markers as scheduled and build the land border into a boundary of peace, friendship and cooperation between both countries. During the process of boundary survey and the erection of boundary markers, both sides will faithfully maintain the status quo of border and manage the boundary strictly following the Interim Agreement on Handling Border Issues between the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam reached in 1991.

Both sides highly compliment the Beibu Bay Demarcation Agreement and the Agreement on Fishery Cooperation going into effect on June 30, 2004 simultaneously, which they believe is a significant event in the Sino-Vietnamese relations, conducive to the permanent peace and stability of Beibu Bay region and of great importance to the long-term stable development of bilateral ties. The two countries are satisfied with the implementation of the above two agreements and stress that they will continue to coordinate closely in implementing the two agreements strictly. They express the commitment to jointly maintaining peace and stability in the Beibu Bay, promoting long-term cooperation and bringing benefit to the two peoples in the spirit of mutual understanding and concessions and without resort to radical action or force Phan (2000).

Both parties agree to strictly follow the consensus reached by the high-level leaders of both governments and the purpose and principles of the Declaration on the conduct of parties in the South China Sea (DOC) signed between China and the member states of ASEAN. The



two parties will remain restrained, neither adopting unilateral action, which might add to the complexity or expand existing disputes nor resorting to force or threats by force, including not resorting to force against fishing boats. Both sides will take tangible actions to maintain the stability of the South China Sea Phan (2000).

Both sides emphasize that they will retain the negotiation mechanism on marine issues and increase rounds of negotiations. They insist to seek fundamental and permanent solutions, which are acceptable to both parties through peaceful negotiations. Prior to the final settlement of those issues, both sides will follow the spirit of addressing easy problems first and then difficult ones, continue to strengthen cooperation in fields with lower sensitivity, which are of common concern to both parties and gradually explore how to expand cooperation in other identified fields.

The Vietnamese government reiterates that it will continue to firmly uphold the one China policy, support China's lofty cause of national reunification and oppose the separatist activities of Taiwan independence in whatever form. Vietnam only maintains non-official economic and trade contact with Taiwan and resolutely refrains from establishing official relations with Taiwan.

Both sides agree to continue to strengthen cooperation and coordination of the two countries in the United Nations, ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum, APEC, ASEM, Greater Mekong Sub-region and other multilateral organizations. They also express commitment to building a fair and rational new international political and economic order and contributing to the regional and international peace, stability and development.

**On trade relation:** China plays an important role especially in his investment projects in Vietnam. Economic and trade relation between Vietnam and China has seen significant development with the two way trade volume standing at 1.345 billion US dollars in the first 7 months of 2000 (Phan, 2000). On the Sino-Vietnam economic relations, the following areas have been of great importance as written by Brown and Joseph (1986).

Vietnam-China trade, which reached a record US \$7.2 billion last year, is likely to reach \$10 billion by 2007, 3 years ahead of the schedule set by Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at a meeting in Beijing last year. Trade, which has grown at an amazing annual rate of 40% in recent years, has emerged as a bright spot in bilateral relations, thanks to many advantages, including the shared 1,643 km land border and mutual access to the Gulf of Tonkin.

Since, the resumption of Vietnam-China economic relations in 1991, the two countries have seen stable and rapid growth in trade, from \$32 million in 1991 to nearly

\$2.5 billion in 2000 and \$7.2 billion in 2004. Vietnam exports in great volumes crude oil, coal, coffee, sea products, fruits and vegetables and footwear to China, while China has registered large increases in the export of pharmaceutical products, machinery and equipment, petroleum, fertilizers, motorbike parts and cars to Vietnam.

At present, China is the second biggest trading partner of Vietnam after the European Union (EU). It is the fourth largest buyer of Vietnam's goods and the biggest seller to Vietnam. Yet the value of two-way trade accounts for just 12% of Vietnam's total trade turnover and represents only 0.6% of China's. The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) suggested that to further boost bilateral trade, both countries businesses should look to long-term contracts on supplying products not only to their countries but also to a third country.

A glorious example of the fruits of Sino-Vietnamese cooperation is the Thai Nguyen Steel Complex in Vietnam, which last year produced 430,000 tons of rolling steel, 300,000 tons of steel ingot and 210,000 tons of pig-iron, grossing a turnover of VND2, 500 billion (US \$157 million). Its products have gone to almost all key projects in the country, occupying a firm foothold in the market. The steel complex, located about 80 km North of Hanoi, was built with Chinese assistance in 1959. At the end of 2001, the first phase of an extension project of the Thai Nguyen Steel Complex was completed with a total investment of nearly \$46.7 million, with China contributing \$22 million. The second phase of the extension (2005-2007), with a total investment of \$200 million, aims to raise the complex's capacity to 750,000-1,000,000 million tons a year.

The Ha Bac Nitrogenous Fertilizer Factory, another gift from China to the Vietnamese people in the 1960s, has markedly contributed to Vietnam's development. Producing nearly 2 million tons of fertilizer for Vietnam so far, the factory over the past 4 years has had an average annual growth rate of 18%. The growth rate was achieved thanks to a \$32 million investment from the Chinese partner to raise the factory's capacity to 150,000 tons a year.

Other major projects jointly carried out by Vietnam and China includes the Sin Quyen copper project, the Cao Ngan thermal power project and the Dac Nong bauxite project. In addition, the Chinese government has decided to provide 150 million yuan (US \$18 million) as non-refundable aid to help build a Vietnam-China Friendship Palace. In the 1992-2004 periods, China pledged \$312 million of official development assistance for Vietnam, including \$50 million as non-refundable aid for the upgrade of a number of Chinese-funded industrial projects in Vietnam. According to Roger (2006), similarly, China may be the second largest source of foreign aid to

Vietnam (including grants and loans). In 2005, the PRC reportedly offered nearly \$200 million in grants and loans, 28 in 2006. Beijing provided loans to Vietnam for railways, hydro-power development and ship building facilities. Japan and France are the largest donors of ODA to Vietnam, providing an annual average of \$670 and \$116 million, respectively (2004-2005).

**Sino-Laotian relations:** The two countries' relations have virtually consisted trade and aid, which primarily, become manifest in road construction in the Northern provinces of Laos, without directly challenging the interests of Thailand or Vietnam in the central and Southern regions. However, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 to unseat then prime minister Pol Pot, provoked China into a limited invasion of Vietnam approximately 19 km deep to teach Vietnam a lesson. Laos was caught in a dangerous bind, not wanting to further provoke China, but not able to oppose its special partner, Vietnam. The Laotian leadership survived the dilemma by making slightly delayed pronouncements in support of Vietnam after some intraparty debate and by sharply reducing diplomatic relations with China to the chargé d'affaires level without a full break. The low point in Sino-Laotian relations came in 1979, with reports of Chinese assistance and training of Hmong resistance forces under General Vang Pao in China's Yunnan Province (Brown and Joseph, 1986).

This hostile relationship gradually softened however and in 1989 Prime Minister Kaysone paid a state visit to Beijing. In 1991 Kaysone chose to spend his vacation in China rather than make his customary visit to the Soviet Union. Diplomatic and party-to-party relations were normalized in 1989. Trade expanded from the local sale of consumer goods to the granting of eleven investment licenses in 1991 including an automotive assembly plant. Following the establishment of the Laotian Chinese Joint Border Committee in 1991, meetings held during 1992 resulted in an agreement delineating their common border. China's commercial investments and trade with Laos have expanded quietly, but not dramatically, in 1993 and 1994. Unlike its other neighbors, China has not historically dominated the Laotians. In the final analysis, China represents the most powerful remaining communist state to which Laos might turn for support against Thai or Vietnamese hegemony (Brown and Joseph, 1986). According to Bouasone (2008), Sino-Laotian relation is identifiable from the following angles:

**Political relations:** China and Laos are friendly neighbors linked with mountains and waters and the people of the two countries have co-existed in peace and harmony since

the ancient times. On April 25, 1961, China and Laos established diplomatic relations and have maintained neighborly and friendly relations ever since. Between the late 1970s and mid 1980s, their relations suffered twists and turns. In 1989, however, Sino-Laotian relations returned to the normal.

Over the last 10 years and more, Sino-Laotian relations have seen comprehensive restoration and development and exchanges of visits between leaders of the two countries become frequent. President Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC Qiao Shi visited Laos respectively while, President of Laos Kayson Phonvihane and Nouthak Phoumsavanh, Premier Khamtay Siphandone and Boungnang Vornchith, President of the National Assembly Samane Vignaket and Central Chairman of the Nation-Building Front Sisavath Keobounphan visited China many times. The two countries have witnessed growing friendly contacts and cooperation in the political, economic, military, cultural and health fields and maintained close coordination and cooperation in international and regional affairs. The Laotian Government abides by one-China position and supports the Chinese people in the peaceful unification cause of their motherland.

In November 2000, President Jiang Zemin paid a state visit to Laos. As it is the first visit to Laos by the president of China, it stands out as a milestone in the history of bilateral relations. During this visit, the Joint Statement on the bilateral cooperation was signed and issued, confirming the development of comprehensive cooperation between the two countries based on long term stability, neighborliness and friendship and mutual trust.

**Economic and trade relations:** Over the recent years, China and Laos have seen sound development of their economic and trade relations. Documents on cooperation in trade, investment protection, tourism and automobile transport were signed respectively and the committee on bilateral economic, trade and technological cooperation was set up between the both sides. In 2000, Sino-Laotian trade volume reached US \$40.84 million, up 28.8% from the previous year and in 2001, it rose to US \$ 61.87 million, up 51.4% from 2000 (Bouasone, 2008).

Since 1900, Chinese companies started building plants in Laos with their investment. By the end of 2001, the contractual investment had totaled US \$75 million, covering such areas as building materials, cultivation and aquiculture and pharma ceutical production. On the other hand, they actively participated in labor and project contracting in Laos, with the contractual total exceeding

US\$ 0.5 billion. The following however, are the aid projects built by China in Laos: ground station for receiving satellite TV programmes, hydropower station by Namgao River power transmission project and cultural palace of Laos. The project under construction now is the 2nd phase of Vangvieng Cement Plant and Langprabang Hospital and other projects will come later (Bouasone, 2008).

**Exchanges and cooperation in other areas:** There has been good cooperation between the foreign ministries of the two countries, the Chinese and Laotian foreign ministers, respectively visited the other country. Laos opened its consulate-general in Kunming. In 1999, the two countries reached an agreement on Laos opening another consulate-general in Hong Kong (Bouasone, 2008).

Military relations between China and Laos have developed very well. China's military leaders Chi Haotian, Zhang Wannian and Yu Yongbo visited Laos one after another, while Laotian Vice-Premier cum Defence Minister Choummaly and other military leaders visited China many times. Since 1989, China and Laos have signed agreements on cultural and press cooperation as well as memorandums of understanding on cooperation in education, health, broadcasting, film and TV. There were frequent exchanges of visits between performing artists, writers and journalists of the two countries. The two countries started to exchange students and vocational trainees since 1990.

**Border issue:** China and Laos share a joint boundary of 500 km long. In October 1991, the two countries signed the Sino-Laotian Boundary, Treaty on the Sino-Laotian Boundary System and Supplementary Protocol to the Treaty on the Sino-Laotian Boundary System. Having found a successful solution to their boundary dispute in a relatively short time through friendly consultations, the governments of the two countries have set an example for states to resolve boundary questions through peaceful talks. The Sino-Laotian boundary has become a peaceful, friendly and stable border (Bouasone, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

Chinese diplomatic relations and foreign policy has witnessed a series of challenges and confrontation, some from her allies such as North Korea and even Vietnam (defying talks on his nuclear issues. Vietnam some times seeing china as a threat in the region). While, some come from the United States and other major powers in international politics. But the main argument, which is virtually crucial to Chinese diplomacy, is the shock

absorber it is able to create for her diplomatic vehicle in order to absorb all sorts of shocks that may affect her relations with international comity of nations, it is also obvious that so long the Chinese diplomatic principles perpetuate and other countries emulate such diplomatic tenets by ceasing to be belligerent, so long the international community would continue to have peaceful atmosphere within the frame work of international politics and diplomatic relations among them selves.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to continue having peaceful Asia as a continent and developmental international relations within the ambit of international law without breaches, the following recommendations are vital:

China as a major power within the region should continue to carry out peaceful negotiations and consultations, which would lead to reconciliation of the South-China sea crisis with his neighboring countries. China should also continue to play a paternalistic role on North Korean issue. This will lead to further understanding and compromise in the sides of North Korea, South Korea, the United States and all parties concerned. Protectionism is also needed by North Korea, which only china is in a position to provide such political privilege.

ASIAN members and other countries within the region should also recognize the emerging economic power of china and her peaceful influence to the markets of the region. This will foster economic cooperation and advancement within the region. China should politically pet the neighboring communist countries in order to maintain a regional ideological internal struggle of communism. Economic cooperation should be fostered among these states: this must involve Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), technological development and transfer, international trade and partnership.

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