The Outlook for US-Vietnam Relations

Carlyle A. Thayer
Presentation to East-West Center
Washington, DC
March 23, 2011
Normalization

China-Vietnam

- Cambodian Conflict 1979-91
- 1990-91 Normalization
- 2005 bilateral defence consultations
- 2009 strategic cooperative partnership
- 2010 November 1st Strategic Defence Security Dialogue

United States-Vietnam

- Vietnam War 1965-75
- 1995 Normalization
- 2001 Bilateral Trade Agrm.
- 2004 annual defence dialogue
- June 2005 IMET Agreement and intelligence sharing counter-terrorism
- 2008 1st Political, Security and Defense Dialogue
- 2010 August Defense Policy Dialogue
$12 billion deficit with China

$9 billion surplus with the US

Economic and Trade Relations
High-Level Defence Visits

China-Vietnam

- 2002-10 six visits by Vietnamese Defence Minister and two return visits by Chinese Defence Minister
- Equal exchanges by chiefs of General Staff, GPD and GLD (political/logistics)
- Exchanges by Military Region Commanders

United States-Vietnam

- 2000-10 two visits by U.S. Secretary of Defense and two visits by Vietnamese Defence Minister
- 2003 turning point
- 1994-2010: nine visits by Commander U.S. Pacific Command
Naval Port Visits

China-Vietnam

- 2000 Gulf of Tonkin delineation and Fisheries Agreement
- Nov. 2001 PLAN Jiangwei II guided missile frigate visits Ho Chi Minh City
- Nov. 2008 PLAN training ship Zheng He visits Ho Chi Minh City

United States-Vietnam

- 2003 USS Vandergrift, HCMC
- 2004 USS Curtis Wilbur, Da Nang
- 2005 USS Gary, HCMC
- 2006 USS Patriot and USS Salvor, HCMC
Naval Port Visits

**China-Vietnam**

- Dec. 2009 PLA ships *Cheng Hai* and *Chao Yang* visit Haiphong
- April 2006-May 2010 nine joint naval patrols conducted in Gulf of Tonkin
- May 2010 joint China-Vietnam Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX)
- November 2010 PLAN frigate visits Da Nang

**United States-Vietnam**

- 2007 USS *Peleliu*, Da Nang; and USS *Patriot* and USS *Guardian*, Hai Phong
- 2008 USS *Mercy*, Nha Trang and USS *Mustin*, Da Nang
- 2009 USNS *Bruce Heezen*, Da Nang; USNS *Safeguard*, Ho Chi Minh City; USS *Blue Ridge* and USS *Lassen*, Da Nang
- 2010 USNS *Richard E. Byrd*, Hon Khoi Port; USNS *Mercy*, Qui Nhon; USS *John S. McCain*, Da Nang
1st Joint Naval Engagement Activities (Aug 2010)

15th Anniversary of US-Vietnam Diplomatic Relations
USS John S. McCain makes port call Da Nang
Access to Cam Ranh Bay
‘Three No’s’

1. No military alliances
2. No foreign military bases on Vietnamese territory
3. No use of third countries to combat another country
## Professional Military Education and Training

### China-Vietnam
- Extensive discussions on army-building
- Under consideration:
  - Exchanges in personnel training
  - Vietnamese participation at National Defence University
  - Disaster relief

### United States-Vietnam
- Extended IMET
- Foreign Military Training:
  - FY2003 & 2004 = nil
  - FY2004 N = 20 (13 at APCSS)
  - FY2005 17 (9 at APCSS and 8 IMET)
- IMET – English language and medical training
Other Defence Cooperation

**China-Vietnam**
- Demining along land border
- Agreement on land border (1999) and subsequent demarcation

**United States-Vietnam**
- MIA-POW full accounting
- Demining and UXE
- Agent Orange joint research
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (flood control)
- Counter-terrorism
- Military medicine research (HIV/AIDS)
Other Defence Cooperation

**Vietnam-United States**
- 2003 Vietnamese observers at COBRA GOLD
- May 2007 Vietnamese observers at Western Pacific Naval Symposium
- 2007-08 Vietnamese observers at annual mid-year US-Southeast Asia bilateral joint exercises

**United States-Vietnam**
- 1997 Proposed: tactical discussions and joint training exchanges in jungle warfare
- 2002: counter drug trafficking
- 2007: send US officers and cadets to train in Vietnamese universities
- 2009 participation in SAR exercise?
Arms Sales & NDI

China-Vietnam

- 2005 NORINCO ammunition for small arms and artillery, military vehicles, and co-production ammunition and heavy machine guns
- 2005 Defence Ministers discuss NDI cooperation
- 2005 China’s Commission for Science, Technology and Industry visits Vietnam

United States-Vietnam

- 1994 CINCPAC proposes equipment exchanges/sales
- 2003 David Lamb, LAT, attractive arms market
- 2005 US Ambassador: repair and maintenance mooted, USN to purchase supplies
- 2006 Secretary Rumsfield Vietnam to buy military spare parts
China-Vietnam

- 2008 Vietnamese Deputy Defence Minister holds discussions with China’s Commission for Science, Technology and Industry in Beijing; suggests cooperation in personnel training, frontier and coastal defence and ‘other fields’

United States-Vietnam

- 2006 Sec State sale, lease, export or transfer non-lethal defence articles and defence services authorized
- 2006 Presidential Memorandum Vietnam eligible under Foreign Assistance Act of 1961; but excluded from lethal end items or their components,
Arms Sales & NDI

United States-Vietnam

- non-lethal crowd control devices and night vision devices.
- 2007 International Trafficking in Arms Regulations amended to allow trade with Vietnam on case by case basis
- 2007 U.S.-ASEAN Business Council opens office in Hanoi

United States-Vietnam

Vietnam-U.S. Strategic Cooperation

- Attended meeting of Proliferation Security Initiative held in New Zealand

- 2004 Attended CHOD meeting (Asia-Pacific Chiefs of Defence) for first time, Tokyo

- U.S. Global Threat Reduction Initiative

- Shangri-La Dialogue (2008)
  - US Chairman JCS met with Vietnam representative
ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus 8

- China
- Russia
- USA
- New Zealand
- Australia
- South Korea
- Japan
- India
East Asia Summit

ASEAN Ten

+3
China
Japan
Korea

India
Australia
NZ

Plus USA & Russia
Vietnam’s Strategic Significance

1. South China Sea littoral state
2. Emerging middle income country
3. Gradual defence modernisation
4. Key player in ASEAN
5. Key player in regional architecture
6. Potential strategic partner of US
The Outlook for US-Vietnam Relations

Carlyle A. Thayer
Presentation to East-West Center
Washington, DC
March 23, 2011