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NORMALIZATION OR RECOLONIZATION?
VOLUNTEERS IN ASIA (VIA) AND VIET NAM - U.S. RELATIONS

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Vietnamese individuals, and especially my college classmates, who I was so fortunate to be able to meet with or conduct email interviews on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Foreign Languages Department, Ha Noi University, which took place in June 2002.

Preface

My intention to conduct research and write a thesis about Volunteers in Asia developed while taking the course HIST 639C, U.S. Diplomatic History, in the Department of History, University of Hawaii at Manoa, during the Fall semester 2001 with professor Naoko Shibusawa. Among the books she assigned for that course, Michael Latham's *Modernization as Ideology* provoked me the most, particularly its two last chapters "Modernization for Peace: The Peace Corps, Community, and America's Mission" and "Modernization at War: Counterinsurgency and the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam."¹ In his book, Latham examines the U.S. government's application of development theory and modernization ideology to its implementation of non-military Cold War policies. Reading about the Peace Corps volunteers and their complicity to the anticommunist war in Viet Nam through community development and teaching assignments, I could not help but relate it to Volunteers in Asia (VIA),² a Stanford-based, non-government, and non-sectarian organization with which I have had close relationships through my VIA teacher, Ms. Miranda Arana. I discovered that many of the Peace Corps' teaching materials and ideals were similar to what I learned from Ms. Arana. For example, my teacher provided us with critical readings about development policies in Southeast Asia, agricultural and industrial revolution, and materials that train independent, critical, and assertive thinking for personal growth and professional success, all of which have U.S.-based contents. On the one hand, this forced me to question whether or not my VIA teacher had intended to reshape Vietnamese students' thinking and transform Vietnamese society into an American model through her teaching as accomplished by the Peace Corps volunteers. On the other hand, my long-held belief in her progressive and conscientious character remains and challenges such an assumption. These concerns inspired me to examine VIA's objectives and accomplishments through its teaching and administrative principles. In writing this thesis, I hope to offer readers a better understanding of this "non-governmental and apolitical" organization, shed a more critical perspective toward "international volunteerism" and, more importantly, explain the policies of the United States toward Viet Nam during and after the Cold War.

My first-hand experience with Volunteers in Asia took place during my junior and senior years at the Foreign Languages Department of Ha Noi National University (September 1992 - May 1994). The U.S. embargo against Viet Nam caused a blockage of communication between the two countries and a consequent lack of knowledge among contemporary Vietnamese students about the United States. As a result, I was extremely excited to have the opportunity to learn English from an American teacher. After two years, in addition to improving my English language skills, I managed to achieve a more critical way of thinking about society and culture in Viet Nam and became particularly sensitive to cross-cultural issues. My understanding of the United States was, therefore, opened and expanded.

According to Ms. Kristy Kelly, a former VIA field coordinator in Viet Nam, VIA teachers have played an essential role in introducing critical and independent ways of thinking for Vietnamese students. Upon commenting about Vietnamese students and VIA teachers, Ms. Kelly said: “Vietnamese students always want a clear opinion, either black or white. They either totally idealize the United States or absolutely hate it. I think they should become more critical and able to see everything from all perspectives. That is what you got during your study in the U.S., through Miranda’s teaching, and through your working experience with foreign organizations in Vietnam, and that is what the Vietnamese government needs. I think the educational system in Viet Nam should change if it wants to produce good leaders for the country’s future.”³ Ms. Kelly’s comments implied that Vietnamese students and ultimately the Vietnamese government may acquire the ability to think critically through their exposure with foreigners and particularly American teachers.

However, my learning experience with Ms. Arana in Viet Nam did not totally work the way Ms. Kelly described. Upon coming to Hawaii to pursue graduate study in American Studies, I realized that my thinking about the United States that developed through my training in Viet Nam was insufficient and idealized. For example, I learned the American lesson of “How to Think Big” or “Interview Tips from A to Z” to achieve professional and business success or the U.S. development projects in Asia, all of which made me deeply admire America’s adventurous and assertive character as well as its

wealth and advanced technology. On the other hand, I learned little from her about the negative aspects of American culture or history, for example, black slavery, Manifest Destiny or Asian American experiences. This has led to a number of questions: Why did I gain such a positive but one-sided, if not inaccurate, understanding of the United States from my VIA teacher and her teaching materials? What are VIA 's institutional goals and the volunteers' motivations? More importantly, what are the ideological effects of U.S. educational programs abroad, even well-intentioned ones, to the countries they serve in the current era of American hegemony?

My research about VIA, its organization and participants, was first conducted in mid-May 2002 in VIA home office at Stanford University. Having informed the administrators of my arrival, my research interest, and equipped with a strong introduction letter from the East – West Center, a highly recognized organization established by the U.S. Congress in 1960, I was cordially received by the VIA staff. However, during our talks, I realized that the staff had concerns about my political allegiance and research objectives. For example, they questioned me how I had received the East –West Center grant, if it had come through the Vietnamese government or some other entity, my intention to publish the thesis, my plans after the MA program, and whether I intended to return to Viet Nam or stay in the U.S. They further requested to see a copy of my thesis for their approval before having it publicized, to “avoid any misrepresentations about VIA.”⁴ The VIA staff's obvious concerns about my research further fueled my determination to examine their organization and policies to understand why they needed to be so careful and whether there were any links between VIA and the U.S. policy toward Viet Nam.

Despite these concerns, the VIA staff was friendly and helpful in arranging interviews and letting me see materials in their office. Some publicity and orientation materials were offered free of charge. However, my research space was limited to the meeting lounge, and no office materials were allowed outside the office. Also, my use of the xerox machine in the office was constantly watched by one of the staff, who later suggested that I'd better consult the Viet Nam Program Director (Ms. Ann Le) before making copies. The cooperation of the VIA field coordinator in Hanoi, Ms. Ky Lam, was

also very limited. During my three months in Hanoi, I could not access her office at all for various reasons, e.g., her work with the orientation program, her vacation, the need to reorganize everything in the office, etc. Even though I had tried to arrange a meeting with her at the office as early as late May, until my departure to the U.S. in late August, I failed to gain access to her office, which I believe contained important archives for a complete understanding of VIA in Viet Nam.

During my stay in Ha Noi, I met as many people as possible for my interviews. In these encounters, I was often met with the same question: “Are you American or an international student?” This question may indicate the interviewees’ concerns about whether I was brought up in the U.S. or raised under the Vietnamese Communist regime. This could have well made a difference in their attitude to me and the kind of information I gained from them. In fact, one interviewee, who gave me his number over email and said that he would call me to arrange an interview, never reconnected with me after our first phone conversation, in which I revealed to him that I am a Vietnamese from Viet Nam. He did not respond to my subsequent email, though I knew from his workmate that he was still in Ha Noi, not too busy with only eight hours’ teaching per week.⁵ From these experiences, I came to believe that what I have gathered from the VIA staff and the interviewees may not be the whole story, and their reluctance to disclose information to me had much to do with my Vietnamese identity.

At home, I dug up the materials that I had studied at college and luckily found most of the handouts that my VIA teacher, Ms. Arana, used in our class. Also, I found many books that she privately gave me when she left Viet Nam in the summer of 1994. It was her intention to use those books for her English classes in Viet Nam; yet, not having had the chance to teach all of those materials, she left them to me. Believing that I was the right person to trust with such academic treasures and that I would not “let them get covered with dust!”⁶ she gave me almost all the books she did not wish to bring back to the States. Ironically, in the six years, since I left college in 1994 till the time I departed for the States in 2000, I did not have time to look through all those books except for some collections of short stories that I thought might be of use for my Literature lectures. To my amazement, I realized that among those untaught books were *All I Asking For Is My*

Body, America Is in The Heart, and *The Last Days of the Sioux Nations*, and many other critical readings of American Studies which have become so familiar to me after my two years in the American Studies Program at UHM. It was then clear to me that Ms. Arana did have the intention to teach us about the genocidal conquest of the American Indian and the suppressed life as well as exploitative labor that Asian American immigrants had to endure. For some reason, however, she omitted such issues from her curriculum and focused more on short stories, essays on American feminism and liberalism, handouts about global economic and environmental issues, and various materials regarding Development in Asia, agricultural and industrial revolutions, as well as resume writing and interview tips, etc. She obtained much of this material from her VIA colleague – Sarah Bales, who taught English at Ha Noi National Economics University and later worked as a World Bank consultant in Viet Nam – and her husband, also a VIA participant who is a former Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines in the late 1980s.⁷

My teacher's specific choice of materials and her decision as to what should be given priority and what was of secondary importance to Vietnamese students were political decisions in the broad sense of the word, whether she was pro-American or not. Also, she did recognize that the idealized conception of America which had been shaped in my mind before going to the U.S. was an "unintended effect" of her teaching.⁸ The same would have been said of other teachers' choices and their impact on Vietnamese students. This study about the teachers' politics in selecting and interpreting materials, therefore, adds to cultural studies scholarship about the relationship between knowledge and power. Also, it further reveals the inherent Americanism in the hearts and minds of a majority of Americans, even those who are critical of U.S. policies. Viet Nam, their host country, could also influence the thinking of these American teachers. Living in an alien, once-hostile, and non-Western culture, their nostalgia and patriotism are likely to be provoked. The unfamiliar lifestyle provides them with a cultural reference point to define the surrounding Other in Vietnamese culture and rediscover their distinctive American identity, as a VIA returnee assertively claimed: "I go to Viet Nam and learn about being an American!"⁹ For these reasons, the American-ness in their self-representations and the Otherness in their representations of Viet Nam could become stronger and more vocal.

I am well aware that my very research is also political and my partiality can be manifested in my interpretation and selection of data. The preciseness and objectiveness of my thesis, therefore, need to be qualified by both objective and subjective factors, e.g., the information that VIA participants released to me and my understanding of such information. However, full responsibility rests upon me for any possible errors.

Notes:

1. Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
2. See VIA website at <http://www.volasia.org>
3. Kristy Kelly, email communication, December 2001.
4. Ann Le, personal communication, May 2002.
5. Hanan Baky, personal communication, May 2002
6. Miranda Arana, personal communication, June 1994.
7. Miranda Arana, personal communication, April 2002.
8. *ibid.*
9. *Number 1 advice*, Viet Nam training material, VIA Training Folder. Stanford Office, CA.

Introduction

The primary objective of this study of Volunteers in Asia (VIA) is to question its self-defined independent status. Also, I want to examine its contributions to Viet Nam-U.S. relations, particularly during the post Cold War period. I will do this by analyzing VIA's administrative and pedagogical principles in the context of U.S. foreign policies in Viet Nam. My communications with VIA participants and my analysis of VIA as well as U.S. government documents reveal that there is an important connection between VIA's policies and U.S. policies in Viet Nam. Whether the volunteer teachers are aware of their participation in these political issues or not, their activities during and after the VIA experience play a complicit role in reinforcing U.S. hegemony in Viet Nam, despite VIA's strong commitment to peaceful and respectful relations with the Vietnamese hosts. Because VIA started its program in Viet Nam in 1966 and lasted for two years before reestablishing the Viet Nam program in 1990,¹ most of my analysis will focus on VIA program in Viet Nam and Viet Nam-U.S. relations in the 1960s and post-1990 eras.

Almost all VIA participants are proud of the private status of their organization, which they believe to be the key facilitator of their access to Asian countries that are denied of U.S. government programs. For example, Richard Thompson, a VIA alumni in Taiwan and China programs, compares VIA with the Peace Corps:

The Peace Corps provides similar opportunities for young Americans to Asia as Volunteers in Asia do, but as an agency run and funded by the State Department of the United States government, its activities are inextricably linked to considerations of American foreign policy. VIA is not so constrained. For example, political changes in Indonesia led to the expulsion of the Peace Corps from that nation in the mid-60s, but four years later, VIA,

an American non-governmental organization, was invited by the Indonesian government to send volunteer teachers to that country. In another instance, VIA began sending volunteers to the People's Republic of China in 1980, a year after Sino-US diplomatic normalization, but by 1989 a Peace Corps program there was still in the planning stage.²

Regarding the VIA program in Viet Nam as one of the first American organizations permitted to operate in Ha Noi in 1990, the former Executive Director of VIA, Paul

Strasburg comments:

“VIA’s non-governmental and non-sectarian nature might make it particularly appealing to a country like Vietnam, which had no formal relations with the U.S. government and was nervous about hosting religious organizations. About the time our contract was being considered, an American teacher with the Mennonite Central Committee, a religious community in Canada and the United States, was expelled from the country out of concern that she might have been a spy.”³

Also, a VIA China volunteer in 1996, who is currently a graduate student at UHM and an East – West Center grantee, repeatedly affirmed in an interview that: “VIA has no relations to the Cold War ideology and it is totally different from the Peace Corps or the East – West Center because of its non-governmental identity.”⁴ Many other participants of VIA also made such defensive claims during my communications with them. However, VIA is only independent from the State Department in terms of its finance. In other ways, its objectives and activities coincide with the U.S. government’s goals in Asia, regardless of the organization’s and the teachers’ intent.

In fact, in certain contexts, VIA administrators and teachers are quite aware and proud of their participation in the government’s foreign relations. In a proposal submitted to one of its funding partners for the fiscal years 2002-2003, VIA begins with a quote:

“Private voluntary exchange programs complement and help lay the groundwork for our efforts to build positive and durable bilateral relationships.” – *Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, George Herbert Walker Bush Administration.*⁵

The bilateral relationships that Mr. Lord mentioned should be understood beyond its diplomatic meaning. As part of the government’s cultural and educational exchange policies, VIA participates in U.S.- Asia political relations and serves the U.S.’s goals of national development and defense. Despite VIA ’s non-government and privately-funded status, its participants willingly contribute to the U.S.’s domestic and foreign interests. Explaining the contribution of cultural and educational exchange activities to promoting American national defense and educational development, Charles Frankel asserts:

Educational and cultural exchange is presented as a means to the construction of a peaceful world order. It is held to be indispensable to the economic and social modernization of traditional societies. It is said to be a tool of foreign policy, to be used, like any other tool, to promote the strategic interests of the nation. In speaking of the educational development as a central purpose of educational exchange, it should be emphasized that I am speaking not only of the educational development of other countries, but of American educational development as well. The exposure of a considerable number of teachers, as a regular part of their careers, to experience overseas means a change in the attitudes and perspectives prevalent in American classrooms.”⁶

In meeting the increasing demand for English language instruction in Asian countries, VIA teachers have been actively involved in the implementation of these strategic interests. In fact, many long-term VIA volunteers, after their teaching contracts are over, have continued working in areas related to their host countries, ranging from education to business and journalism. Some are active in foundations or developmental agencies, especially in Asia. Many return to the United States to pursue advanced study or to hold administrative positions in international organizations.⁷ One volunteer revealed that her motivation of joining VIA was to have a legitimate reason to go to Viet Nam and study

the politics of neo-traditional music in Viet Nam, which became the topic of her Master's thesis and her book afterward.⁸ Another volunteer expressed her wish to gain teaching and language experience in Viet Nam:

My interest in teaching is related to my plans after completion of my doctoral program. My career goals include teaching, not only in the US but also at universities and secondary schools abroad. One of my primary goals is to gain a deeper grasp and fluency of the Vietnamese language as well as gain valuable teaching experience. I also hope to gain better insights into the everyday culture of Vietnam that will assist me later.⁹

When being asked about VIA 's greatest accomplishment, Dwight Clark, VIA president responds: "It's probably the fact that we've found a viable pattern both for meeting the needs of Asian institutions and in providing the kind of experience for volunteers that makes a positive and lasting impression on their lives. Better American-Asian relations require more Americans with a sensitivity to Asia and knowledge of its languages and cultures. The more VIA can do this objective, the better."¹⁰

The above arguments support my assumption that there is an unofficial cooperation between VIA 's policies and the U.S. interests in Asia. Considering VIA 's small size, tight budget, and non-religious identity, which give it a "non-threatening and non-materialist appearance," VIA has enjoyed easy access to politically sensitive countries like Viet Nam and China.¹¹ Compared to government programs like the Peace Corps or the U.S. Agency of International Development, which are planned with political objectives and national commitment, VIA is smaller but functions in a more critical and productive manner because its service to the government is not so easily identified as the USAID while its impact is no less significant than the Peace Corps in Asia.¹²

To underscore the welcoming response of the Vietnamese host and their collegial relations with VIA, my initial encounter with VIA through one of its volunteer teachers has been quite pleasant and mutually beneficial, both in our classroom experiences and advanced studies afterwards. In fact, this teacher-student relationship has developed into a long-lasting, emotionally and intellectually supportive friendship. Also, it is entirely true that many Vietnamese students have benefited from their language training through VIA, and many academic institutions in Viet Nam warmly welcome VIA with sincere gratitude and enthusiasm. Many of these institutions specifically request VIA to place volunteers to teach content-based English with topics relating to American culture, business management, and economics.¹³ The cooperation between VIA and Viet Nam, therefore, is mutually agreed upon and beneficial. My personal relationship with VIA makes the task of taking a reflexive and critical look at VIA quite challenging. The objective of this study is not to chastise VIA and its participants or thanklessly deny their contributions. In writing this thesis, my goal is to present a more complex understanding of VIA, its participants, and the ideologies of their home country. By connecting VIA with the U.S. agenda in Viet Nam, I hope to bring readers more critical perspectives on international voluntarism in the U.S. and the crucial roles of those who, though involved in “non-government” activities, are actually facilitating the government’s goals.

American volunteerism, as Tocqueville observed and argued in *Democracy in America*, is both a unique quality of the Americans and a central feature of American democratic liberalism.¹⁴ Although Americans were neither the first nor the only ones to express altruism through the act of volunteering, the United States was the first nation to incorporate volunteering into its foreign policy in an attempt to demonstrate one

alternative to power politics, as exemplified through the Peace Corps project.¹⁵ The meaning of “volunteer,” therefore, needs to be reexamined in the context of American culture and politics. Generally defined as a “willingness to offer service,”¹⁶ volunteerism in America always conveys a combined sense of humanistic democracy and enlightened “self-interest.” For this reason, voluntarism especially appeals to young and idealistic Americans who wish to do something “good” both for the world and for themselves through their pacifist service. This spirit of volunteerism can be critical in two ways. First, the volunteers may use this language to disguise their own political and material interests. Second, they may innocently serve the concerns of others by doing “unintended tasks” while performing self-perceived “mutually good works.” VIA experience is an example of these consequences. Initiated in 1963 as part of the World University Service based in Geneva and coordinated to the Viet Nam project in 1966 by Don Luce, a socialist and anti-war activist of the International Voluntary Service,¹⁷ VIA was strongly involved in anti-imperialist internationalism and benevolent humanitarianism. Nonetheless, VIA’s international voluntarism bears the self-serving motives and the unintentional complicity to the U.S. agenda in Viet Nam. Almost all VIA participants go to Viet Nam for an “experience” to further their academic and professional goals while justifying their works by claiming the mutually beneficial nature of the enterprise without a nuanced awareness that they are making critical contributions to the Americanization of Vietnamese culture, economics, and politics through their teaching.

The first part of this thesis will present the links between the U.S. interests in Viet Nam during and after the Cold War, particularly under the influence of recent politico-economic situations in Viet Nam, and the implementation of U.S. policy through its

educational and non-militaristic projects in Viet Nam. In part II, I will give an overview of VIA 's history, administration, policies, and contextualize VIA in the larger picture of U.S. foreign policy. I will also examine the relationships among VIA, its supporters, and U.S. foreign policy to reveal the political nature of VIA's objectives by analyzing its fundraising and publicity literature to see how VIA represents itself and its accomplishments to attract individual, corporate, and government support.

Part III will specifically examine the VIA Viet Nam program, its history, financial, and administrative policies. The context in which VIA became interested in Viet Nam will be analyzed in parallel with the contemporary political and educational conditions of Viet Nam. Particularly, VIA 's financial relationship with the Ford Foundation will be thoroughly investigated to examine not only VIA and the Ford Foundation's objectives in Viet Nam, but also how these two non-government organizations are complicit in furthering the U.S. interests in Viet Nam. In order to better explain and understand VIA and the field activities of VIA volunteers, it is necessary to study the way VIA administration prepares volunteers before their departure. Therefore, the last section of part III will analyze the pre-departure training program and how it helps shape ideas about Viet Nam in the minds of prospective volunteers.

Finally, part IV will be a critical analysis of the teachers' tasks and their interaction in Viet Nam to demonstrate how they both meet and contradict the objectives set by VIA, namely, "learning and respecting Vietnamese culture to promote mutual understanding between Viet Nam and the United States."¹⁸ I will examine the teachers' behavior in the historical and cultural context between Viet Nam and the U.S., between the East and the West, that shape their attitude toward and ideas about Viet Nam. In this

part, I will process the information collected from interviewees, VIA administrators, and VIA teachers. In particular, a survey conducted with 20 Vietnamese students will provide a better view of VIA teachers' long lasting impact on Vietnamese students and Vietnamese society.¹⁹

The complexities of transnational relations and global interdependence today require dual perspectives both at VIA and the Vietnamese hosts when criticizing the U.S. hegemony in Viet Nam. Considering the welcoming reception and cooperation of Vietnamese people with VIA, with all Americans in recent years, and the undeniable benefits that Vietnamese students gain, it would be unfair and narrow-minded to group all VIA participants and Americans in Viet Nam as the contributors in the U.S. agenda toward Viet Nam. In fact, the role of the host country also needs consideration when analyzing the re-colonization of Viet Nam within American hegemony. Therefore, in the conclusion, I will not only summarize VIA 's contributions to both Viet Nam and the U.S., but also illustrate the dilemma that Viet Nam has to face when struggling to develop the country while protecting its culture and politics from being Westernized, particularly under the influence of American capitalism and U.S. hegemony. Finally, I would like to relate this study to other international voluntary organizations, voluntary activism, and non-governmental programs so as to raise further caution and critical perspectives toward the inherent politics and limitations of such humanitarian programs in the age of globalization.

Notes:

1. Dwight Clark, email communication, June 2002.
2. Richard Hasty Thompson, *Volunteers in Asia: Taiwan and China Programs*. Ph. D dissertation, Department of Education at the University of Virginia, 1990.
3. Paul Strasburg, email communication, June 2002.
4. Gregory Francis, personal communication, April 2002.
5. VIA FY 2002 – FY 2003 Proposal, submitted to a funding foundation. At my request to see VIA's fundraising material submitted to the Ford Foundation, Carolyn Welch sent this to me via email but deleted the specific name of the foundation for privacy reasons.
6. Charles Frankel, *The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Affairs: American Educational and Cultural Policy Abroad* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution., 1965), 111.
7. See appendix A.
8. Miranda Arana, personal communication, April 2002.
9. See Lynn Zephyr's quote at <http://www.volasia.org/programs/volasia/programs/vietnam/volprofiles>
10. *Campus Report*, daily paper, 9 June, 1982. Stanford University, CA.
11. Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July 2002.
12. *Parents'FAQ*, VIA publicity pamphlet. VIA Stanford Office, Stanford University: CA.
13. For example: University of Dalat, Ho Chi Minh University of Technology, Thu Duc College of Agro-Forestry, etc. Home Office Coordinator Reports: 1996, 1997, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office, CA.
14. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Random House, 1981), 403-404.
15. Elizabeth C. Hoffman, *All You Need is Love* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 9.
16. Webster Dictionary (Random House, Inc., 1993).
17. Dwight Clark, email communication, June 2002.
18. See appendix C.
19. See appendix E.

Part I: U.S. Policies in Viet Nam

Over the second half of the twentieth century, the strategic position of Viet Nam in Southeast Asia has always existed in the minds of American leaders. Therefore, the U.S.'s objectives in Viet Nam have remained largely unchanged from the start of its involvement in the Viet Nam War to the reestablishment of Viet Nam – U.S. relations. The need to rebuild Viet Nam and its institutions into the U.S. model, to eradicate Vietnamese communism for America's political supremacy in the world, and to “modernize, democratize, and liberate” Viet Nam for the U.S. economic security in the region is consistently sought. The militaristic war forty years ago is now replaced by an economic war, yet implemented by the similar American rhetoric of “promoting democracy and freedom in Viet Nam.” The following section will present these links between the U.S. policy in Viet Nam before 1975 and after 1990, with a focus on educational and cultural exchange projects.

1. The U.S. Interests in Viet Nam before 1975

Before the United States became involved in the civil war in Viet Nam in the early 1960s, it had once been Viet Nam's ally in the war against Japanese imperialism in Asia and the Pacific. From 1943 to 1945, a large number of American military advisors assisted the Viet Minh, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, to liberate the country from the Japanese occupation during World War II.¹ However, when the French attempted to recolonize Viet Nam in 1946 and waged the first Indo-Chinese war against Vietnamese nationalists, the U.S. government realized that France and Western Europe were more valuable allies than Viet Nam. The Japanese “Yellow Peril” was no longer threatening in the Asia - Pacific region after the U.S. atomic bombings of Japan and Japanese surrender in 1945. Also, the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949 warned the U.S. government of a similar event in Viet Nam, which had already been under strong influence of communism. For these reasons, the United States increasingly supported France with military and logistic supplies. At the peak of the war in 1954, the U.S. assistance reached

80 percent of total expenses.² The war, however, ended with the French defeat and the subsequent division of Viet Nam. Concerned that North Vietnamese Communists would spread their influence to all of Viet Nam, causing a “domino effect” and threatening the economic interests of the United States in Southeast Asia, the American government supported Ngo Dinh Diem, an anti-communist Catholic, and bolstered his regime in South Viet Nam. From 1956, the U.S. poured tons of military and economic aid into South Viet Nam, making it a prosperous and noncommunist nation, a market for U.S. goods, and a barrier against North Vietnamese communism.

An outline of the U.S. objectives in Viet Nam, prepared under the Eisenhower administration and maintained through the Kennedy administration, highlighted six points: (1) assisting Free Viet Nam to develop a strong, stable and constitutional government, (2) working toward the eventual peaceful reunification of a free and independent Viet Nam under anti-Communist leadership, (3) supporting Saigon’s insistence that a reunification vote be held only if “genuine free elections” could occur in both zones, (4) aiding the building of “indigenous armed forces” in the South capable of providing internal security and some resistance to external attack, (5) encouraging the South Vietnamese to plan their defense in accordance with “U.S. planning concepts” and the provisions of the SEATO Treaty, (6) undertaking political, economic, and psychological efforts to weaken the Vietnamese communists.³ On the one hand, the rhetoric in these objectives was contradictory and hypocritical, e.g., in the way “freedom and democracy” for Viet Nam should comply to the U.S. anticommunist interests. On the other hand, they helped shape and justify the U.S.’s educational and socio-political programs in South Viet Nam, which were most effectively implemented by the USAID and the Peace Corps.

In 1960, the U.S. government started to support the strategic hamlet program, a revised version of the relocation program initiated by the Diem administration in 1959.⁴ The goals of this hamlet strategy were: isolating communist insurgents from South Vietnamese peasants, tying the people into the government's communication network, getting them involved in South Viet Nam government affairs through "civic actions" in the hamlets, educating the people and improving living standards to win their support. Later, this program developed into part of the U.S. agenda named "Alliance for Progress," which was based on the modernization theory and established by the Kennedy administration.⁵

The basis of the U.S.'s Cold War modernization theory lies in the assumption that by providing developing nations with technical and economic assistance, the United States would fulfill America's "mission to see the principles of national independence and human liberty extended on the world scene" and obtain its supremacy by "steering the world's newly aroused human energies in constructive rather than destructive directions."⁶ Following this strategy, Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1961 and gave it authority over technical aid, development projects, education, and military assistance to "build entirely new nations with economic growth and political democracy."⁷ With educational projects in South Viet Nam, USAID launched a long-term contract program with American universities to send teachers to South Viet Nam on two main projects: Elementary Education Division and the Strategic Hamlet Schools. According to this contract, American teachers were recruited from universities nationwide under the administration of the USAID and the Asia Training Center in Hawaii. They were then assigned to various education-related tasks: teaching in

pedagogical schools that trained elementary teachers, designing curriculum, introducing textbooks, advising on educational institution development, and teaching in Strategic Hamlet Schools.⁸

In parallel with the USAID project, Kennedy invited Eugene Staley, a Stanford University development expert, and professor Samuel Hayes at the University of Michigan to be his consultants for the Viet Nam's Peace Corps programs.⁹ The central roles of the Peace Corps were developing community and also teaching "civic action and socio-political basis" in hamlet schools.¹⁰ On the one hand, these projects aimed at transforming the living and thinking styles of the people, especially traditional peasants and children, to make them "prosper and modernized" and to gain their support for the South Vietnamese government. On the other hand, they hoped to deprive the Communist insurgents of people's support and suppress revolutionary momentum in South Viet Nam.

The contract between the USAID and the universities was, in fact, an example of the effective participation of private sectors in the government's agenda. In *AID and the Universities*, John Gardner – former president of the Carnegie Foundation – proposed a long-term collaboration between private and public agencies in building educational institutions in other countries and acknowledged: "Even though a university never wholly escapes the tone and character that it has any immediate involvement in foreign policy, it needs to resist that notion."¹¹ However, Gardner also pointed out the "potential value of the universities' exchange students and teachers as *nongovernmental* representatives abroad" in making "full contribution to foreign policy when they were *not* closely tied to the government's foreign policy."¹² These arguments not only demonstrate the interrelation between private universities' programs abroad and the government's foreign

policy but also suggest that the relationship between the host country and American teachers can become more effective when they have a *nongovernmental* appearance with the participation of private universities and individuals. This, in turn, serves to depoliticize the objectives of the private groups and nominally insulate them from the government agenda even though they are administered by the USAID.

In defining the major objectives of USAID – university projects abroad, Edward Weidner stresses the task of institution-building for academic development in the host country.¹³ First of all, with the assistance of American scholars, he argued, advanced knowledge and teaching as well as studying methods would be introduced. Secondly, USAID and the universities need to focus on pedagogical institutions, training the trainers of the host country to achieve a powerful multiplication effect. Finally, the long-term objectives are to establish professional and cross-cultural knowledge and friendship for the United States, even though “these do not necessarily serve to combat Communism.”¹⁴ Incidentally, these objectives were not only established by the USAID educational projects but also announced by non-governmental programs like VIA.¹⁵

By 1965, under the coordination of USAID, the United States Operations Mission (USOM) and the South Vietnamese government, American teachers had been training Vietnamese students and teachers for service in 13,000 hamlet classrooms.¹⁶ By helping with community development projects, for example, giving peasants supplies to build schools, markets, pig pens, chicken coops, and irrigation canals, American officials hoped to produce what Hilmans called the “enormous political gain” of “participating and having a choice” in the “development of community spirit.”¹⁷ While these programs effectively improved the people’s living conditions, the major effect of the projects was

that South Vietnamese people became economically and politically dependent on the U.S., culturally as well as mentally colonized within the American set of values.

These educational and community development projects were also implemented and carried out by the Peace Corps volunteers. Unlike AID-administered university teachers, most Peace Corps volunteers in South Viet Nam were assigned community development tasks.¹⁸ A minority of them, who held a college degree but lacked the specific training in a profession or skill, were usually assigned to teach English or social studies subjects in Strategic Hamlet Schools and other educational institutions. However, the more heroic image of “community developers” that demands “leadership abilities, practical experience, and a sensitivity to human values” attracted many of these B.A. generalists to community development projects.¹⁹ Most of them were probably unaware that the community development tasks they performed actually served one of the most strategic projects in the U.S.’s goals, leaving most transformative impacts on the native culture and facilitating a U.S.-model lifestyle. As Latham describes:

Of all the different Peace Corps assignments, however, “community development” provides the clearest example of the way the agency’s leadership sought to produce dramatic, institutional change in host nations. Volunteers working in community development were expected to do more than meet an immediate, concrete need in an impoverished setting. Their assignments also required them to alter local social life and accelerate modernization at the town or village level. Community development projects, in this sense, were more ambitious than many other Peace Corps programs. They also provide an excellent opportunity to analyze the way the agency categorized deficiencies within the recipient cultures and authorized correctional interventions on the part of the United States.²⁰

Whether in the role of a teacher or a community developer, American civilians in Viet Nam during the Viet Nam War actively contributed to the U.S. government’s anticommunist goals and the implementation of nation-building and institution-building

in South Viet Nam. Though diverse in profession or background, these Peace Corps volunteers were convinced that they were the representatives of the world's model country in educational and political institutions, and had gone to Vietnam "to build the things—the social links and services and the common institutions—without which no people can have and be a nation."²¹ This confidence inspired them to set out to spread their American lifestyles to Viet Nam. Also, believing in the United States' unrivaled leadership and its possession of unique humanitarianism, these American individuals, despite their disagreements with government policy, set a long lasting example of international voluntarism for the next generations of Americans.

In the past fifty years, the rhetoric "institution-building and democratization" has been central to the foreign policy of the United States vis-à-vis Viet Nam. In 1962, President Kennedy stated that the U.S.'s objectives in Viet Nam were to "[rebuild] the nation under the U.S. auspices and link strategic objectives, liberal capitalism, and humanitarian mission with a reconstruction of America's ability, right, and duty to chart the course of the world's "underdeveloped" regions."²² Forty years later, President Bill Clinton and Douglas Peterson, the U.S. ambassador in Viet Nam, echoed similar objectives. In a meeting with Le Kha Phieu, the former Secretary of Vietnamese Communist Party, Clinton urged Phieu to move Viet Nam forward in liberalism and democracy.²³ Also, on the occasion of Clinton's visit, the U.S. ambassador in Viet Nam Peterson announced:

The areas that need work in Vietnam include technical training, technical transfer, systems development, institution building, which is one of the most critical lacking factors in Vietnam now. They just do not have the institutions in existence now to support even the full implementation of the bilateral trade agreement that

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we've just signed. Because of this gap, the United States will be providing even greater funding into that technical assistance in the areas that we would refer to perhaps as institution building and rule of law. I don't know that any other country has the capacity and many times [sic] the expertise to do those kinds of things.²⁴

In fact, the bilateral trade agreement between the U.S. and Viet Nam, which may benefit Viet Nam in several aspects regarding exportation quotas or access to international banks, helps expand the U.S.'s neocolonialist labor zone and market in Viet Nam. Rebuilding Vietnamese institutions, removing the communist system for the U.S.'s security in the region, and imposing American rule of law upon Viet Nam have been the key objectives of the U.S. government. Various changes have occurred in the world scene over the last four decades, but the ways the U.S. presidencies perceive themselves and their missions toward Viet Nam have not fundamentally changed.

2. The Return of Americans to Viet Nam: Normalization

The return of Americans to Viet Nam took place against the backdrop of Viet Nam's reformed policies in the late 1980s. The collapse of state socialism and the weakened legitimacy of communism in the world during that period have provided the opportunity for a resurrection of modernization ideology, a post-Cold War celebration of the transformative power of capitalism, and the regained confidence for Americans to return to Viet Nam in the early 1990s. As Templer describes:

They were nervous about their reception in this once hostile land but they were carrying trinkets that the natives craved and they had an unshakable faith in the civilizing power of market economics.²⁵

The vision of America's transformative potential preserves claims to its authority in today's age of neo-colonialism. The "modernization theory" is now modified into a more

popular phrase “globalization” and justified by other countries’ recent embrace of international trade and social progress. “Bilateral” agreements disguise the striking parallels between America’s own imperial past, the U.S. role in Viet Nam in the 1960s, and America’s revised interests in Viet Nam in the last ten years.

Before the return of Americans, when Viet Nam was still isolated from the Western world, it had been engaged in various reformed policies after a decade of constant economic difficulties, which were caused by both domestic and foreign factors. For example, infrastructures for transport and manufacture were destroyed and poorly maintained, national planning was wrongly assessed,²⁶ the U.S. - led embargo and isolation of Viet Nam from all Western countries and the ASEAN restricted Viet Nam’s foreign trade and denied its access to foreign banks or monetary organizations, most of which are U.S. and Japan - dominated.²⁷ Viet Nam’s determination to protect its sovereignty and territory, to uphold its political and economic ideologies, and its ambition to exert influence in Indo-Chinese areas were the major causes of these difficulties. The intention to rescue Cambodia from the genocidal Khmer Rouge and “help educate and build their national structure” added a further threat to Southeast Asia and the rest of the Western world about a possible expansion of Communism. Determined to safeguard the ASEAN for its political and economic security, the United States, then under the Carter administration, halted considerations of improved relations with Viet Nam, maintained its isolation policy, and waged support among its allies, who unanimously followed the American example.²⁸

For more than a decade, Viet Nam had to rely on the former U.S.S.R., Eastern European countries, and Sweden as the only exception of a noncommunist supporter, for

economic assistance.²⁹ However, the change in the Soviet cabinet in 1985, with the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika program, signaled Russia's gradual retraction of economic and technical assistance to Viet Nam, which were soon followed by other Soviet block countries.³⁰ The already crippled economy of Viet Nam in the mid-1980s faced more challenges and looming crisis. Dissatisfaction among Vietnamese people was high due to the constant shortage of food supplies and high inflation.

For the first time since 1975, Vietnamese leaders felt an urgent need to reconsider the country's economic and political direction. The sixth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party, held in 1986, selected Nguyen Van Linh, a reformist from the South of Viet Nam, as the new General Secretary. This led to numerous reforms in national policies, among which were the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, the privatization of farming land, and the introduction of foreign investment laws.³¹ The typical rhetoric and explanation of the Vietnamese government about these reforms have been the intention to build a "market-oriented socialist country."³² The dramatic rise in the people's living standard and the GDP, the greater opportunity for private business, and a general air of happiness among the Vietnamese people in the late 1980s and early 1990s were evidence that the Party had made the correct decision. However, the changes in Socialist countries in general and in Viet Nam in particular were immediately seized upon by the Western world as convincing proof of the superiority of capitalism. This later laid the ground for American triumphalism, reaffirmed America's transformative obligation in Viet Nam, and prepared a "roadmap for normalization with Viet Nam," ranging from the solution of POW/MIA to humanitarian issues.³³ The U.S.'s final goal is to rewrite its history of defeat in Viet Nam.

These changes in Viet Nam – U.S. relations led to heated lobbying on the part of business leaders, national columnists, and politicians to pressure the Bush and the Clinton administrations to reopen trade and diplomatic ties with Vietnam.³⁴ Not only did the Vietnamese reappear in America’s neo-colonialist vision as “hard-working labor force, disciplined, well-educated, and friendly people,”³⁵ but Viet Nam also reemerged as the site for America to secure its political and economic interests in Asia – Pacific region. This idea was initiated by Richard Fisher, a senior policy analyst and U.S. Trade Representative, who was later recognized in a Rose Garden speech by Clinton.³⁶ In his article “Beyond Normalization: A Winning Strategy for U.S. Relations with Vietnam,” Fisher examined the strategic position of Viet Nam, considering its economic and political reforms, its forthcoming entry into the ASEAN in mid-1995, and a considerable influence of Viet Nam on the region’s affairs in the process. He then asserted the long-term benefits for the United States and argued for the U.S.-Viet Nam normalization:

The United States must plan to promote not only economic freedom in Vietnam, but political freedom as well. This process may take many years and cause great friction with Vietnam. But there are better prospects now to realize America’s original goal: a free Vietnam that becomes a valued economic and political partner in Asia. If this occurs, the Vietnam War may turn out to have been only a lost battle. The forces of freedom and democracy for which America fought will prevail.³⁷

Fisher argued that the return of American politicians to Viet Nam after twenty years of isolation and hostility would initiate the U.S.’s victory, not by military arms but by economic means. The nature of the anticommunist American war in Viet Nam under the U.S. government’s hypocritical rhetoric of “democracy and freedom for Viet Nam” still remains.

Further advancing the call for the U.S.'s establishment of bilateral relations with Viet Nam, Stanley Roth, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, indicated the possibility of Viet Nam's complete subscription to capitalism and U.S.-modeled human rights under the coercive power of the U.S. and its Bilateral Trade Agreement with Viet Nam:

The Bilateral Trade Agreement is very much in our national interest because it will lock Vietnam into a broad band of commitments that will strengthen its private sector. A stronger private sector will allow ordinary Vietnamese greater ability to determine their own economic future. Provisions in the agreement require Vietnam to extend trade and distribution rights to every citizen. The freedom to make individual economic decisions is one of the many individual freedoms we have been encouraging Vietnam to grant to its people.³⁸

In making one of the most stubborn Communist countries relinquish its ideology and reshape its policies to the American mold, he argued, the United States can regain its reputation twenty years after their loss in the Viet Nam War. This way, Viet Nam is made to be living evidence of the superiority of American values.

Contributing to this rhetoric, Professor Carlyle A. Thayer, a researcher at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, comments:

While Mr. Clinton's visit was of symbolic significance, it was also important from a geo-strategic perspective. Vietnam is emerging as a major player in Southeast Asia. This change comes mainly because Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia are experiencing domestic instability or political uncertainty.

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Disarray means that Vietnam, as chair of ASEAN's standing committee for 2001, will occupy an important leadership position in the regional body. To outside powers with extensive interests in the region, such as the United States, Australia and Japan, it is important that ASEAN recover its cohesion and play a positive role in regional security. Vietnam's contribution to that process will be critical. Vietnam's close military relations with China are not yet mirrored by similar

military relations with the United States. American policy aims to reverse this imbalance.³⁹

For all practical purposes, the normalization of diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Viet Nam revives the old domino theory that seeks to strengthen and liberalize Communist Viet Nam for two main objectives. First, Viet Nam is used as a counter-balance of power for the United States in its strategy to counter China. Second, a capitalist-oriented Viet Nam will secure American business interests in the ASEAN region.

The U.S. interests underpinning its new relations with Viet Nam was further reflected in Secretary of State Warren Christopher's speech during his visit in Viet Nam in August 1995, following Clinton's announcement of the normalization of Viet Nam – U.S. diplomatic relations on July 11th 1995. His speech was a manifestation of the post-Cold War triumphalism to describe the “globalization” of American political, economic, and cultural models in post-colonial world:

The main story of the late 20th century is the ascendancy of open societies and open markets in country after country, which has the effects of lifting the lives of hundreds of millions of people. If Vietnam is to find an important place in the community of nations...it should move beyond just opening its doors. The key to success in this rapidly changing world is the freedom to own, to buy, to sell; and the freedom to participate in the decisions that affect our lives...There are many different models of market economies. But whether you go to New York, or Tokyo, or Bangkok, you will find most of the fundamentals are the same...In each, efficiency, hard work, and imagination are rewarded, not discouraged...But I believe sustained economic development is more likely where additional factors are present—where courts provide due process, where newspapers are free to expose corruption, and where businesspeople can make decisions with free access to accurate information. The foundation of market economies...can only be fully guaranteed by the rule of law.⁴⁰

The rule of law that Christopher mentioned is, in fact, the rule that America imposes upon Viet Nam in an attempt to “lock” Viet Nam into a system of American capitalist rules to protect American private property and business. In the wake of the Bilateral

Trade Agreement (BTA) between Viet Nam and the U.S., Vietnamese people eagerly study and accept new American concepts regarding business and legal rules. After the signing of the BTA in November 2001, there has been widespread interest among Vietnamese people to search for information about the United States, to learn its culture, political system, laws, and business practices. University curricula have added more courses exploring these subjects to keep up with the trend and attract students. Bookstores have started to display books about the United States. The best-sellers are those about the U.S. legal systems, both in translation and written by Vietnamese scholars.⁴¹ *Tim Hieu Phap Luat Hoa Ky Trong Dieu Kien Viet Nam Hoi Nhap Kinh Te Khu Vuc Va The Gioi* (Examining American Laws to Facilitate Viet Nam's Integration into Regional and Global Economy) written by Pham Duy Nghia, a Professor of Law at Ha Noi University of Social Sciences and Humanities is one example.

In his book, Nghia gives a brief overview of the economic conditions of Viet Nam in the last twenty years and asserts that "The integration is decided by the Vietnamese government and not under any external pressures or following any foreign tendency."⁴² The major part of his book, however, discusses American legal and business laws with numerous case studies. In convincing Vietnamese readers of the necessity to learn these rules to completely immerse themselves in the regional affairs and effectively implement the agreement with the United States, he suggests:

We should further cooperate and activate the efficiency of the treaties by increasing public awareness of Viet Nam's policies and laws as well as of U.S. policies and laws toward Viet Nam, researching American markets, and facilitating trade fairs between two countries. The government and institutions will strongly encourage educational interchanges and excommunication in research institutes and universities in Viet Nam and the U.S. for mutual benefits. Especially, we should make full use of scholarships from U.S. government,

private business, NGOs, and foundations to send Vietnamese students to the U.S. for advanced study.⁴³

The BTA between Viet Nam and the United States is not exactly bilateral. Both the U.S. representative and the Vietnamese representative acknowledge that the Vietnamese are expected to learn and adopt the American rule of law. The spread of American hegemony in Viet Nam is, therefore, enabled by both the Americans and the Vietnamese but subtly cloaked under the rhetoric of “mutual interests.”

The inequality of these “mutual interests” is also reflected in the U.S.’s different representations to different parties about the normalization. During the Viet Nam – U.S. normalization process, there was opposition from both the Vietnamese and the American sides. On the one hand, the representatives of some Vietnamese-American constituencies strongly condemned the current Hanoi government for its human rights records.⁴⁴ On the other hand, a number of Vietnamese politicians were concerned that economic exchanges would come along with the infiltration of heterodox or Western ideas that threatened national self-determination.⁴⁵ To the American public, it is frequently mentioned that the Normal Trade Relations would “bring about over time significant reforms in Viet Nam’s trade and economic policies...and contribute to a broader process of normalization with both great symbolic and strategic importance for the United States.”⁴⁶ To the Vietnamese people, it is persuaded with paternalistic tone: “You have moved courageously towards economic reform. Don’t be afraid to do more. Your decision to integrate the Vietnamese economy with the rest of the world will allow Vietnam to grow and prosper. If we are not held back by fear, our two nations can put the past behind us. There is nothing about our future that we should fear.”⁴⁷ On the one hand, this rhetoric demonstrates the necessity to

point out to the American public some “strategic” interests in opening relations with Viet Nam. On the other hand, it also obscures the U.S. interests and foregrounds the mutual friendships and immense material benefits for Viet Nam.

Even the benefits for the Vietnamese people need questioning. The bright and colorful pictures of Viet Nam’s thriving economies in urban areas hide the widening gap between the rich and the poor, a dramatic deterioration in human relations as a result of increasing materialism, and individualism, and looming financial risks.⁴⁸ While many Vietnamese college graduate students seek positions in Western-style offices with up-to-date technical facilities, millions of the less fortunate people only dream of employment in foreign-owned sweatshops or assembly lines with minimal pay and sub-standard working as well as living conditions.⁴⁹ Many of these workers, who are young country girls wishing to establish a life in the city, eventually find prostitution a quick measure to survive and prosper. Their lives and the Vietnamese society thus further deteriorate.⁵⁰

In joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and other U.S.- dominated economic groups, Vietnam is under no guarantee that it would not be affected by a possible currency crisis in the region as were Southeast and East Asia countries in 1998 partly as a result of the U.S. hegemony in the area.⁵¹ Globalization and increased contact with the U.S. have failed to promote either reforms in these developing economies or mechanisms of public welfare for the people at the bottom of society, for whom the crisis had its most devastating impact.

For the time being, the trend seems irreversible. Two thirds of the Vietnamese population are under 30 years old, having no direct memory of the Viet Nam War but having lived through the hardest years of the country, the mid-1980s.⁵² Therefore, most of them enthusiastically embrace the life-changing effects of a market economy and support the renewed relations with the United States, especially after Clinton's visit to Viet Nam in November 2000. His speech delivered to half a million Vietnamese students at Ha Noi National University excited them and nourished their dreams of the opportunities possibly opened for their future as a result of the relations with the U.S. Many of them wished to go to the U.S. to study when hearing the President say: "The United States has great respect for your intellect and capacity. One of our government's largest educational exchange programs is with Viet Nam. And we want to do more."⁵³ The Vietnamese people's support for relations with the United States was very high.

As part of Clinton's strategic visit, the Vietnam Education Foundation Act of 2000 was signed into law, providing \$5 million annually for bilateral educational exchanges, i.e., 100 Vietnamese students can study in the U.S. every year.⁵⁴ This Act designated that the U.S. educational funding would be administered by the USAID. At first, it was intended to fund Vietnamese students to study in the United States in technological and administrative fields, then amended in November 2001 with an additional emphasis in U.S. business practice.⁵⁵ Also, the section 222 of the Vietnam Democracy Act approved in September 2001 specifically reads:

It is the policy of the United States that programs of educational and cultural exchange with Viet Nam should actively promote progress toward freedom and democracy in Viet Nam by providing opportunities to Vietnamese nationals from a wide range of occupations and perspectives to see freedom and democracy in

action and, also, by ensuring that Vietnamese nationals who have already demonstrated a commitment to these values are included in such programs.⁵⁶

In addition to educational and cultural exchange, the U.S. government also has encouraged Americans to visit Viet Nam – as tourists, businesspeople, and as members of educational exchange programs. In a speech delivered to the Asia Society in Washington D.C., Douglas Peterson, former U.S. ambassador to Viet Nam, encouraged Americans to go to Viet Nam to see that “beautiful country” with “vast natural resources” but “limited human resources” due to “the nearsightedness of its government” and concluded:

You can help too. I hope that many of you will visit Vietnam, an increasingly popular destination for tourists. There is plenty to see in that beautiful country, but while you are admiring the ancient temples and the imperial citadel of Hue and the beaches and the gorgeous green countryside and the variety of colorful ethnic dress in the mountain villages, I hope you will talk to the Vietnamese you meet and ask them about their lives and their aspirations. You will find that almost everyone is pleased to meet Americans. More and more Vietnamese, especially young people, speak English.

You might find that you want to get more directly involved in building the relationship. There are many ways to do so, from academic exchanges to volunteer organizations to business opportunities. All of them contribute to creating a broader and deeper sense of mutual trust that will help prevent repetition of some of the mistakes of the past.⁵⁷

Peterson’s recognition of the contribution that voluntary groups make to promote the U.S. government’s objectives was more clearly acknowledged in his letter to VIA on its 35th Anniversary:

We at the American Embassy in Hanoi are deeply appreciative of the contribution your volunteers have made to our efforts to bring about a full reconciliation between the American and the Vietnamese peoples. The kind of cultural and educational exchanges that your volunteers have been conducting over the years have helped our work immensely.⁵⁸

To Peterson, Vietnamese people are amazingly friendly and welcoming the presence of Americans in Viet Nam. This allows him and many Americans to conclude that any attempt from the Vietnamese government or individuals to prevent the country's full integration into the capitalist world or to resist Americans would be seen as "nearsighted" and "undemocratic." The fact that many of them speak English promises an easier and freer environment for exchanging ideas and cooperating with the Western world. Thus, the intention to come to Viet Nam to teach English to the Vietnamese people, to promote "mutual trust," to see that exotic Oriental country as recommended by Peterson, and further witness their hospitality as well as the "nearsightedness" of the Vietnamese government is likely to get solidified in the minds of Peterson's audience. Their future experience in Viet Nam seems promising and rewarding. Most importantly, this gives them the opportunity to observe the dramatic transformation of Viet Nam's developing economy to further confirm the superiority of capitalism, to reject socialism, and fuel their determination to "help" Vietnamese people change their lives and their government. American self-interest and benevolence are again combined, but this time added with the taste of triumphalism. As the way young American businessmen in Ho Chi Minh City hailed in a toast: "Most importantly, let us win here."⁵⁹ The victory they meant is the economic and ideological victory that could rectify the lost military war. Viet Nam today again is a site for American victory and supremacy. However, the U.S. mistake of the past mentioned by Peterson seems to remain. As a professional woman in Ha Noi, who is specialized in Vietnamese Socio-linguistics and experienced in teaching Vietnamese to foreigners, comments:

I think Vietnamese people are friendly, open-minded, and polite to foreigners. They are more tolerant and forgiving to past conflicts (this is more applicable to those in Viet Nam's northern countryside). They may not forget their pain or their loss, but they don't retain or expose their hatred for too long. I think some Americans often misunderstand this and think Vietnamese people are really friendly and already forgot the sad history. Also, they tend to think of themselves as superior than all other foreigners and that makes their behavior unworthy of attention.⁶⁰

The U.S. objectives in Viet Nam and its perspectives toward Viet Nam have been fundamentally maintained and even furthered after the Cold War. The direct and violent intervention of the past is now subtly transformed into the strategy of bilateralism, for example, with the BTA or the assistance of educational and cultural exchange programs like VIA, as Peterson acknowledged. All of these, in fact, disguise the U.S.'s determination to "win the Viet Nam War" and exercise its neocolonialist hegemony in Viet Nam. The theory of modernization in the past is replaced by the more popularized notion of globalization. Money, Congressional Acts, and American spirit of voluntarism have always been among the favorite instruments for the U.S. government to achieve its goals.

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Part II: Volunteers in Asia and the United States

1. VIA and the U.S.'s Cold War Internationalism

The purpose of this section is to contextualize VIA, a non-governmental educational exchange program, in the larger picture of the U.S. foreign policy regarding cultural and educational affairs. While VIA began as a pacifist and progressive organization, it shared many objectives and principles with other government programs established during the Cold War, for example the National Defense Education Act, the Fulbright-Hays Act, and the Peace Corps. To support these assertions, I will initially analyze these U.S. Cold War programs and then relate them to VIA to argue that even the most benevolent and independent program can effectively serve American objectives abroad and reinforce American hegemony.

The National Defense Education Act was passed by the Congress in August 1958 largely as a response to the Russian launching of the first earth-orbiting satellite *Sputnik* in 1957.¹ The Eisenhower administration endorsed this Act with the view that American education in science, technology, and foreign languages needed to be improved through federal funding to compete with the Soviet Communism. The Act clearly stated its objective to “insure trained manpower of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the national defense needs of the United States.” Under that rubric, the federal government supported the education of specialists in various disciplines, among them foreign languages and area studies, named in Title V as a “Language Development” project.² Following the regulations in this section, language institutes and area studies centers were established. Thousands of American scholars were sponsored to study uncommonly

taught languages and cultures of relevant countries, mostly located in Africa and Asia. In the first year, funding for the implementation of this Act was amounted to \$5 million.³

Although established at the same time as foreign language institutes under this Act, it was not until the early 1960s that area studies actually developed. As an essential product of the Cold War, area studies were generously supported by federal funds throughout the 1960s and the 1970s in order to ensure that the United States would possess the knowledge about Third World countries needed to compete effectively with Second World countries. This necessity came from a U.S. -centric conviction that newly independent peoples in the Third World struggling to set up order and build national economies were infirm, fickle, and incompetent to manage themselves, thus likely falling into the realm of Communist controls.⁴

The belief that certain behavioral patterns are primarily determined by cultural influences encouraged many area specialists to study the unique culture and history of a specific people to explicate their thoughts and behavior. While most area specialists did not necessarily see their scholarly missions in anticommunist terms, support for their study of foreign languages and cultural research in countries where such languages are spoken – usually developing countries in Asia and Africa or occasionally Latin America – was made possible by the American government and several private foundations that saw strategic values in the collection of detailed information about Third World societies. Support for the study of Second World societies and languages, said to be necessary so that the United States would know its enemy, was also provided.⁵

To consolidate and widen the relationships between the United States and its allying countries, Senator J. William Fulbright was successful in getting Congress to pass the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act in 1961 (often known as the Fulbright-Hays Act).⁶ This Act grew out of the conviction that intellectual and cultural exchanges between nations contributes to increased awareness of intercultural similarities and differences, which would then lead to mutual understanding and increase the opportunities for international cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. According to this Act, American Fulbrighters would be funded to work or study in European or Asian countries in order to learn the host cultures or to conduct research about the social and political developments of fast-changing continents.⁷ Also, this Act provided grants for foreign scholars to come to America to study, to observe American ideas and lifestyles, and thereafter getting to know the complex American social and political system.⁸

In his argument for the necessity to develop a non-militaristic and non-diplomatic approach of foreign politics and the benefit that cultural exchanges could bring to national defense strategy, Senator Fulbright asserted:

The questions of whether the highest aspirations of mankind can best be fulfilled under a totalitarian or a democratic society will ultimately be decided in the minds of men—not on a battlefield or in a conference room. In viewing the challenge in this manner, the importance of the human element in foreign policy becomes quite obvious. The fundamental requirement for a world community of good neighbors is that all different peoples achieve a broader and deeper mutual understanding of each other. Such an understanding can be promoted through people-to-people contacts outside formal diplomatic channels. Our long-term objective must be the development of a sense of community in the world. In time we may even hope that the dogmatism and fanaticism which now separate Communist nations from the free nations will gradually give way to a more enlightened and civilized view of the world and pave the way for a more cooperative community of mankind.⁹

William Fulbright was not alone in the promotion of this non-conventional foreign policy. A number of other politicians, among whom Philip Coombs and Charles Frankel were most vocal, supported his political approach. Philip Coombs, then Assistant Secretary of State in the Kennedy administration, criticized that the United States had not placed adequate attention to the field of educational exchanges, therefore making it the “underdeveloped area of U.S. foreign policy.” In attempting to clearly define the strategic importance of cultural and educational exchanges and propose an answer for the neglected issue, “How educational and cultural relations can best be utilized to support national objectives?,” Coombs indicated two general ways:

One is by fostering a broader and deeper understanding of America on the parts of other nations and peoples, so that this nation’s policies and behavior will be understood more accurately and sympathetically, and its leadership thereby applied more effectively. The other way is by enlarging American understanding of other nations and our general competence in world affairs, so that our policies and leadership will be better informed, widely supported at home, and more effective abroad.¹⁰

Further contributing to the long-term benefits that educational and cultural exchanges, in addition to national defense and the construction of a peaceful world order, is the momentum for national development. Charles Frankel, a Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University who had been invited to teach in Europe, strongly advocated this equally important benefit. According to him, the intellectual achievements of American scholars going abroad then returning to the United States to further develop American academic foundation had double benefits. While American international education helps develop other countries and possesses the chief instruments by which Americans can hope to exercise some control over the destiny of their species, it also helps them further

engage in academic pursuit and therefore, contributing to the growth of the nation's intellectual and economic resources.”¹¹

As is often the case, these American scholars are not only contributors to national defense and development but also goodwill ambassadors for the United States. Because most of them are unusually intelligent, devoted, and self-sacrificing, their virtues and presence abroad help construct a more favorable image for the country they represent. As Frankel describes:

They are better than the United States, given existing public attitudes toward their work, and given the conditions provided them for doing this work, has a right to expect. Representing the United States government overseas, particularly in the field of educational, cultural, or scientific affairs, has many intrinsic pleasures, which is the reason those who do the job keep coming back for more.¹²

Although few of these scholars were the secret agents of the Cold War or American foreign policy, as the best representatives of the United States, they have often made an impression upon the host country that they were the products of a “free, democratic, and modern” society, sent abroad to serve and do their assigned work with willing dedication. Gratitude and admiration for the United States have been naturally won. Therefore, sending Americans abroad has brought varied benefits for the United States regarding its security, prosperity, academic development, and worldwide friendships.

The explicit strategy in the National Defense Education Act and the more benevolent objectives of the Fulbright-Hays Act were both based on the theory of modernization, which resulted in the growth of U.S. educational aid to developing countries. This theory emerged in the mid-1940s as part of a strategy to confront newly de-colonized and underdeveloped countries, which the U.S. feared “will go Communist if

they are not aided in making rapid progress in raising their level of living.”¹³ Two defeated countries after World War II, Japan and Germany, also became the experimental subjects of this theory. Imagining that resourceful funding was the only path to lead a country to modernity, the U.S. government provided huge economic assistance to “help” these countries modernize and prosper. In doing that, the American government hoped to win the “hearts and minds” of the people there and transform them into the U.S. ’s political as well as economic allies.¹⁴

This theory, in fact, had a long history, as manifested in the ideology of the Manifest Destiny to civilize the American West, the “benevolent” conquest and assimilation of the Philippines, and the recent modernization projects in South Viet Nam. On the one hand, these projects resonated United States ideology about its national greatness and world mission. On the other hand, they justified and idealized the practical pursuits of power and commerce through the rhetoric of “public responsibility” and “international sacrifice.”¹⁵ In the early 1960s, this combined ideology of self-interest and selflessness was perfectly implemented in the concept of the Peace Corps.

The origin of the Peace Corps dates back to a speech that John F. Kennedy made to the students at the University of Michigan in October 1960, during his election campaign: “How many of you are willing to spend ten years in Africa or Latin America or Asia working for the United States and working for freedom? How many of you who are going to be doctors are willing to spend your days in Ghana; technicians or engineers, how many of you are willing to work in the foreign service and spend your lives traveling around the world? On your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country will depend the answer whether we as a free country can compete.”¹⁶

In November 1960, the then president elect Kennedy refined his ideas in a speech delivered at the Cow Palace Hall in San Francisco. This time, he linked them to an assault on the Eisenhower administration's diplomatic corps. Kennedy declared that Republican appointees and State Department officials, due to their ignorance of foreign languages and cultures, were losing ground to highly disciplined teams of Soviet technicians, doctors, and teachers, who had been "prepared to spend their lives abroad in the service of world communism."¹⁷ The United States, Kennedy argued, would have to match the Soviet drive with the skills, determination, and benevolence that characterized American citizens, with a "peace corps," largely made up of "talented young men and women" but open to "all qualified Americans, of whatever age, who wished to serve the great Republic and serve the cause of freedom."¹⁸ A few weeks later, Kennedy received a petition for international voluntarism from eight hundred students at the University of Michigan.¹⁹ He then consulted with his leading experts and requested that they "take on the responsibility of working up a Peace Corps idea into something I could implement in the winter of 1961."²⁰ In spite of the opposition from a few leading Republicans and also some Southern Democrats in Congress, Kennedy's proposed Act was finally passed in September 1961. This Act was established with three major goals: first, to help interested countries meet their needs for trained men and women; second, to promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and third, to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.²¹

The benefits that the Peace Corps Act offered the United States, Peace Corps volunteers, and the people in the host countries are immense. First of all, the volunteers' passionate idealism and their technical skills bring goodwill for the United States and

establish favorable relations with the host peoples. Secondly, the volunteers earn much better understanding of the languages and cultures of the countries they serve. Once returning to the United States, this knowledge enhances their professional growth and also contributes to the intellectual development of the United States. Finally, but not least importantly, the literacy rates, living conditions, and economic levels in the host countries are greatly improved. Moreover, the Peace Corps claims to reawaken the patriotic spirit and moral value of Americans. Ministering to societies that are culturally different and lacking in the material wealth as well as other daily comforts, these Americans can rediscover themselves and their U.S.-born privileges. In turn, they became more appreciative of their American identity and further support the United States.²²

Among these three geopolitical Cold War strategies, the Peace Corps is the one that best integrates the American spirit of democratic liberalism with individual and national self-interests. Jack Vaughan, the second director of the Peace Corps, was correct when saying: “the Peace Corps is about love,”²³ yet this human love operated within a political context of U.S. agenda. Social activism and self-sacrifice not only bring volunteers emotional pleasure but also personal and intellectual growth, therefore, the real development is sometimes more apparent for the helpers than for the helped.²⁴

The Peace Corps idea can also be traced far back in Lederer and Burdick’s *The Ugly American*. This book criticized the American luxury-loving diplomats who were ignorant of the language as well as the culture of their host country and made compliments to the non-conventional diplomats, the private citizens. Father Finian, a model of such private citizens, is fluent in native language, ready to eat native food, and live in a native house.²⁵ By letting the Asian characters repeatedly claim that “if all

Americans abroad would only act like the real and popular Americans, the sheer force of American personality and sincere goodwill would be enough to drive the Communists out of Asia in a few years,”²⁶ the novel validates the U.S. anticommunist campaign through the voice of the Asians. The book further legitimizes the benevolence of American volunteers through the Asian characters’ words: “the average Americans, who live life out here on our level, are the best ambassadors a country can have.”²⁷ This book, therefore, provided a model for the Peace Corps, a prescription and justification for the objectives to win the “hearts and minds” in Viet Nam, and the inspiration for the Volunteers in Asia. Looking at the Peace Corps or other volunteer organizations, therefore, helps us further understand the way in which the United States expresses and uses humanitarianism for its national interests and self-claimed world mission.

The opposition that many Americans had toward the Viet Nam War led to the rise of conscientious objection through overseas voluntarism, which combined the ideas of peaceful service, individual moral choice, and opposition to war. In fact, many young Americans joined the Peace Corps to avoid the drafts and to express their wish to make democratic and free choice while still fulfilling a national duty.²⁸ As a non-governmental and humanitarian organization emerged in the era of campus activism, Volunteers in Asia incidentally expressed all the needs and virtues of the time, as conveyed through the National Defense Education Act, the Fulbright-Hays Act, and the Peace Corps: enhancing self-knowledge in area and foreign language studies, promoting international goodwill and mutual understanding, and integrating individual self-sacrifice with national heroism and pacifist alternative to military service.

2. The Birth of Volunteers in Asia (VIA)

VIA was established as a private and university program on the Stanford Campus in 1966 by Dwight Clark, its current president. At that time, Clark was simultaneously a graduate student in education and dean of male freshmen at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. He lived in an apartment in the dormitory complex where male freshmen were housed, and he encouraged his young charges to drop by to chat about whatever was on their minds. Not surprisingly, the conversations often focused on things the freshmen hoped to do, both during their Stanford years and after. One group of students in particular regularly visited Clark with a concern over their education: “Were academics enough to mold them into the kinds of people they wanted to be?” They concluded that they wanted some experiential education to add to the “Stanford campus experience.” Many of the students also realized that their lives would be determined as much by the non-Western world as by the Western world.²⁹

As a graduate student of Education, Clark had wide knowledge and also first-hand experience about experiential education. Being a member of the Society of Friends, a pacifist and religious association, he had participated in a Quaker summer work camp at a boy’s reformatory in Oregon in the late 1950s. As a white middle-class graduate student, Clark found the culture of a reformatory to be as foreign as that of another nation, yet he also felt that having a job to do – even as a volunteer – gave him entrée into that new society. This experience often came to the fore in Clark’s informal counseling of the Stanford freshmen as he regularly urged them to participate in social service activities during their college years. His advice was often received enthusiastically.³⁰

The initiation of the volunteer effort that became Volunteers in Asia took place largely due to coincidence. Dwight Clark served as the faculty advisor to the Stanford chapter of World University Service (WUS), a pacifist Geneva-based organization that raised funds in developed countries, particularly among college students, to support projects relating to higher education in developing nations. In the spring of 1963, the representative of WUS for the western U.S. visited the Stanford campus, and because it happened to be a school holiday, Clark had more time than usual for a leisurely chat over lunch. The WUS staff member mentioned that their office in Hong Kong had sent out a general request for volunteers who could come during the summer to work on various social service projects, mostly related to providing services for refugees recently arrived from China. Given some recent discussions with a particular group of freshmen, Clark saw an opportunity to put their idealism into action. He told the WUS representative that he could probably find 10 students who would be interested. A week later he called WUS in San Francisco with a list of 22 students who had committed to the project. The volunteers would have to pay their own travel costs, but room and board in Hong Kong would be arranged by the WUS office.³¹

That summer, Dean Clark led 22 students to Hong Kong to teach English to refugees, organize recreation activities for children living in large housing estates, and build a road to a tuberculosis sanitarium in the rural New Territories. This was the genesis of Volunteers in Asia. The participants thought the program was such a success that plans were made immediately to repeat it the following summer. The second group was slightly larger, included several women, and garnered an equally positive response

from both volunteers and hosts. It was followed by a third. On the Stanford campus, the interest in voluntary service was very high.³²

By 1966, after three groups had spent the summer in Hong Kong, with short stopover experience in Japan and Taiwan, Clark had become convinced of the merits of a program that allowed young Americans to perform volunteer service and simultaneously gain some exposure in Asian societies that were so foreign yet likely to become more and more important to the students. In addition, they started receiving requests for volunteers from other parts of Asia. The project had gained momentum from the passionate participation of Stanford students, but it had become clear that the program would need more attention if it were to continue to grow and prosper. Clark withdrew from his Doctoral program and gave up his duties with the dean's office to fully devote his time and energy to this volunteer effort.³³

Volunteers in Asia was chartered in 1966 as a California non-profit corporation and is governed by a board of directors. Traditionally, returned volunteers have made up a majority on the board, and a returnee has served as chair. Faculty members from Stanford University and the University of California at Santa Cruz – the two schools where VIA actively recruit volunteers from – have usually filled two seats, and residents of local communities have been included on occasion, such as persons involved with other cultural exchange program or businesspersons interested in non-profit organizations. In 1984, VIA hired Paul Strasburg for the position of executive director who assumed overall responsibility for the day-to-day operation of VIA, while Dwight Clark took the newly-created title of “president” with a mandate to program development and funding in Asia.³⁴

VIA 's original roster of summer positions was expanded in the mid-1960s to include two-year posts so that VIA could serve as an alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. Under the regulations of the US Selective Service Commission, these COs had to do two years' worth of volunteer work with an approved organization to discharge their draft obligation, and VIA gained approval for its program as alternate service. Concern about the draft also affected undergraduate participation in VIA, since able-bodied male college students of that era could not leave school without losing their student deferments. This meant that a summer program was the only option for young men still enrolled as students. With changes in the draft in the early 1970s and more liberal university policies about "stopping out," undergraduate six-month and one-year positions were set up and attracted male and female participants in roughly equal numbers.³⁵ Truly, VIA served as an alternative for COs but more importantly, it has offered more opportunity for young men and women to express their voluntarism and gain an Asian experience than the Peace Corps, which only recruits college graduates.

61. VIA 's Policies and Operation

Since its official beginning in 1966, VIA has been attempting to maintain its financially independent status. Over the years, there has been a number of amendments, for example one that allows VIA to indirectly receive government funding administered through other NGO projects.³⁶ The purpose of this amendment is to increase VIA funding and capacity to place volunteers in needed posts. VIA believes that its refusal to accept direct funding from the U.S. government or any religious groups provides VIA with favorable conditions to enter almost all Asian countries that need their English teaching service. In fact, VIA participants find their limited funding an advantage for

their operation, as Clark asserted: “Our relative poverty and freedom from government ties helps to be accepted in Asia, where stereotypes portray Americans as rich and powerful. People we work with realize we run a lean operation, and they find it easier to relate to a group which maintains such simple lifestyle.”³⁷ Especially with Asian countries that have sensitive political relations with the United States like Viet Nam and China, this financial policy works to facilitate their hosts’ acceptance, as VIA describes itself: “VIA’s people-to-people approach and independence from the U.S. government led to invitations to send volunteers to China in 1980 and to Vietnam in 1990—five years before the normalization of relations between Vietnam and the U.S. In 1995, VIA started sending volunteers to Laos, before American government volunteers were welcome.”³⁸ Also, to the question from its participants’ parents that “VIA sounds like the Peace Corps. Are they the same?” VIA responded:

VIA is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-sectarian organization. This opens doors in countries that would not otherwise welcome us. Unlike the Peace Corps, VIA provides opportunities for undergraduates as well as recent graduates. We are a local organization, focusing our undergraduate recruitment to the greater San Francisco Bay Area. With fewer than fifty participants in Asia at a time, VIA is smaller and thus better able to give participants more personal attention and care in matching a participant to a post.”³⁹

Thus, it is well assumed that VIA is more flexible and intimate in its operating style, and able to offer more opportunities for those who wish to do voluntary work in Asia, all thanks to its financial and ideological independence from the government. However, does VIA’s private, government-free status really guarantee its ideological independence? The following section will further investigate this question.

62. VIA in Relations with Asia and the U.S. government:

While VIA is not directly affiliated with government programs in Asia in terms of its financial status and administrative principles, its objectives in sending volunteers to Asia and its achievements echo the goals of the three Cold War Acts discussed in Part 1 to a surprising degree: language fluency, area studies, cross-cultural understanding, personal and professional development. In a proposal submitted to a funding Foundation, VIA states the “life-changing” impacts that a VIA experience can offer the volunteers:

The American volunteers, who often live at a simple level in a developing economy, report that the intangible gains of their experiences are life-changing – in shaping their careers, personal values, global perspectives, thus exemplifying the mutual benefit of cross-cultural immersion and educational exchange. One or two years of immersion in an Asian country can also provide linguistic and cultural fluency beyond traditional academic learning. Upon return, volunteers share their knowledge, and many are still active in Asia as journalists, diplomats, educators, business people, lawyers and directors of international development organizations. Others return with unique skills in inter-cultural issues and unique knowledge of Asia.⁴⁰

The experience in Asia provides VIA participants with similar opportunities and accomplishments as Peace Corps volunteers. By going to Asia, VIA volunteers can express the spirit of international volunteerism. Many VIA alumni affirm that employers and graduate schools appreciate the important leadership and human relations skills developed by the challenge of teaching and living overseas. The personal growth they gain from the experience and the proven ability to operate effectively in intercultural and cross-cultural settings become assets in their professional life and beyond.⁴¹

While the volunteers’ interactions with the host students, host authority, and local people do not always go well because of cultural or political conflicts, in many cases, by their sincere expression to learn and appreciate the host culture and their dedication to

teaching, VIA participants enjoy the “most crucial and rewarding discovery in the hospitality and friendliness of the host people with whom they live and work.”⁴² The widespread expression from the host students is support for VIA and gratitude to the teachers. After all, the English knowledge and the intercultural exchanges brought about by VIA undeniably benefit them professionally and academically. Also, as a number of VIA participants say, representing America in Asia, VIA volunteers act the role of “goodwill ambassadors” for the U. S.⁴³

However, the “goodwill, friendship, and support for America” need questioning. Are they really promoting friendship and understanding, or are they disseminating an embellished view of American culture, or even devaluating Asian culture in the process? Adrienne Duque, a VIA alumni in Taiwan, talks of the changes he experienced in the way he viewed America when he returned: “Through such an intense and complete immersion in Asian society, the whole experience had more of an effect on my personal viewpoints. For instance, I’m now more aware of and thankful for the many benefits of American society which we have so easily taken for granted.”⁴⁴ Going to a non-Western country, for Duque and many other volunteers, has served as a chance for them to see a cultural difference but not necessarily to appreciate that difference. Rather, the experience could further confirm their belief in the superiority of American culture, reinforcing the spirit of American exceptionalism and national greatness. These impacts, however, are not specific to VIA but probably intrinsic to all educational and cultural exchange programs between the East and the West because of the long history of Western domination and, subsequently, the long-held belief in Western superiority expressed by both Western and Eastern people.

VIA experience also serves to enhance the volunteers' self-fulfillment. To convince the parents of prospective or ongoing volunteers that joining VIA offers their children the qualities they need for their future job pursuit, VIA's pamphlet *Parents' FAQ* asserts:

For the past 38 years, VIA has given thousands of participants a career edge. One recently returned volunteer, now a Marketing Communication manager, reported: "When I asked my boss what he thought of my experience with VIA, he told me it was the thing that made me stand out from 200 applicants for the job." No matter what career one chooses, be it domestic or international, the VIA experience prepares people to understand the interdependent, multi-cultural world around them. The skills they learn make them better able to communicate, to administrate, to lead.⁴⁵

VIA establishes similar objectives and offers its participants similar opportunities to government programs like the Fulbright or the Peace Corps. This demonstrates that VIA's refusal to accept government funding does not necessarily mean it will not serve or reinforce the government objectives. On the contrary, as a private organization with easier access to Asia, VIA operates in an even more efficient manner to perform these objectives. In fact, the private organization and individual citizen are acknowledged as having a "decided influence" and being the "senior partner in this aspect [Educational and Cultural Affairs] of U.S. foreign relations," and unless it "takes a large and direct hand in international cultural activities the government can accomplish little."⁴⁶ Also, Philip Coombs demonstrates that "private agencies and individuals independently pursue educational and cultural exchange activities which shape foreign relations often join in U.S. foreign politics quite unintentionally."⁴⁷ This argument can be related to VIA and its participants. Taking part in the "citizen diplomacy,"⁴⁸ VIA volunteers are not just "goodwill ambassadors" like the Peace Corps volunteers. Their experiences help further not only their professional pursuits but also the implementation of U.S. foreign policies in

Asia. VIA's indirect contributions to these goals can be illustrated through their gained insight of Asian studies and languages. Bringing such knowledge back to the United States and American academic life, the volunteers unintentionally join the implementation of the National Defense Education Act or the Fulbright-Hays Act while most of them are not necessarily anticommunist.

Even when the knowledge of Asia that VIA participants gain has no involvement with the government policies in Asia, their desire to "learn and understand Asian cultures" needs examining. Why, after all, do Americans need to understand Asia? VIA President, Dwight Clark, often recalls the early days of his organization when he was still a graduate student and a dean of male freshmen:

At the time, Stanford University had overseas campuses in various European countries such as Britain, France, Belgium, Austria, and consortium programs in Nairobi, Lima, Sao Paolo, but none to Asia. The curious and conspicuous absence of opportunities for us to study in Asia says something about our campus and our country that Volunteers in Asia, a private, campus-based organization, would like to see changed. Most Americans know so little about the non-Western world, it is embarrassing. Asians know all about us, but we know so little about them. If there is one thing we have a missionary zeal about, it is educating more Americans about Asia.⁴⁹

At best, an experiential education in and about Asia helps these Americans better understand themselves and their fellow citizens that include millions of Americans of Asian ancestries living in the U.S., particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, close to VIA headquarters. An equally important cause is to help smooth U.S.-Asia trade relations with an understanding of the cultural behaviors. Another goal of this experience might be to give an American the chance to realize how cultural values are differently observed and interpreted, thus becoming more culturally sensitive. Gregory Francis, a summer volunteer in China in 1996, says his experience made him more confident when

encountering cultural and social situations other than his familiar ones. He also discovers why human life or individual rights in China can sometimes be placed below other values, for example human dignity or family piety, which made him more respectful to other cultures.⁵⁰ VIA's knowledge of Asia, in a way, is good for better cross-cultural understanding both within and without the U.S. Yet, on the other hand, the growth of U.S.-Asia trade relations can lead to an expansion of American hegemony in Asia, and the "cultural sensitivity" that Francis mentioned may subtly hide the perpetuated exoticism of the Asian images in the minds and eyes of Americans.

Regarding U.S.-Asia political relations, this transnational activity poses another issue: capitalism versus socialism. Currently, VIA's educational exchange programs operate in four Asian countries: China, Laos, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. Among these, the China and Viet Nam programs have steadily maintained the largest number of posts recently.⁵¹ The Indonesia program is considered "unstable" with "unsure future" because of Indonesia's political situation and the high inflation there.⁵² Particularly, after September 11,th 2001, nine volunteers in Indonesia were called home due to anti-American riots or transferred to another nation.⁵³ The Laos program remains the smallest one with only two posts in 2002 with rumors that it may soon be closed.⁵⁴ Why do China and Viet Nam programs remain strong and have more recruitments? This reality may be based upon different political ideologies, as revealed through the wording of a survey about the varied motivations that VIA participants have in mind when choosing to go to either Taiwan or China. While the Taiwan volunteers overall expressed a more general interest in going to Asia or to a foreign culture in order to have a cross-cultural experience, a large number of China participants were specifically interested in living in

“a developing and socialist nation.”⁵⁵ What motivates the volunteers to go to China or Viet Nam, therefore, can be the opportunity for them to see and work not only in another culture but also experience life in, and gain knowledge about, another political system. This demonstrates a political element in VIA’s activity and how it fits the U.S. political interests in China and Viet Nam.

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Part III: VIA Viet Nam Program

In this section, I will specifically investigate the VIA Viet Nam program and analyze its history, administration, funding, and the pre-departure training program. My argument is that even though it is a well-meaning and pacifist organization, VIA cannot divorce itself from the history of Viet Nam-U.S. relations. This argument is made evident through VIA Viet Nam training program and its financial relation with the Ford Foundation, a non-government but political organization. While VIA attempts to preserve its non-political status and trains volunteers to respect the host culture, it is indirectly involved in U.S. political goals in Viet Nam as a virtual subsidiary of the Ford Foundation and directly engaged in cultural conflicts through its representations of Viet Nam in the training program.

1. History

Volunteers in Asia first went to South Viet Nam in the summer of 1966 in a program coordinated by the International Voluntary Services, Inc. (IVS), a “non-governmental” organization with funding from both private contributions and government subsidies. ¹ VIA ’s activities in South Viet Nam, however, lasted for just two years because the volunteers’ parents were concerned about their children’s security as the Viet Nam War became too dangerous for VIA participants in early 1968. VIA had no direct connection with the Peace Corps or USAID educational programs and only operated as a small, private, voluntary group. Also, Don Luce, the person in charge of IVS at the time, was against the way American prison authorities cruelly treated VC prisoners in the infamous “Tiger Cages.” He later led an American Congressman to the

scene and helped change the American public opinion regarding the war. However, because the main assignments of VIA volunteers at the time were community development and education-related activities,² the pioneers of VIA in Viet Nam were indeed involved in the U.S.'s "Other war" for the "hearts and minds" of South Vietnamese people.³

The return of VIA to Viet Nam twenty-three years later was initiated in 1989 by the then VIA executive director, Paul Strasburg, with the assistance of John McAuliffe (former director of the U.S.- Indochina Reconciliation Project) and Lady Borton (American representative of the American Friends Service Committee in Viet Nam). These two persons, with their long experience in non-political and humanitarian work in Viet Nam, had convinced Strasburg that VIA might be favorably received by the Vietnamese authorities due to its private and non-religious status. Under the auspices of the USIRP, Strasburg participated in a study tour led by McAuliffe and Borton in 1989. He then had the chance to meet with Vietnamese leaders of universities and government agencies, discussed his projects with them, and was encouraged to submit a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Ha Noi for consideration.⁴

Indeed, VIA 's project in Viet Nam was strongly supported by both VIA and the Vietnamese administration at the time. First, VIA found that they needed to develop new projects because their long-standing programs in Japan and Taiwan were shrinking. Those countries had reached a high level of economic and cultural interaction with the U.S., thus making VIA less appealing to them. In addition, the VIA leadership felt that "there was need for more people-to-people contact between the two countries [America and Viet Nam] to heal the wounds of the past."⁵ Further contributing to the

implementation of VIA project in Viet Nam was the receptiveness of Vietnamese officials. Mr. Tran Viet Dzung, then Director of Foreign Relations at the MOET, recalls: “We did not have much work to do at the Ministry at that time and became very interested in VIA, an apolitical organization from the United States.”⁶ Also, political and economic instability in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s led to a decrease in aid from those countries to Viet Nam, thus urging the Vietnamese government to establish relations with other Western countries and seek their support. For this reason, the demand for more English language teachers in Vietnamese colleges and universities was very high in the early 1990s. Not only did Vietnamese students want to learn English, but thousands of teachers of Russian also needed to be retrained to teach English or they would have been out of jobs.”⁷ The return of VIA in Viet Nam in 1990, therefore, was the result of mutual agreement and bilateral interests.

Over the years, however, the relationship between VIA and the Vietnamese hosts has changed in the level of trust and cooperation, which may depend on the behavior of a particular VIA teacher or the hosts as well as changes in international relations. As an administrator of VIA commented: “VIA ’s position in Viet Nam at any moment reflected both the volunteers’ work and changes in international politics.”⁸ For example, at the beginning of the academic year 1991-1992, there were only four teachers, and their residence was restricted to state-run guesthouses in Ha Noi. Their work was often under surveillance for many reasons, ranging from the coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 to the recruitment of a teacher who was suspected to be a spy because he had previously visited Viet Nam.⁹ In brief, any changes in world politics or with VIA in Viet Nam in its

early years, when there were few American organizations operating in Viet Nam, could provoke suspicion on the part of Vietnamese authorities.

On the other hand, warming relations between Viet Nam and the United States also had positive effects on VIA and its operations. By early 1992, a U.S. office in charge of POW/MIA issues was established in Ha Noi, and U.S. humanitarian assistance and Fulbright scholarships for Vietnamese to study law in the U.S. came into effect. Also, frequent exchanges of delegations between Ha Noi and Washington took place. In particular, a diplomatic handshake between Secretary of State James Baker and Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam promised the end of post-1975 hostility. All these factors provided favorable conditions for VIA. For the first time, VIA teachers resided in private housing, and there were plans for ten of them, beginning in September 1992, to teach not only in Ha Noi but also Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City. After 1995, when normalization took effect, the number of VIA in Viet Nam increased considerably with the participation of Vietnamese American volunteers.¹⁰ It looked as though VIA would have fewer problems with the authorities, now that there were more American as well as other foreign agencies operating in Viet Nam, and that the bilateral relations became less intense. However, around this time, VIA started having difficulties with the MOET. According to VIA, there were three reasons on the part of the Vietnamese agency for the difficulties VIA encountered: overwork; incompetence; and politics.¹¹ VIA participants began having to deal with the bureaucracy and conflicts with host institutions, who had to do more work with other foreign organizations, thus giving VIA less priority and care while becoming more demanding of VIA.¹² Recently, the MOET representatives repeatedly request that they attend VIA's annual conference in Viet Nam at the expense

of VIA or they may not issue visa for the Viet Nam home office coordinator. This request has been refused by VIA, which argues that VIA has a tight budget. This exchange has caused minor distrust between VIA and the MOET.¹³ In short, VIA experience in Viet Nam has not always been pleasant and non-political as it was initially seen or hoped to be.

2. Administration:

Since 1990, VIA Viet Nam program has had two components: (1) long-term posts based on one or two year contracts for college graduates and (2) a six-week summer mentor teaching post for undergraduates. The purpose of the long-term program are stated by VIA as: a) to contribute to the advancement of English teaching at the host institution; b) to enable VIA teachers to learn about the culture and language of Viet Nam; and c) to further mutual understanding and friendship between Vietnamese and Americans. Teaching topics and materials – which range from English language and American Studies to Economics and International Relations and Literature – are either designated and provided by the host institutions or by the volunteers themselves. On the other hand, the summer program can be best described as an English teaching and cultural exchange program. With the pedagogical assistance and logistic management of a mentor who is a seasoned volunteer, VIA summer participants give intensive classes on American holidays and daily life while learning Vietnamese culture and visiting sites of interests. Since 1998, a third program called English Resource has been added, which is a post for volunteers to assist Vietnamese researchers or students with their English skills in editing, tutoring, or counseling.¹⁴

The recruitment for summer volunteers and long-term volunteers often begins in the last few months of the year and continues until early February. To participate in either program, prospective volunteers are required to enroll in English teaching courses at their universities and commit themselves to all training sessions held by the VIA Home Office, usually during weekends in the Spring semester. All long-term volunteers must hold their undergraduate degrees at the time of their departure. Summer volunteers must be continuing undergraduates from Bay Area schools. In addition, they have to pay a participant fee of \$1,975 for summer or one-year programs, but only \$950 for two-year programs.¹⁵ It can be inferred that VIA is mostly composed of students from rather well-off families with privileged background, which could have been an important factor in the way they represent the United States in Viet Nam and how they interact with Vietnamese students as well as the authority.

The Viet Nam Program has a full-time home office coordinator and a half-time field coordinator (from August 2002, the field coordinator is a full-time position).¹⁶ Upon arrival in Viet Nam, volunteers spend from one week (for summer participants) to three weeks (for long-term ones) in Ha Noi studying Vietnamese and attending orientation sessions. The orientation may include panel discussions in which VIA alumni or host students are invited to come and share their experiences; visits to museums; meeting with Vietnamese celebrities and experienced American expatriates in Ha Noi, and interactions with a number of academic institutions around Ha Noi to learn the general system of education.¹⁷ During the fall, the field coordinator visits each post to see how the volunteers have settled in. In early winter, the home office coordinator comes for a tour of posts to renew contracts or explore new posts, which is also undertaken by

the field coordinator. After their trips, both coordinators write and submit field reports after their trips to the VIA 's home administration, which are also emailed to all volunteers. After the home office visit, volunteers gather together with the two coordinators for the annual conference. The conference is not only a chance for volunteers to catch up with one another, but also an opportunity to share or propose ideas and set program plans for the upcoming volunteers.¹⁸ While ultimate decision-making power rests with VIA 's Board of Directors, comprised mostly of former volunteers and faculty staff of Stanford and UC-Santa Cruz and varying in number each year, all the opinions and recommendations from the field reports and conference minutes of VIA participants and coordinators are taken seriously to reach consensus among all VIA members.¹⁹ Being an international organization operating in Asia, however, VIA has no Asian Board members, which makes VIA appear more nationalist than internationalist.

When a Vietnamese college or university agrees to accept a VIA teacher, VIA will select and train the teacher to assure that he or she is competent to teach English at the host institution, which may require different teaching techniques depending on the level of students or the specific area of study in the school. Prospective volunteers also receive free training in Vietnamese culture and language with an emphasis on cross-cultural situations.²⁰ VIA administration also provides airfare, health insurance, and the cost of any VIA-related travels within Viet Nam. Currently, the Viet Nam program has thirteen volunteers posted in fifteen institutions, plus a full-time field coordinator, five of whom are Vietnamese American, nine are women, and three are Amerasian.²¹

VIA teachers are usually contracted to teach a maximum of 16 hours per week and supposed to maintain communication with the host staff for their support,

supervision, and notification of faculty events or school policies. To make sure that the volunteer is really “needed” and their work is based on cooperative efforts, VIA expects the host institutions to provide volunteers with free housing and a bicycle for in-town transport. In addition, volunteers receive 4 hours of Vietnamese language instruction per week free of charge (which is not always followed especially when the volunteers are already fluent in Vietnamese). They are also given one-week winter break to attend the annual conference, an average stipend of \$165 per month for food and essentials, which is either provided in full (less likely) or partially by the host institutions. In the latter case, VIA will try to make up for the rest of the total amount. Occasionally, volunteers are offered free passes to all or some of the historical and cultural sites in the place they are posted. Any other support from the hosts, such as transportation to and from the airport or introductory tours around the area, are not requested but appreciated. However, depending on the financial or geographical features of each institution, the bilateral contracts may be flexibly adjusted or insufficiently implemented.²²

At first glance, the co-operation between VIA teachers and their Vietnamese hosts appears to be a mutually productive and beneficiary relationship. For several reasons, VIA generally favors posts outside large cities and in teaching or research institutions.²³ First, VIA believes that non-urban areas are the places where Vietnamese culture originates and where people have limited resources and little contact with foreigners, let alone foreign English teachers. Placing volunteers there not only gives the volunteers the chance to better absorb Vietnamese culture and immerse themselves into the community than in a city, where foreign expatriates often gather, but also help narrow the disparity between the city and the country.²⁴ Secondly, VIA believes that posting volunteers in

teachers' colleges, where trainers for other institutions are trained, is more productive because of its multiple impact.²⁵ This policy is similar to the educational strategy of USAID when it sent American teachers to Vietnamese educational institutions in the early 1960s, both aiming at maximizing the scope of knowledge influence for American teachers in Viet Nam.²⁶

VIA and the Vietnamese partners believe that VIA's activities benefit both the hosts and the volunteers. On the one hand, Vietnamese students, especially those who are poorer and live in the countryside, can have low-cost but high-quality English instruction by a devoted American teacher. Not only do they improve their English skills and become familiar with foreigners, but they also learn new perspectives on cultural behavior and gain Western knowledge otherwise unavailable in Vietnamese language. This enables them to broaden their outlook, to communicate with and understand foreigners.²⁷ In the long term, such experience helps expand their professional opportunities, especially in well-paid positions with foreign organizations. When being asked to recall the three best aspects of studying with an American volunteer teacher in addition to English fluency and proficiency, 80% of the students, who studied in the same class, mentioned job application writing and interview tips, which were crucial in seeking jobs in foreign business or organizations; 60% appreciated gaining skills in critical and free writing or/and independent thinking; 30% emphasized cross-cultural understanding, particularly regarding Viet Nam-U.S. relations. Other considerations mentioned included "confidence," "environmental issues," "American culture," and finally "American Literature," which variably comprised 15% to 20% of the responses.²⁸ This survey was conducted with 22 of my classmates in Ha Noi, with 20 replies received. Therefore, the

result may not be quite representative. However, the fact that 70% of them are regularly employed in foreign-related organizations (whose income is a lot higher than what their American teacher got from VIA!) and that 80% placed application techniques as the most useful or memorable lessons reveals the significance of VIA teaching. It is obvious that VIA teachers' work has a considerable impact on Viet Nam's employment and per capita income, and effectively promotes business cooperation between Viet Nam and foreign countries.

On the other hand, VIA volunteers have opportunities to directly experience a new culture and enhance their knowledge, which are always "valuable assets" to help advance their future studies or careers.²⁹ Also, working as a teacher in a developing foreign country, especially in the Socialist Viet Nam, can bring them more powerful experiences or valuable observations. Usually posted alone in an institution, sometimes in a province, each volunteer is required not only to learn how to work creatively and independently to manage their classes, but also to cope with cultural as well as personal difficulties. All these experiences help to develop their character.³⁰ When the teaching contracts are over, a majority of them seek graduate studies or employment in international organizations, particularly relating to Viet Nam, in diverse fields ranging from social sciences research institutes to foreign relations and education.³¹ It is widely acknowledged by VIA alumni that the time and energy VIA teachers invested in Viet Nam, added with the challenging life they experienced, later become the life-changing resources for them to develop their careers and character. For this reason, it is understandable that donations from VIA alumni, though not particularly large, constitute one of VIA's most stable sources of funding.³²

3. Funding: VIA and the Ford Foundation

According to Carolyn Welch, VIA Program Development director, VIA Viet Nam program receives 30% of its funding from alumni donations, 10% from participant fees, and 60% from grants donated by the Ford Foundation (abbreviated as FF hereafter), Freeman Foundation, Kunstadter Foundation, and Starr Foundation. None of these organizations receive money from the U.S. government. Among the foundations that are interested in funding the Viet Nam Program, the FF is the largest sponsor.³³

The FF represents itself as a “private, independent, non-profit, non-political philanthropic organization” that aims to be “a resource to innovative people and institutions worldwide, because innovation is needed for finding effective solutions to new challenges in an ever-changing world.”³⁴ The FF makes grants to institutions – including governmental agencies, universities, research institutes, and non-governmental organizations – and to individuals for research, training, experimentation and developmental efforts. For more than half a century, the FF has been working with 40 countries in the world with four goals: strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.³⁵

However, there is evidence that the FF has indirectly supported the U.S. foreign relations since the Cold War. Highly recognized as a major ally and supporter of the U.S. government in the establishment of area studies in the 1950s and 1960s then a “revitalization” of these studies in 1996,³⁶ the FF is actually involved in politics. Its granting institution only started in 1950 but soon became the world’s largest private philanthropic force. As Philip Coombs assesses:

By late 1961, out of total Ford grants of \$1.5 billion, more than 20% had gone into world affairs. Much of this went to American education, mainly for study and research on foreign areas and languages by American scholars, to boost our own competence. But the largest share of Ford's "world affairs" money has gone into technical assistance and institution-building in some forty countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with heavy emphasis on education. These philanthropies jealously guard their independence of government, yet their actions have unquestionably contributed much to the advancement of the underlying purpose of U.S. foreign policy.³⁷

This reveals that being "non-government" does not necessarily mean not supporting government interests. In fact, this label can further facilitate a private organization's entry abroad and fuel its capacity to get involved in foreign affairs due to its independent and non-political appearance. Receiving funding from the FF, VIA inevitably plays a role in its objectives in Viet Nam.

The FF has been supporting VIA for 10 years, totaling its approved funding for VIA to \$ 842,000 (from February 1st 1992 to October 31st 2004).³⁸ In the last few years, the FF has increased its funding and currently funds approximately 60% of the whole Viet Nam field expenses. There was a sharp increase of \$35,000 from \$95,000 for the 1996-1998 period to \$130,000 for the 1998-2000 period.³⁹ In 2001, during the home office coordinator's meeting with the FF, it was expected that the FF would continue its support for VIA and increase its funding up to \$300,000 for the period 2002-2004.⁴⁰ In 1998, FF fully funded six of 14 posts for \$28,455, in addition to \$14,000 for home and field office expenses.⁴¹ In 2001, the FF fully funded 5 posts plus the field coordinator expense among a total of 11 posts.⁴² Currently, six of the fifteen Viet Nam posts, plus the field office expense, are fully funded, and five others are partially funded by the FF.⁴³

According to Dr. Charles Bailey, the FF 's representative in Ha Noi, the reason for the FF 's support for VIA is the necessity to "promote a people-to-people approach for a better mutual relations while contributing to the development of Viet Nam."⁴⁴ From the beginning, the FF was interested in developing two sectors in Viet Nam: market economic training and international relations. As a consequence, the first VIA posts in Ha Noi that received substantial funding from the FF were the National University of Economics (1992 -1994), Ha Noi Foreign Trade University (1992 -1996), Ha Noi Foreign Languages University, and the Foreign Languages Department at Ha Noi University.⁴⁵ The Institute of International Relations of Ha Noi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Vietnamese Communist Party External Relations Commission are among those institutions that have been funded by the FF.⁴⁶ Thus, it can be asserted that the FF was among the first organizations that promoted American capitalism and American political ideology in Viet Nam through its funding priority. By placing volunteers in these institutions, VIA became part of the FF project.

In recent years, the FF 's focus has shifted to international relations and rural development. However, according to John Ambler, the former representative of FF in Ha Noi, their major objective in Vietnam remains "institution-building."⁴⁷ Since 1996, the FF has been funding and encouraging VIA 's post at the Ho Chi Minh Political Academy to develop it into an academic institution, although VIA did not really like the post because it was rather "disorganized, lacking academic facilities like a real school." However, VIA also realized that "it was hard for VIA to leave this "fascinating and challenging" post, a research and training center of Viet Nam's political think tanks."⁴⁸ In the last six years, VIA has kept a volunteer to teach in the Academy and also in

another of its branches, the External Affairs Commission at the Communist Party's Central Committee. Shelby Hunt, who is currently teaching in these two posts, has been "selected especially for this post with a special interview given by the three country program directors" because VIA was looking for a volunteer who could present himself "professionally and maturely" and "be aware of cultural and political hot-spots."⁴⁹ This implies that VIA has become interested in politics and increasingly dependent on the FF's objectives when making their decision to place a volunteer. For example, VIA reestablished a post at Thai Nguyen Agricultural College in 1996 because it was funded by the FF, even though VIA had had conflicts with the school and discontinued its contract with them one year earlier.⁵⁰ Recently, VIA opened a new post at An Giang University because the FF funds a project in this school and suggests that VIA place a volunteer there.⁵¹ The tendency to prioritize the FF's funding in establishing posts, however, was against VIA's intention and policy, thus causing internal conflicts within VIA. Seeing the increase in the FF's funding and its voice in VIA, the former VIA Viet Nam's home office coordinator, Andrew Lewandowski comments:

At the same time, a change has occurred in Ford's funding priorities. In the past, Ford has funded projects that seemed more appropriate for VIA's program: posts in areas where volunteers could have an immersion experience. Now, Ford seems more interested in funding volunteers for institutions where they already have projects. In the past, the VIA teacher was the Ford project. Now, the VIA teacher is part of a larger project. For example, Julie Do is now working at the Institute of Social Sciences in HCMC where Ford has given grant of \$ 365,000.⁵²

Lewandowski then warned: "To have Ford Foundation offer more funding than it is currently doing could jeopardize the independence of our program. I would urge extreme caution in accepting funding beyond the level that has been offered for this grant."⁵³

Also, in another home office report, it was determined that VIA would continue to seek

funding from the FF but try not to make VIA a “wholly owned subsidiary” of the FF.⁵⁴ Adrian Khactu, a volunteer at Dalat University in 2001-2002, joined the protest against receiving bulky funding from the FF: “I know that VIA is receiving a lot of money from FF and think it is not a good direction. It should have spread its funding to many small sponsors so as not to become too dependent on or instrumental to any big group.”⁵⁵ VIA does recognize its dependence on the FF and tries hard to maintain its “independent” status. However, refusing funding is not an easy task. Not only does VIA continue to accept FF funding, at least until the end of the 2002-2004 grant period, but it is also considering a project to send Vietnamese students to Stanford on VIA summer program with FF funding.

In a meeting with Ms. Fieldsted, the former home office coordinator of VIA Viet Nam program, Dr. Bailey expressed his appreciation that VIA “really helps to expose Viet Nam to ideas from the outside world” and saw the need for American officials to see more aspects of Viet Nam to understand it, considering the anti-legislation in Washington regarding the Bilateral Trade Agreement.⁵⁶ The FF representative also expressed interest in granting \$ 35,000 a year to sponsor seven Vietnamese students to study at Stanford University every summer on VIA’s Stanford Program to “expose young Vietnamese people to another culture, which can have a significant impact.” It was suggested that “the students should be selected on the basis of what they would like to implement after their return to Viet Nam and thus getting them more interested in civic involvement.”⁵⁷ While the FF is running an independent program from the United States’ government, but the two share some similar goals: “democratizing” Viet Nam (which is more a rhetorical

than factual goal), building and rebuilding its institutions, and reshaping young Vietnamese people's way of thinking with American money and ideologies.⁵⁸

A study of the FF website regarding its current programs in Viet Nam reveals that the FF is spending millions of dollars on the development of Viet Nam via two channels. The first channel is the FF International Fellowships Program that funds Vietnamese students or researchers to study in the U.S. The second channel includes grants to governmental agencies, universities, research institutes, and non-governmental organizations working for the benefit of Viet Nam. Obviously, no Vietnamese institution or individual would deny the necessity to receive the FF's assistance, considering Viet Nam's low level of development in many fields, especially in rural or highland areas. The FF's goals in Viet Nam are clearly stated as follows:

The Foundation's efforts in Vietnam are currently focused within five fields: International Cooperation; Poverty Alleviation in the Uplands; Sexuality and Reproductive Health; Social Sciences; and Arts and Culture. The Foundation seeks to respond to the development needs of Vietnam in these areas by contributing to the enhancement of skills and problem-solving ability of Vietnamese researchers, policy makers, and practitioners working in critical social areas. The solutions that Vietnam devises for addressing its development challenges must be uniquely Vietnamese, but Foundation grant-making seeks to create access to the best thinking and training world-wide and to support innovative development experiments in the country.⁵⁹

Even though the FF states that the way Viet Nam solves its problems must be "uniquely Vietnamese," this does not guarantee such solution in actuality because the FF, with *their* money and in *their American* standard, holds the ultimate power to select the Vietnamese grantees and expose them to "the best thinking and training world-wide." Therefore, prospective as well as current grantees naturally have to refashion or direct their motivations in such a way that fits the FF's interest. Similarly, VIA's financial

dependence on the FF leads to the redirection and politicization of its programs. This shows how difficult it is for both VIA and Viet Nam to preserve their political independence in an era when American corporations exert such strong influence and pervasive domination.

4. Pre-departure Training

VIA 's pre-departure training for the Viet Nam program lasts for 4 months from early March to the end of June each year, with the participation of alumni, recent returnees from Viet Nam, VIA Viet Nam program administrators, and Vietnamese Studies specialists from Bay Area universities (many of whom are Vietnamese American). In addition to talks about Vietnamese culture and history by experienced volunteers and area studies scholars, each trainee is provided with a training packet that contains documents about VIA in general, and readings about Vietnamese history, religion, culture, society and political issues. Similar to other Asian countries' programs, the training includes three sections: cross-cultural sensitivity and country orientation training; Vietnamese language training; and English teaching skills. With the last training, trainees are usually required to take a course on Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language offered at their schools. Of these three sections, the first one is the most essential and specific to VIA. According to the Viet Nam Program Home Director, the training programs are revised, updated, and made more comprehensive every year to best prepare the volunteers with life and work in Viet Nam.⁶⁰

Ultimately, the cross-cultural training and country orientation sessions can be understood as an introductory course in Vietnamese Studies. These sessions aim to

provide training in two areas. The first is to help them understand Vietnamese culture, people, religion, society, education, etc. The second is to expose trainees to aspects of Vietnamese society that are different from America and prepare them for culture shock. Trainees are taught how to deal with those differences while remaining respectful of the hosts and host culture. Despite VIA 's efforts to provide "true" representations of Viet Nam and to encourage volunteers to respect Vietnamese culture, these training programs often reinforce Orientalist ideas about Vietnamese people and provoke an attempt to change some aspects of Vietnamese culture. For instance, all these materials are either presented by Americans from American perspectives or collected from books published in South Viet Nam before 1975 by South Vietnamese people, which not only fail to prepare the trainees adequately for living and working in Viet Nam but also further negative ideas about the country, particularly the need to reform Viet Nam's political system.⁶¹

The training in differences between U.S. and Vietnamese societies can be generally classified into three sections: educational environment, political condition, and social relationships. First, VIA presents to volunteers a broad picture of Viet Nam's educational system, its teaching and learning traditions. In addition to basic and "objective" data about literacy rate or specific types of degrees, these materials clearly point out how things are different from the American educational system. For example, volunteers are advised to solve things on their own rather than seek assistance from a Vietnamese colleague or administrator because "it is hard to know who really takes responsibility or action in the faculty."⁶² While VIA trainers make every effort to remind volunteers of the necessity to respect Vietnamese culture and people, to stay away from

stereotyping them, and to avoid letting the “better American way” get into their interaction with the Vietnamese, its representations provoke the future teachers to change all those “un-American” ways. Also, tactful approaches for teachers to make changes are suggested, for example, about the Vietnamese habit of learning:

Since Vietnamese students are accustomed to having their teachers decide everything for them, including telling them what they should do in class, they may naturally expect their American teachers to do likewise. To be on one’s own, to be allowed to take certain initiative in one’s studies, however exciting this may be, may also be confusing and even threatening to someone who has not been trained to enjoy such freedom. To assist the Vietnamese students to make a smooth transition from their old school system to a completely new one, it is advisable that their new teachers initially assume an authoritative role to guide the students and to acquaint them with the new classroom procedures until they feel more at home with their new environment. To be able to provide such guidance successfully will require a great measure of patience with the refugee students, plus a knowledge of their background, an understanding and awareness of their emotional and academic problems as well as a keen insight into, and appreciation of, their linguistic difficulties.⁶³

This material was originally part of a handbook for American teachers who teach Vietnamese refugee children in the United States and help them adapt to American culture. It is ironic that teaching material used for assimilating Vietnamese students to American life is applied to the instruction of Vietnamese students in Viet Nam. Following this model in the Vietnamese context, this may result in an Americanization of Vietnamese students.

The second section portrays the politics in the government and the workplace. This is represented in a detailed article provided by *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, an online journal with strong emphasis on country profiles around the world, and a long article entitled “Learning to Work in Viet Nam” by Lady Borton, an American who has been working in Viet Nam since 1969 with the American Friends Service Committee. In addition, trainees are advised on how to approach political discussions in the class

without jeopardizing either themselves or the students involved.⁶⁴ These materials help depict Viet Nam as a nation of one-party government struggling to maintain its ideology, to legitimize its existence, and to overcome economic difficulties. Also, they perpetuate the prejudice that there is little freedom of political expression in the country nor democracy, and inspire volunteers to make an indirect change with their future teaching.

Trainees are prepared to work in a country whose cultural norms have “evolved over the centuries from a base in Confucianism” with its concepts of “Respect and Right Relationships,” which dominate most social and business relationships.⁶⁵ According to these materials, corruption, bureaucracies, business influenced by private relationships, or bribery are all to be expected in Viet Nam. Yet, they also tell readers how to adapt to the Vietnamese ways if they want to avoid trouble because “nothing lasts forever” and Viet Nam will be “a memory and an experience that change your life” that make a person “appreciate the significance of personal struggle and triumph.”⁶⁶ From these materials, trainees can imagine a tough but useful experience for them in Viet Nam.

In the final section, volunteers are introduced to Vietnamese rules in relationships and also the troubles they may encounter. For example, the materials instruct readers:

- The closer you are to someone physically, the more emotionally you are seen as attached to that person.
- Friendships in Vietnam are for life while in the U.S. they may not be.
- Romantic relationships in Vietnam are expected to be a permanent commitment while they are closer to experimental in the U.S.
- What are the possible darker reasons of foreign/native relationships?

- Vietnamese women see foreigners as a ticket to the U.S. and fame and wealth.
- Hue girls are very traditional and virtuous with long, flowing hair, sweet, soft voices, careful manners, and sickeningly gentle.
- Gender relations and Vietnamese patriarchy are even worse than the second-place role of women in the US.⁶⁷

In general, these materials tell volunteers some interesting as well as troublesome aspects of friendship in Viet Nam, warn them of the gravity of the problems they may encounter with romantic relationships with a Vietnamese person, and finally give volunteers a picture of patriarchy in Viet Nam. These representations are somewhat correct and necessary for the sake of both the volunteers and the Vietnamese to save them from misunderstanding or illusions. Yet, these statements also perpetuate Orientalist stereotypes about gender and sexuality in Asia. Vietnamese women are portrayed as erotic with female gentility but likely to manipulate foreign men for their material ends. Female volunteers are likely to imagine Viet Nam as an “incredibly gender-biased society,” thus feeling fortunate to be an American woman, and envisioning how they can empower themselves by “rescuing” Vietnamese women from Vietnamese patriarchy.

The number of Vietnamese American volunteers in VIA has been increasing recently.⁶⁸ As a consequence, a considerable part of the training concerns Vietnamese American identity and the problems they may have in Viet Nam. These training materials often introduce three issues: the Vietnamese host’s white fetishism; confusing expectations toward Vietnamese Americans; and the host’s stereotypes of Vietnamese Americans as “very rich.” It is true that a number of Vietnamese institutions prefer to

have a white American teacher as if they thought only white Americans were “real” American.⁶⁹ The behavior and appearance of Vietnamese American teachers are more likely to be commented upon as either “very American” or “very Vietnamese” while the specific meanings assigned to such characterization are unclear, thus making them frustrated and confused.⁷⁰ Also, because many young Vietnamese American volunteers are not very rich, their experiences are self-contradictory in many ways. On the one hand, they prefer to be treated as “Vietnamese” in stores so as not to be charged with higher prices as are many foreign tourists. On the other hand, they expect some respect from the hosts as if they were “white tourists.”⁷¹ Being “neither Vietnamese nor American” and wishing to learn more about their heritage, they try their best to really immerse themselves into Vietnamese society without having to subordinate their American cultural values. This often causes them further conflict and a painful experience.⁷² A number of female Vietnamese American teachers, who date white American males, are stereotypically mistaken as Vietnamese prostitutes and scorned by the locals.⁷³ All of these experiences are frustrating but solvable. As one female Vietnamese American shares in a training handout:

I think that a lot of the problems are either illusory or are a result of some pathology Vietnamese-Americans have that needs to be corrected. Vietnamese Americans don't want to be identified as Vietnamese, they want to be identified as Americans, and they want to be treated like other white tourists. This seems a strange way to look at things seeing as how the point of the VIA experience is to try to become part of the culture of your host country. Being a Vietnamese American should give you a head start rather than putting you at a disadvantage. Vietnamese Americans want to be judged by who they are, not according to stereotypes or generalities and so forth, but for a people like the Vietnamese who live in a society that is still very collective thinking in terms of such large categories it seems inevitable. So don't take it personally. By taking it personally you actually live up to the stereotypes the Vietnamese have of Viet Kieu [Vietnamese American].⁷⁴

This female Vietnamese American is quite aware of the nature of the problems that Vietnamese Americans face and the contradictions in their own thinking. This also reveals another contradictory aspect of VIA Viet Nam training. Vietnamese Americans do not want to be judged by the Vietnamese in “stereotypes and generalities” and critique the “collective thinking” in Vietnamese society, but they do produce generalities and perpetuate stereotypes of Vietnamese people and particularly Vietnamese women in their own training. VIA ’s partiality in representing Viet Nam and representing themselves hinders their ability to see things in both directions.

VIA ’s training program serves multiple functions and also reveals various issues about Viet Nam – U.S. relations. In a way, they are absolutely necessary for the volunteers to familiarize themselves with the society they are going to live in and what sort of problems they might encounter. However, these training materials also give volunteers a generalized and negative picture of Viet Nam, that inspires them to “make a change.” As a consequence, the training not only reaffirms but also further implants in the minds of volunteers more Orientalist ideas and prejudices about Viet Nam, Vietnamese culture, and Vietnamese people. This seems to contradict VIA ’s outline of *Key Qualities for Teaching and Living in Viet Nam*: “respect for Vietnamese culture/people/society” and “Positive and constructive attitude.”⁷⁵ When the VIA experience reaches Viet Nam with real teaching and real interaction, such politics and contradictions are stronger and become more apparent.

Notes:

1. Glyn Roberts, *Volunteers in Africa and Asia* (London: The Stanhope Press, 1965), 57. The author did not provide precise information regarding which government subsidy funded the IVS.
2. Dwight Clark, email communication, June 2002.
3. See part I about community development/teaching tasks, p. 15-16.
4. Paul Strasburg, email communication, June 2002.
5. Dwight Clark, email communication, June 2002.
6. Tran Viet Dzung, personal communication, July 2002.
7. Le The Que, personal communication, May 2002.
8. Home Office Coordinator Report 1992, Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office.
9. Ibid.
10. See appendix A.
11. Home Office Coordinator Report 1996, Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office.
12. Carolyn Welch, personal communication, May 2002.
13. Home Office Coordinator Report 1997, 1998, Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office.
14. VIA Viet Nam Reader 2002, *VIA Viet Nam Program*. Training material, provided by Ann Le.
15. For information regarding VIA's logistic and administrative operation, see <http://www.volasia.org/programs/volasia/details>
16. Ky Lam, personal communication, August 2002.
17. Ky Lam's orientation plan, August 2002.
18. Ann Le, personal communication, May 2002.
19. Dwight's talk given at the Ben Lomond Hostel, *VIA Viet Nam Reader 2002*; VIA Biennial Report 2000-2001, 15-16.
20. See section 3: pre-departure training.
21. See appendix F.
22. Ann Le, personal communication, May 2002; appendix C.
23. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
24. David Joiner & James Vest, personal communication, July 2002.
25. Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July 2002.
26. Part II, p. 14.
27. Tran Kim Lien, personal communication, June 2002.
28. See appendix E.
29. *Number 1 advice*, Viet Nam program training handout. VIA training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
30. James Vest, Thu Cao, Ann Le, etc., personal communication; Shelby Hunt and Lynn Zephyr, volunteer field reports, VIA Viet Nam folder, VIA Stanford Office.
31. See appendix A.
32. Carolyn Welch and Ky Lam, personal communication, May & August 2002.
33. Carolyn Welch, personal communication, May 2002.
34. See FF website at <http://www.fordfound.org/>
35. Ford Foundation Annual Report 2001, New York: Office of Communications, Dept. A.
36. Patrick O'Meara, Howard D. Mehlinger, and Roxana Ma Newman, eds., *Changing Perspectives on International Education* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 71.
37. Philip H. Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 71.
38. Charles Bailey, personal communication, July 2002.
39. Home Office Coordinator Report, 1997. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
40. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
41. Volunteer Program and Administration: Fiscal year 1998-1999 Budget. VIA Policy Folder. VIA Stanford Office.

42. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
43. Ky Lam, personal communication, August 2002.
44. Charles Bailey, personal communication, July 2002.
45. Kristy Kelly & Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July and October 2002.
46. See FF website at <http://www.fordfound.org/vietnam>; Shelby Hunt, personal communication.
47. Home Office Coordinator Report, 1996. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
48. Home Office Coordinator Report, 1997. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
49. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
50. Home Office Coordinator Report, 1997. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
51. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2000. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
52. Home Office Coordinator Report, 1997. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
53. *ibid.*
54. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
55. Adrian Khactu, personal communication, June 2002.
56. Home Office Coordinator Report, 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
57. *ibid.*
58. See section 222, Viet Nam Democracy Act at <http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/www/hwf010907.html>
59. See FF website at <http://www.fordfound.org/vietnam>
60. Ann Le, personal communication, May 2002.
61. VIA Viet Nam Reader 2002, training material, see sections *Facts and History*; *Culture and Cross-culture*.
62. *Strategy to Negotiate with Your School*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
63. VIA Viet Nam Reader 2002, training material, section *Education and Teaching*. "Working with Vietnamese children and youth," by Hugh H. Sterling, Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools. "Brief Hints for Dealing with Cultural Differences in Classroom Situations: Suggested Approaches for Teachers," quoted in a teaching handbook for American teachers teaching Vietnamese children refugees in the U.S. (Source is not provided by VIA).
64. *Teaching: Hot Topics and Taboo*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
65. Lady Borton, "Learning to Work in Viet Nam," VIA Viet Nam Reader 2002.
66. *Number 1 Advice*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
67. *Gender Identity, Vietnamese Relationships*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
68. See appendix A.
69. Ann Le, Vinh Huynh, personal communication, May & June 2002.
70. Thu Cao, Vinh Huynh, personal communication, June 2002.
71. *Viet Kieu identity*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
72. Vinh Huynh, Thu Cao, personal communication, June 2002.
73. *Viet Kieu identity*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
74. *ibid.*
75. *Key Qualities for Teaching and Living in Viet Nam*, Viet Nam program training handout, Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.

Part IV: VIA Viet Nam Teachers
Classroom and Social Interaction

1. Teaching Language and Transforming Culture

VIA teachers in Viet Nam do not just teach English; they also teach American culture. In addition, their work is perfectly consistent with the Vietnamese students' need to learn English and their desire to learn American culture. Therefore, VIA participates in a mutually changing effort that affects the thinking of Vietnamese students and Vietnamese culture in the long term. This is not necessarily seen as a bad thing by the Vietnamese. However, it is intrinsically contradictory to some of the key goals they set about working in Viet Nam: learning and respecting the culture. No matter how much they are trained to avoid "pressing the American views" on Vietnamese students, to "be culturally sensitive and respectful,"¹ they do not often fulfill these goals. As American teachers, their work inevitably imposes their American views in the lessons. As a volunteer says about his work in Viet Nam:

Everyone thinks that I am teaching English, but I am not. I am introducing to Vietnamese students different ideas from a Western perspective. I am introducing my American views of the world to them. I just want to let them know and see. It is they who choose what to get.²

Why did he feel the need to "introduce" his American views to Vietnamese students? Certainly, any teachers would want to see the knowledge he or she imparted working to change their students' minds, behaviors, and lives. His teaching is, therefore, never an innocently introductory action but a changing process by intention.

From a socio-linguistic perspective, language is an essential part of culture. A long-standing claim concerning the relationship between language and culture is that “the structure of a language determines or influences the way in which speakers of that language view the world” and “through language, people find ways to reflect their culture, what they value and what they do.”³ Thus, VIA teachers of English in Viet Nam are actually teachers of American culture. While some VIA teachers may deny the fact that teaching English is part of the Westernizing process,⁴ many of VIA participants are quite aware of this dimension of their work. As one of VIA’s publications pointed out:

During their affiliation with VIA, many find themselves grappling with the ethical implications of teaching their language to the Asian people. At some level they cannot ignore the fact that the homelands of the English language – Great Britain and the United States – have long been guilty of imperialist domination.[...] In teaching language, one inevitably teaches culture. The transmission of Western cultural values, norms, and biases through the language itself, as well as through the materials used to teach that language, can often lead to false hopes and aspirations, and ultimately frustration. [...] At a time in the history of these developing countries when cooperation and community are so important, to present Western individualism and materialism through our language may, despite its immediate utility, be ultimately damaging.⁵

The presence of American teachers in Viet Nam is hardly free from the charge that they are helping to spread American culture and hegemony in Viet Nam, with the reception and cooperation of Vietnamese students. Vietnamese students are more interested in having an American teacher, not only because of his or her native accent or intonation, but also because they expect to gain the “authentic, inborn, and genuinely American” knowledge through their direct contact in the classroom and teaching contents imparted by the American teacher.⁶

2. Classroom Culture and Teaching Contents

The classroom is the first place of teacher-student interaction and the site of cultural contests between an American teacher and Vietnamese students. It is the place for the teacher to transmit knowledge, challenge students, and affect their thinking and behavior. As one VIA teacher puts it: “I want to challenge your ideas of the teacher not as a master of knowledge as it is often the case in Viet Nam but a human being just like you, and challenge your views of everything around you in your society.”⁷ Similarly, the Vietnamese idea of a disciplined class is challenged: “I want my students to get active in English practice and enjoy it as something fun and not a heavy task, so I move around the classroom a lot to get them talk or even laugh, and not just stand in a place by the table as many Vietnamese teachers do. I also introduce the American educational system to them, they seem very inquisitive about this.”⁸

Challenging students’ learning and thinking habits serves as a good chance for both the teacher and the student to better understand each other and themselves. As a teacher experienced in teaching abroad, Pamela George says:

As any of us moves abroad, the “otherness” is readily apparent and we soon learn the joy of discovering another culture, understanding it, and appreciating it. We see ourselves as Americans all the more clearly when we look at our own cultures through the mirror of another culture. The transition for someone teaching abroad is even more profound. Not only do teachers reflect their own culture in daily life and routine, but also in how they teach in their classrooms.⁹

When American teachers reflect their culture in the classroom, they tend to present what they believe to be the most representative aspect of their culture, which can also be realized through what the students get from them the most. My survey with 20 Vietnamese students shows that 60% of them report “free, independent, and critical

thinking or writing” as the most important aspects of their learning with an American teacher.¹⁰ This instance also fits George’s ideas about the liberating and politicizing effects of American teaching of critical thinking, especially in developing countries or traditional societies:

Two essential characteristics of teaching for critical thinking are teaching the fundamentals of critical thinking and having students think for themselves. These methods enable students to examine points of view and decide for themselves their own views, opinions, and beliefs. They encouraged students to avoid blindly accepting or rejecting beliefs or ideas because of custom, political persuasion, or tradition.¹¹

On the one hand, such training in critical thinking is valuable because an unconditional acceptance of images, customs, rules, or myths as realities will make people inert and powerless. This tendency to politicize teaching and learning activities represents some of the best aspects in American culture. American-style education introduces the principles and practices of egalitarian participation, collaboration between students and teachers, and the freedom to engage in dialogue with whom one disagrees.

On the other hand, the American teaching of critical and independent thinking also has unexpected negative effects on the host society and the behavior of host students. While the teachers’ objectives may be to challenge their students to think critically about the government or the authority, American values such as criticism, individualism, materialism, and liberalism have an instant and immediate effect on the students’ more everyday relationships, such as those with their families, friends, and colleagues. To many Vietnamese people, this has caused a chaotic and upsetting effect, particularly upon familial relations, which Vietnamese people refer to as the “foundation of the society” and where the “genuine Vietnamese culture is found.”¹²

What affects Vietnamese students is not only what Americans teach but also what they do not teach. VIA teachers often have full authority to design their curriculum and many host institutions especially request them to teach American culture, American economics, American literature, etc.¹³ The issue is not, however, that they choose to teach only positive aspects of American culture. My communications with VIA teachers reveal that they *choose* to minimize or entirely omit the discussion of negative issues of American culture from their curriculum.¹⁴ In other words, they do not consciously act as American propagandists but they also do not want to create any “anti-American” ideas among Vietnamese students, either.

Almost all VIA teachers in Viet Nam are well-educated and open-minded in their views of the world and of America. In fact, they are well aware of the problems of the United States and could be very critical in some aspects when talking to me. For example, they criticize American media, for the way in which it stereotypes America or under-represents non-white Americans,¹⁵ the assimilationist policies toward American immigrants, the genocidal history of the American West,¹⁶ and the U.S.’s domination of the world and its self-serving rhetoric in the WTO and the World Bank.¹⁷ An alumni expressed his strong disagreement with the current Bush administration for his foreign policy, saying “the U.S. government is strong but aggressive like a bully, hitting and intimidating all weaker countries whenever it can.”¹⁸ A Vietnamese American teacher said he hated the way the U.S. wants to exert its hegemony all over the world for its own economic benefit and that it was “absurd to have a McDonald in Ho Chi Minh City, which is just not proper with Vietnamese culture.”¹⁹

However, when I asked whether they taught about these issues in their classes, they frequently replied with a brief hesitation, then answered “No” and gave some justifications. A female teacher strongly criticized the Asianization of American sweatshops like Nike shoes plants Bien Hoa and Binh Duong provinces, close to where she teaches. “I think the owners of these plants are filthy rich,” she said, “cruelly exploiting female workers there and still thinking that they are doing a favor for those workers. I got a good offer to teach English for the workers there, but I turned it down, I did not want to get their money but make their bosses richer.” When asked if she had told her students what she observed, she said: “No, I did not tell them, well..., my students all have very positive ideas about working for a foreign business, especially American businesses. I did not want to make things negative. In fact, I helped them how to write a good resume so that they can find better jobs with better pays.” Asked if she thought some of her students may seek work in those plants in the future (which is possible because she teaches in a provincial Language Center, not a university), the teacher said: “Yes, I know there may be some self-contradictions in my work, that I am further promoting that business.... But I am just a teacher, an individual, I cannot stop sweatshops though I hate them. What I want to do with my teaching is Vietnamese students can have better command of English so that they can get a better job, maybe not in sweatshops. Also, with my teaching and living example, I hope Vietnamese girls can have not only jobs to earn money for themselves but also the autonomy and confidence necessary for their career and private lives.”²⁰ While her intentions are genuine, this female teacher not only promotes American and foreign businesses in Viet Nam by choosing not to mention the negative aspects of such corporation to Vietnamese students,

but also exercises her female authority in Viet Nam through her attempt to liberate Vietnamese women with her teaching and her model lifestyle.

Most other VIA teachers neglect to introduce to Vietnamese students negative aspects of American culture with reasons like, “I was asked to teach about American holiday, sports, and youth culture and did not really have the chance to teach those”²¹ or “I am not supposed to teach American politics or touch sensitive topics regarding U.S. politics.”²² This teacher’s comment is ironic because he taught a class on “Comparing two political systems, advantages and disadvantages.” A teacher in Hue, a Central city well-known for its tourist attractions, said: “Most of my students want to become a tourist guide when they finish college. I think it is better to teach them topics close to their interests that they can relate to their lives, for example, the good and bad sides of relying on a tourist economy, or ecology, etc., rather than broader issues like the World Bank.”²³ While some of these replies are justifiable, it is implied that the VIA teachers do not wish to send a negative impression of the United States to Vietnamese students but want to promote interaction between Viet Nam and the U.S. as well as other Western countries, and help Vietnamese students get better-paid jobs with foreign businesses. Therefore, VIA serves to further the U.S. interests in Viet Nam, as expressed through the BTA or normalization agenda.²⁴

VIA teachers in Viet Nam do not mean to defend American culture or become cultural imperialists. They are well-educated American women and men who want to develop their careers, their character, and worldview by having a challenging experience abroad while doing something good and necessary for the hosts and promoting international cooperation. Many of them sincerely like and respect Vietnamese culture

and people. They also manage to deconstruct various misconceptions Vietnamese people have of the United States. However, regardless of how much they try to appreciate Vietnamese culture, they cannot help adopting their classroom habits or lessons in the U.S. to their teaching manner and contents in Viet Nam, and change the learning and thinking styles of Vietnamese students. Believing that the U.S. educational systems is a good model, they encourage “critical thinking,” “freedom of expression,” “egalitarian and civic culture” in their classes, which inadvertently serves to further the U.S. government’s attempt to let Vietnamese nationals “see freedom and democracy in action.”²⁵ While VIA may oppose the U.S. government’s deceptive cause of “political democratization and economic liberalization” in Viet Nam, the fact that they avoid negative aspects of American culture or politics in their classes obscures the Vietnamese student’s ability to clearly see the falsity of such announcements.

These teachers, some of whom may strongly disagree with the Vietnamese government, do not think of the long-term effects of their teaching on their students necessarily as “subversive to the government.” Rather, they believe that they are “goodwill ambassadors” promoting “mutual understanding and beneficiary cooperation” between Viet Nam and the United States. However, these idealistic expectations and the actual accomplishments need further examination.

3. Expectations and Realities:

In VIA ’s contract with Vietnamese host institutions, it is stated that VIA wishes to “further mutual understanding and friendships between Vietnamese and Americans.”²⁶ Also, a former volunteer said about their role in Viet Nam: “Teaching is a mutually good

channel to know how people think and why they think that way, thus becoming more receptive to different points of view. In that way, I think we volunteers can contribute to the relations between two countries as goodwill ambassadors.”²⁷ However, I would argue that if “goodwill and mutual understanding” are ever achieved, they are more for the good of the Americans than the Vietnamese. Also, there is an imbalance of trust and respect between VIA as well as the U.S. and Viet Nam. VIA’s voluntarism and its interaction with Vietnamese hosts work better to produce a Vietnamese appreciation of America and American culture than an American appreciation of Viet Nam.

First of all, this is exemplified by an unequal acknowledgement of the mutual benefits and understanding. Both VIA and Vietnamese hosts are aware of the material benefits that Vietnamese students gain from VIA. However, very few of VIA publications, which mention the immense benefits that the volunteer experience will bring to volunteers, ever reach the Vietnamese host institutions and students.²⁸ Answering Vietnamese students and people’s question of why they come to Viet Nam, most of them just give answers like “I am tired of being in technology and want a change of pace”²⁹ or “I have been involved in a Viet Nam project in the U.S. and want to come to help more Vietnamese people while learning the culture”³⁰ or “I hate working as a lawyer and want to have new challenge.”³¹ For a Vietnamese American, a better reason is “I want to learn my own cultural heritage while doing a service to my country.”³² Part of these motivations are genuine, of course, yet the more personal and practical aspects of the volunteers’ motives in going to Viet Nam are often ignored or underrepresented. This creates a nice image of the volunteers as benevolent, selfless, and culturally sensitive people. As voluntary members of an “independent” group, on the one hand, they

represent a popular and non-materialist identity. On the other hand, they appear as privileged, young, educated Americans who can afford taking off one or two years of their youth to “do service and learn culture” to the eyes of the Vietnamese hosts.

Secondly, there is an imbalance in “goodwill” between VIA and Vietnamese hosts. While a majority of volunteers express their appreciation for and respect toward their hosts and the culture, almost all of them have very critical opinions about the authority and the government. Some volunteers even denounce everything in Viet Nam.

³³ For example, many teachers highly compliment Vietnamese students for their diligence, intelligence, and enthusiasm both inside and outside the classrooms,³⁴ or express gratitude for the friendliness and considerateness of Vietnamese hosts.³⁵

Vietnamese culture is appreciated for the way people “have very lively interactions and carry out many socializing activities outdoors,”³⁶ unlike the way “Americans keep their lives private and close, they are unhealthily late to bed and late to rise, which I dislike.”³⁷

Sometimes, cultural conflicts and compromise set in regarding privacy. For example, some volunteers find their rooms peeped through or opened, yet try not to make fuss.³⁸

Another teacher feels uncomfortable that his students ask him about his personal life but tries to take it as a “fun” aspect of the interaction.³⁹ These instances indicate that many of the volunteers appreciate and manage to understand or accept the more collective and personalized aspects of Vietnamese culture and people.

However, when it comes to issues relating to the government, the authority, or the leadership of an institution, VIA teachers often maintain their low opinions and reinforce their own values about democracy and freedom. The Vietnamese government is widely represented as “undemocratic” for doing things that are incompatible with the will of the

people or failing to raise public interest in its activities. For example, a teacher criticizes the state media that “broadcast music programs in socialist and propagandist lyrics while people dislike listening to those” or “futilely keep celebrating and reminding people of the war and impose those ideas on them while most Vietnamese people today no longer have any memory of the war and support relations with the U.S.”⁴⁰ Other teachers support their critique with the fact that “many students do not participate in election themselves but ask their seniors to vote for them” or “the people do not care about whoever will be in the cabinet because that does not any influence their life.”⁴¹

The lack of freedom is also severely criticized and exaggerated by the volunteers. One of their most rumored and “hair-raising” stories concerns Peter Seidel, a volunteer in 1991, who was expelled from the country for interviewing and videotaping Vietnamese dissidents.⁴² The government, state agencies, and academic institutions are seen by volunteers as highly ineffective because “there are a lot of corruptions, bribery, nepotism, feudalistic laws, hidden intra-conflicts, and incompetent people holding decisive positions that many people know but few dare to expose or protest.”⁴³ A number of volunteers suggest: “If Viet Nam wishes to further open its door to the West, it should change the way it interacts with each other and with foreigners. Otherwise, foreigners will feel discouraged to work in Viet Nam, in fact, many foreign businesses and NGOs have already withdrawn.”⁴⁴ Another volunteer expresses his irritation that “English was banned to learn and teach in Viet Nam in the early 1980s.”⁴⁵ This statement is inaccurate and prejudiced because English has been always taught in Ha Noi and most provincial cities of Viet Nam at least since 1981.⁴⁶ Prejudice goes so far that a democratic and liberal institution, where people operate on the principle of mutual respect and practice

good communication and resource-sharing, is seen as “truly unusual in Vietnamese educational institutions.”⁴⁷

Further discontent from VIA toward the Vietnamese government concerns the bureaucracy and visa or passport checks. Two male volunteers find the authority so “frightening” and “paranoid” that they have to carry passports whenever they are out.⁴⁸ Steve Boswell, a volunteer in Hanoi in 1991, wrote in his short story *You Figure It Out* that he was sometimes thought to be a spy or at least having some hidden agenda by the security police or people in authority. This is contrasted with the “warm handshake” he received from a Viet Nam War veteran and what he observed: “there is a surprising lack of rancor, animosity and ill-feeling on the part of seemingly all Vietnamese, in both the North and the South.”⁴⁹ Also, because of the authority’s attempt to exercise security controls to Americans, many feel “lucky to be in the United States where they can enjoy the freedom and justice that they often take for granted.”⁵⁰

While many of these convictions are true, VIA’s criticism perpetuates the American prejudices towards the Vietnamese Communist government and rejects its legitimacy. By making contrasts between the government’s behavior and the average people’s attitude towards Americans, they not only reconfirm their assumption that Vietnamese government is undemocratic but also relieve themselves of any possible sense of guilt about the Viet Nam War. By severely criticizing their situations of being over-checked by the government, they reassert the lack of freedom in Viet Nam. By openly addressing the Vietnamese government’s shortcomings and incompetence, they stress the American example of “freedom of expression and dissent.” Although the volunteers often maintain such prejudices towards Vietnamese authority, they claim to

have been able to lessen Vietnamese prejudice towards Americans and make this accomplishment a feature of their publicity on VIA's website:

Recently when I asked my students to give examples of "prejudice," one of my brightest students explained: "When I was a child, I thought all Americans were our enemy, though I hadn't seen any Americans before that time. Now I know that some Americans are friendly." Now more than ever, as communication on the government-to-government level becomes more strained, programs like VIA, which are based on people-to-people contacts, are essential.⁵¹

All of these representations lead them to further appreciate their VIA experience, embrace their American identity, and confirm the superiority of their government system. In short, there is little room for American "goodwill" toward the Vietnamese government in VIA teachers' representations.

To some volunteers, even the interaction with host people is considered to be annoying. Although they gain many things through the experience, these American teachers believe they are doing a great favor for the Vietnamese and thus deserve unconditional respect from the hosts in their role as "volunteers." For example, a volunteer in Tay Ninh Continuing Education Center in 1997 freely commented to the field coordinator that "the post is too peasant" and "the people are aggressive and manipulating" even though the school provided him with stipend, free meals, accommodation, and facilities that are "more than adequate" from the perspective of the field coordinator. He disliked local children saying hello to him, allowed himself to talk to local staff and people in such a manner that it struck the field coordinator as "aggressive in its own right, if not downright rude."⁵²

Another volunteer in Ha Noi was "very dissatisfied with the students, faculty support, facility usage, library and the educational system in general," feeling that his

reception in Viet Nam was very “unwelcoming” and looked forward to returning to the States.⁵³ A female volunteer in Hue University of Sciences in 2000 expressed her frustration about the way Vietnamese people stared at or commented on her over-sized body:

The daily reality of dragging yourself out of bed and looking at yourself in the mirror, desperately trying to remember why you came to VN when people can be so cruel, it not an easy task. I am by no means saying that big or tall people should not come to VN. In fact, I think that our presence here can really open the eyes and minds of the VN people. [...] Now that I have lost quite a bit of weight and the people who live in Hue are used to seeing me, I deal with the comments and stares less than I did when I first arrived. However, what really changed wasn't the VN people, but how and what I allowed to effect me and my peace of mind. I think I reached a breaking point and I only had two choices: go home or stop allowing the VN perspective to influence my own when it comes to how I view myself.⁵⁴

One might feel sympathy for the cultural difficulties and frustration that these teachers experienced but one cannot ignore their way of looking down upon Vietnamese people. The way they see themselves as a superior and powerful people who came to “open the eyes and minds of the Vietnamese people” does not give them the right to disrespect the Vietnamese or disregard their perspective. The behavior and thinking of these teachers actually make them unfit with the objectives of VIA.

The fact that many of volunteers use the experience and knowledge they gain in Viet Nam for their professional and academic development reveals a problematic aspect of VIA when they produce knowledge of Viet Nam. As I have shown, Viet Nam is widely represented by the volunteers as an “interesting” country with “nice people and great history” but a country that remains “underdeveloped and undemocratic” with “inefficient systems” because of its “corrupted and feudal” government. Taking Viet

Nam as a study subject, they do not have to entirely appreciate it or write favorably about Viet Nam. VIA participants who are later involved in advanced study about Viet Nam may produce knowledge that includes negative perspectives or politically biased opinions and fuel the U.S. government's determination to "reshape" Viet Nam. This also exposes the misleading meaning of "mutual understanding" that VIA as well as many international organizations often use to create a noble self-representation. In this case, "mutual understanding" does not fully guarantee goodwill, respect, or sympathy. Rather, it strengthens one's capacity to describe and criticize negative characters of the other country to further dominate it and justify the domination.

From this analysis of VIA teaching and its people to people interaction, it is clear that VIA Viet Nam experience and representations not only lead to an expansion of American hegemony in Viet Nam but also a perpetuation of American prejudice toward Viet Nam's political and administrative system, which in turn fits the determination of the U.S. government to "change" Viet Nam. VIA's expectation of promoting Viet Nam – U.S. friendship is only partially achieved on a people-to-people basis while intrinsically damaging to Vietnamese government with such accomplishments in political relations and representations.

Notes:

1. "How can you express your opinions and not be seen as arrogant or as 'pressing your views' on your students?" Viet Nam program training handout, VIA Training folder, VIA Stanford Office.
2. Shelby Hunt, personal communication, May 2002.
3. Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Socio-linguistics* (Basil Blackwell Ltd., U.K., 1986), 211-214.
4. Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July 2002.
5. Barbara Schuler, *Up Front Spring*, 1983, 13. Stanford Campus Magazine, VIA Stanford Office.

6. Lam Hoa Binh, Dang Tu Anh, personal communication, June 2002; *The Best Essays and Stories*. Unpublished collection of students' journal essays, edited and compiled by Miranda Arana, VIA teacher, Ha Noi University, Viet Nam. 1993.
7. Miranda Arana, personal communication, April 2002.
8. Thu Cao, personal communication, June 2002.
9. Pamela George, *College Teaching Abroad: A Handbook of Strategies for Successful Cross-Cultural Exchanges* (Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), ix.
10. See appendix E.
11. George, 167.
12. Phan Huy Le and Vu Minh Giang, *Cac Gia Tri Truyen Thong va Con Ngươi Viet Nam Hien Nay* (Ha Noi: Nha Xuat Ban The Gioi, 1994) [Viet Nam's Traditional Values and Vietnamese People Today, World Publishing House], 47-49.
13. A number of Vietnamese institutions that make special request that VIA teachers teach American culture, Economics, or Business are University of Da Lat, Foreign Trade University, Ho Chi Minh University of Technology, Dong Nai Teacher Training College, etc., personal communication with volunteers posted in those schools. June-July 2002.
14. See preface, 5-6.
15. Ann Le, Darlene Damm, personal communication, May 2002.
16. Jeff Weiser, personal communication, June 2002.
17. Angela Bailey, personal communication, June 2002.
18. David Joiner, personal communication, August 2002.
19. Vinh Huynh, personal communication, June 2002.
20. Thu Cao, personal communication, June 2002.
21. David Joiner, personal communication, August 2002.
22. Vinh Huynh, personal communication, June 2002.
23. Angela Bailey, personal communication, June 2002.
24. See Part I, p 20-21.
25. See Section 222, Vietnam Democracy Act, September 6, 2001: <http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/www/hwf010907.html>
26. See appendix C.
27. Jack Bailey, personal communication, June 2002.
28. Personal communication and observation with faculty staff of host institutions, e.g. Da Lat University, Foreign Trade University, Bien Hoa Cambridge Language Center, Institute of Ethnology Ha Noi.
29. Shelby Hunt, field report 2001, VIA Viet Nam folder, VIA Stanford Office.
30. Hanan Baky, personal communication, May 2002.
31. Jack Bailey, personal communication, June 2002.
32. Catherine Le's quote at <http://www.volasia.org/programs/volasia/programs/vietnam/volprofiles>
33. See Field Coordinator Report: 1997-1998. Field Coordinator Folder; Home Office Coordinator Reports 2000. Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office, regarding Jason Picard and James Fondueux.
34. Patricia Fieldsted, Miranda Arana, Thu Cao, Angela Bailey, personal communication.
35. Hanan Baky, personal communication; Katherine Steel, VIA Biennial Report 2000-2001, 6.
36. Jack Bailey, personal communication, June 2002.
37. Hanan Baky, personal communication, May 2002.
38. James Vest, personal communication, June 2002.
39. Shelby Hunt, field report, 2001, VIA Viet Nam folder, VIA Stanford Office.
40. Miranda Arana, *Neo-Traditional Music in Viet Nam* (Nhac Viet, 1999), 4-5; Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July 2002.
41. Thu Cao, Angela Bailey, personal communications, June 2002.
42. Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July 2002.
43. Jeff Weiser, Christopher Clemmens, personal communication, July 2002.
44. Angela Bailey/David Joiner, personal communication, June/August 2002.
45. Shelby Hunt, personal communication, May 2002.
46. Personal experience.
47. Home Office Coordinator Reports 2001. Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office

48. Jeff Weiser, James Vest, personal communication, June 2002.
49. Steve Boswel, *You Figure It Out* (1992) in *The Long Side of a Little While* (Collection of writings by Volunteers in Asia, compiled by Walter Rich, 1999), 26. VIA Stanford Office.
50. Miranda Arana/David Joiner, personal communication, October 1995/August 2002.
51. See David Joiner's quote at <http://www.volasia.org/programs/volasia/dates>
52. Field Coordinator Report 1997-1998. Field Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.
53. Home Office Coordinator Reports 2000. Home Office Coordinator Folder. VIA Stanford Office.
54. Lynn Zephyr, field report, 2000. Home Office Coordinator Folder, VIA Stanford Office.

Conclusion

This investigation of VIA activities, its complicity in the U.S. goals in Viet Nam, in the past and in the present, and the role of Viet Nam in facilitating American educational projects in the country suggests the need for a more critical, careful, and self-reflexive look at cultural and educational exchange organizations. At a glance, VIA operates on the principle of goodwill for Vietnamese students and American teachers. A closer look at VIA and its accomplishments, however, reveals a more sober picture. The cross-cultural exchange between VIA teachers and Vietnamese students takes place in the context of the history of the Viet Nam War, the ideology of modernization, the Cold War strategy, and renewed U.S. hegemony in Viet Nam under the demands of globalization since the normalization of Viet Nam – U.S. relations. As a consequence, VIA ’s self-representations, both in its publications and the volunteers’ words, inherit and echo the U.S. imperialist history in Asia, the U.S.-led international anticommunism, and the current U.S. agenda in Viet Nam. American teachers in Viet Nam are not divorced from the larger context of Viet Nam – U.S. relations. While VIA is not directly affiliated with government agencies, its role in promoting U.S. national interests in Viet Nam is manifested in their funding, their program operations, and the experiences of the volunteers both during and after their assignment in Viet Nam.

My findings and arguments can also be applied to other so-called “non-governmental” and “voluntary” organizations to further reveal the inherent politics and limitations of such programs. Any form of voluntarism may become the evidence of paternalism, human inequality, and racial hierarchy. Also, in the age of U.S.- and

corporate-dominated globalization, non-governmental organizations and international voluntarism can easily lose control of their principles when they try to balance their funding with the need to institutionalize and publicize their activism, thus giving a helping hand to expand American hegemony in the countries they serve and complying to the implementation of the very policy they oppose.

Also, this study shows how difficult it is for Viet Nam to uphold political sovereignty and preserve cultural identity while joining international organizations and opening its door to the West. U.S.- led globalization demands Viet Nam to facilitate international communication and cooperation between Viet Nam and Western countries, particularly the U.S., by increasing its capacity to communicate in English and reshape its policy. In this situation, Viet Nam inevitably encounters the challenging tasks of protecting its independence and integrating itself with world powers for national development. Viet Nam cannot possibly develop itself without cooperating with Western countries through the communication channel of English language. Yet, English language teaching also perpetuates Western neo-colonialism. The enthusiasm and reception of Vietnamese students toward VIA teachers and American teachers in general provide a favorable route for the entry of Americans and American ideology into Viet Nam, which will facilitate the re-colonization of Viet Nam within American hegemony. Viet Nam's desire and effort to join the global trade make the situation potentially challenging and dangerous, particularly with the rhetoric of bilateralism. The prevailing subscription to Western capitalism among the majority of Vietnamese people further justifies American objectives in Viet Nam. These conditions urge us all the more aware of the unintended

but far-reaching power of American cross-cultural exchange and voluntary activism programs in the Americanization of global politics and culture today.

**Appendix A: VIA Viet Nam Program Directory
Long-term Volunteers and Coordinators**

Year	Name	Profession/Education/State of Residence
1966	Kit & Kate Anderton	CA
	Paul Goldman	CA
	Chris & Tuyet Jenkins	CA
	Edward Sun Ahn	CA
	Holt Ruffin	CA
	Doug Ohmans	CA
	Henry Garden Hooker Alan Williams	CA, Professor at UC Santa-Cruz, CA
1967	Timothy Murphy	CA
	Joe F. & Janet B. Neal	CA
1990	Peter Zinnoman	Professor of Vietnamese History, UC Berkeley
	Jim Carlson	Program Officer, UNDP Bangkok; US-Asia Environmental Association, U.S. Embassy, Hanoi.
	Diane Fox	ESL Instructor; Writer, Portland and Hanoi
	Lisa Sansousy	
1991	Peter Saidel	Writer, New York
	Katrina Peirce	ESL Instructor; Nurse Practitioner, San Francisco
	Steve Boswell	ESL Instructor, Phnom Penh Royal Institute, Cambodia
	Vivian Lowe	
1992	Sarah Bales	Consultant to World Bank, Hanoi
	Kristy Kelly	Former Director of IIE, Hanoi; Ph.D. candidate in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. (Proposed Dissertation regarding Viet Nam's Educational Reforms)
	Chris Clemmens	MBA Program, University of Hawaii/Hanoi program
	Alexandra Crampton	Resides in Michigan
	Lydia Snape	Resides in New York
	Rick Krenzer	Resides in New York; Laos
	Miranda Arana	M.A, Ethnomusicology, Wesleyan; Oklahoma. MA thesis/Publication: <i>Neo-traditional Music in Vietnam</i>
	David Fennel	
	Asad Ismi	
	Alexandra Cramton	
1993	Andrew Lewandowski	VIA Director; MBA program, Yale
	David Biggs	Ph.D. Candidate in Vietnamese History, University of Washington, resides in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC)
	Tom Treutler	Legal and Asian Language Consultant, HCMC
	Nam Hee Won	
	Vu Nguyen Abi Stallcup	
1994	Andrew Burwick	Researcher, Public Policy Institute, Princeton
	David Joiner	B.A: Japanese Studies; novelist, journalist; Ohio; MFA, University of Arizona; travel writer
	Giang Thanh Ton	Ph. D. candidate, Public Health, University of Washington, Seattle
	Caitlin Huong Nguyen Jennie Mollica	Resides in Switzerland Laos Community Service Center; Oakland, California.

- Rachel Cohen
Adam Durfee
Susan Voyticky
Andrew Leonard
M. Sang Nguyen
- ESL Instructor, San Jose, California
- 1995** *Joe Hong Huynh*
Carrie Holshuh
Kristina Westphal
Mai Anh Crowe
Alexandra Galston
- Law Clerk, Florida Supreme Court
Resides in Indiana
Resides in Germany
ESL Instructor, Reno Nevada
Former Vietnam Representative, US-Vietnam Trade Council;
Giving Officer, Goldman Sachs, NY
Second posting: see 1993
- David Biggs
Janhabi Nandy
Ly Nguyen
Madison Phuong Nguyen
Huy Ton
Phuong Truong
- Executive Director, Vietnamese American Center, CA
- 1996** Ayumi Sakamoto
Laura Karen Vik
David Zimmerman
Brock Frankel
Scott Walker
- Resides in Tokyo
Preschool instructor, Ho Chi Minh City
Anthropologist, Navajo Reservation, Flagstaff
Resides in San Diego, California
Foreign Service Officer, US Department of State, Washington DC
- 1997** David Joiner
Eric Lee
Ben Hogdon
- Ohio; See 1994
Urban Planner, County of Monterrey, California
Former Program Office for World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Hanoi;
Forestry Studies student, Columbia
Program Officer, New York Bar Association
Vietnam Programs Officer, Social Sciences Research Council, New York and Hanoi
- Darin Neely
Van thi Bich Tran
- Julie Do*
Jason Picard
Lam Nguyen
Elissa Schechter
Sylta Aiko Paysen
Doan Ly
Thuy-Mi
- Resides in San Jose, California
Graduate Student in International Relations, Columbia
Resides in Connecticut
- 1998** Kate Dunham
Patricia Fieldsted
Thien Minh Hua
Jeff Morrosetti
Tim Eblen
Lisa Tran
Duy Nguyen
Jeremy Shepard
Lisa Ton
- Education Policy Officer, County of Alameda, CA
Vietnam Program Director, VIA, Stanford
High school teacher, Oakland, California
Resides in San Jose
Resides in Ho Chi Minh City
Resides in Oregon
Resides in southern California
Resides in Oregon
Resides in Philadelphia
- 1999** Michitake Aso
Christine Gralow
Minh Le
Ben Reich
Jack Bailey
James Fondueux
- NGO Consultant, Hanoi
NJ, Institute of Linguistics, IIE volunteer, IIE director
ESL teacher

2000	Katherine Steele Andrew Demo James Vest Zephyr Lynn <i>Christine Tran</i>	CO, IIE educational advisor; Ph.D. candidate in Education
2001	<i>Ky Lam</i> Shelby Hunt Hanan Baky Angela Bailey <i>Thu Minh Cao</i> <i>Vinh Tong Huynh</i> Lorene Strand <i>Adrian Khac Tu</i> Jeff Weiser	CA, Oakland; Urban Studies, Stanford University, field coordinator CA, Sacramento; BBA; Egypt, Public Administration, HOPE/NGO projects; CA, San Diego, History and Political Sciences CA, San Diego, Sociology; CA, Berkeley, Sociology CA, MBA; NV, Las Vegas, planning: MFA NV, Reno, planning: NGO projects
2002	<i>Be Mai</i> Elicia Berger <i>Mai Tran</i> Christine Lotus Katherine Steele <i>John Trien</i> <i>Phu Huynh</i> Dorian Tran Rachel Chaney Jack Tran	

Viet Nam Program Coordinators

Year	Field Coordinators	Home Office Coordinators
1990	No particular person in charge	No particular person in charge
1991	Diane Fox – supervisor	No particular person in charge
1992	Diane Fox – only Spring Semester 1992	Diane Fox
1993	Kristy Kelly	Diane Fox – Carolyn Welch
1994	Kristy Kelly	Carolyn Welch
1995	Kristy Kelly	Carolyn Welch
1996	Kristy Kelly	Carolyn Welch
1997	Kristy Kelly – David Joiner	Andrew Lewandowski
1998	David Joiner – <i>Van Tran</i>	Andrew Lewandowski
1999	<i>Van Tran</i> – Jeremy Shepard	Kim Yap
2000	James Fondueux – Mitchitake Aso	Kim Yap – Patricia Fieldsted
2001	<i>Ky Lam</i>	Patricia Fieldsted
2002	<i>Ky Lam</i>	<i>Ann Le</i>

- Notes:
 - Attempts to make direct contacts with VIA volunteers in 2002 were made difficult due to outside factors. Therefore, their personal profiles are not available. For more information about the volunteers in 2002, please refer to Appendix F.
 - *Italic names* indicate Vietnamese American identity.

Appendix B: List of Interviewees

	Names	Gender	Occupations/Posts/Positions	Home Cities/States Educations/Ethnicities
1	Arana, Miranda	F	Alumni, Ha Noi, Viet Nam,	OK; BA: Southeast Asian Studies; MA: Ethnomusicology; Caucasian
2	Bailey, Angela	F	Teacher, Hue, Viet Nam	CA, BA: History/Political Sciences; Caucasian
3	Bailey, Charles	M	Ford Foundation Representative of Viet Nam program, Ha Noi	NY, Ph. D: Agricultural Economics; Caucasian
4	Bailey, Jack	M	IIE Director, Ha Noi, Viet Nam	CA, BA: International Economics; J.D; Afro-American
5	Baky, Hanan	F	Teacher, Ha Noi, Viet Nam	NY/CA; BA: Public Health; Egyptian
6	Cao, Minh Thu	F	Teacher, Viet Nam, Bien Hoa	CA, BA: Sociology; Vietnamese-American
7	Chan, Cliff	M	Executive Director, Stanford	CA, BA: Sociology; Chinese-American
8	Clark, Dwight	M	VIA President, Stanford	CA, BA/MA: Education; Caucasian
9	Clemmens, Christ	M	Alumni, Ha Noi, Viet Nam	CA, BA: Psychology/ MBA; Caucasian
10	Damm, Darlene	F	Stanford Program Director, Stanford	CA, BA: History, Caucasian
11	Dang, Quynh Nga	F	Student, Ha Noi/NGO project assistant	Vinh City, BA: English/Economics Vietnamese
12	Dang, Tu Anh	F	Student, Ha Noi/Reuter reporter	Ha Noi; BA: English/MBA; Vietnamese
13	Do, Ngoc Khanh	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign Business	Ha Noi; BA: English/Marketing
14	Fieldsted, Patricia	F	Alumni, Hue, Former Home Coordinator	CA; BA: Public Administration; Caucasian
15	Francis, Gregory	M	Alumni, China Program,	CA, BA: International Relations; MA: Education; Caucasian
16	Ha, Xuan Uong	M	Deputy Dean, Bien Hoa Forestry College	Binh Duong, BA: Forestry Studies; MA: Resource Management; Vietnamese
17	Hunt, Shelby	M	Volunteer, Viet Nam, Ha Noi	CA, BBA; Caucasian
18	Huynh, Tong Vinh	M	Volunteer, Viet Nam, Bien Hoa	CA; BA: Sociology; Vietnamese-American
19	Joiner, David	M	Alumni, Dong Nai (1994), Ha Noi (1997)	OH; BA: Japanese Studies; MFA: Creative Writing; Caucasian
20	Kelly, Kristy	F	Alumni, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, Former Field Coordinator	WI, BA/MA: English/Journalism Ph. D. candidate: Education; Caucasian
21	Khactu , Adrian	M	Teacher , Da Lat, Viet Nam	NV, BA: English; Vietnamese-American
22	Kieu, N. Phuong	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign Embassy	Ha Noi, BA: English/Economics; Vietnamese
23	Lam, Hoa Binh	F	Student, Ha Noi/college teacher	Ha Noi; BA: English; Ph. D: Socio-Linguistics, Vietnamese
24	Lam, Tu Ky	F	Field Coordinator, Viet Nam	CA, BA: Urban Studies; Vietnamese-American
25	Le, Ann	F	Viet Nam Home Coordinator, Stanford	Britain/CA, BA: Literature; Vietnamese-American
26	Le, The Que	M	Foreign Languages Department, Ha Noi University, Former Dean	Ha Noi; BA/MA: British Literature Ph.D: International Studies; Vietnamese
27	Mai, Bich Hong	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/BBA; Vietnamese

28	Mai, Kim Khuyen	F	Student, Ha Noi/ Journalist	Ha Noi; BA: English; Vietnamese
29	Ngo, Lan Anh	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/MBA; Vietnamese
31	Nguyen, P. Lien	F	Student, Ha Noi/State company	Vinh City; BA: English; Vietnamese
33	Nguyen, Cam Van	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/BBA; Vietnamese
34	Nguyen, H. Yen	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/BBA; Vietnamese
30	Nguyen, L. Huong	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/BBA; Vietnamese
35	Nguyen, Que An	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/MBA; Vietnamese
36	Nguyen, T. Dung	M	Student, Ha Noi/College teacher	Ha Noi; BA/MA: English; Vietnamese
32	Nguyen, T. Nhung	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/BBA; Vietnamese
37	Nguyen, Van Anh	F	Student, Ha Noi/Private business	Ha Noi; BA: English; Vietnamese
38	Pham, Mai Huong	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign Business	Ha Noi; BA: English/CPA; Vietnamese
39	Pham, Thu Dzung	F	Student, Ha Noi, Foreign NGO Personnel Assistant	Ha Noi; BA: English/BBA; Vietnamese
40	Pham, Xuan Huy	M	Student, Ha Noi/College Teacher	Ha Noi; BA: English, MBA
41	Phan, Thanh My	F	Student, Ha Noi/MIA officer	Ha Noi; BA: English/J.D.; Vietnamese
42	Quan, Mai Binh	F	Director, Information Resource Center, US embassy, Ha Noi	Ha Noi; BA/MA: Communication
43	Strasburg, Paul	M	Former VIA Executive Director	CA; BA/MA: International Relations; Caucasian;
44	Tran, Hong Yen	F	Student, Ha Noi/Foreign business	Ha Noi; BA: English/CPA; Vietnamese
45	Tran, Kim Lien	F	Student, Ha Noi/College teacher	Da Nang; BA/MA: English; Vietnamese
46	Tran, Viet Dzung	M	Director, International Relations Department, Ministry of Education and Training, Ha Noi.	Ha Noi; BA: International Relations; Vietnamese.
47	Vest, James	M	IIE Educational Advisor, Ha Noi	CO, BA: Geography, Amerasian
48	Weiser, Jeff	M	Volunteer, Hue, Viet Nam	NV, BA: History; Caucasian
49	Welch, Carolyn	F	VIA Program Development Director, Stanford	CA, BA: Politics; MPA: ongoing; Caucasian

Appendix C: Contract Sample

**Terms of Agreement
between
Volunteers in Asia
and
The University of (name of host institution)
Academic year:**

Volunteers in Asia (VIA) and the University of _____ hereby enter into an agreement to cooperate in a program of English teaching at the University. The purposes of this program are (a) to contribute to the advancement of English teaching at the University; (b) to enable VIA teachers to learn about the culture and language of Viet Nam; and (c) to further mutual understanding and friendship between Vietnamese and Americans.

Toward these ends, VIA agrees to provide and the University agrees to accept one volunteer English teacher as member of the University's staff. The terms of this agreement are as follows:

1. VIA will select and train the teacher to assure that they are competent to teach English at the University. The teacher will each have a bachelor's degree from an accredited American university and will have training in teaching English as a _____ Language prior to arrival at the University.
2. VIA will train the volunteer teacher in Vietnamese culture and beginning language prior to arrival at the University.
3. VIA will provide for the teacher international airfare, health insurance, and the costs of any necessary travel within Viet Nam.
4. VIA will provide a part-time field coordinator to help coordinate VIA 's activities in Viet Nam.
5. The VIA teacher will each spend a maximum of 16 periods a week in teaching or other classroom activities.
6. The VIA teacher will report to a member of the University's staff responsible for supervising teaching in the English Department. The staff member will assign classes to the teachers consistent with their abilities and the needs of the Department, and will provide primary supervision and support. The University will also provide such other staff support as may be necessary to enable the teacher to work effectively.
7. The University will pay each teacher a salary of \$ _____ (to be paid in Viet Nam Dong) a month to cover the costs of food and other necessary expenses.
8. The University will provide adequate and convenient housing for the VIA teacher by 1, August, _____, as agreed upon by the university and the VIA field coordinator or the VIA teacher. The University will contribute \$ _____ (to be paid in Viet Nam Dong) a month for housing.
9. If, by mutual agreement of the University and VIA, the volunteer stays a second year, the University will provide housing and a stipend during the summer between the first and second years. The volunteers are not expected to teach during the summer. If the volunteer stays only one academic year, the University will stop providing housing and a stipend on 30, June _____

10. The University will provide the teachers with competent instruction in the Vietnamese language for a minimum of 4 periods a week, which should begin at the same week the VIA teacher starts teaching. The University will provide a teacher free of charge or pay any costs of Vietnamese lessons.
11. The University will be responsible for obtaining all visas and permissions required of the teacher by the Vietnamese government. VIA will pay the cost of processing the volunteers' visas at the consulate in San Francisco. The University will pay for the cost to send visa approval to the San Francisco consulate and any costs of renewing or extending the volunteer's visas during the volunteers' term of service at the university.
12. The University will provide such other non-financial support as is needed to enable the teacher to work effectively, live at a standard comparable to that of Vietnamese teachers, and gain reasonable access to appropriate cultural and social opportunities. This includes providing each new volunteer teacher with a bicycle when s/he arrives at the post. The university will not be responsible for replacing any lost or stolen bicycles during the VIA's terms of service. When the teacher leaves the post, the bicycle will be returned to the University.
13. The university agrees to permit the teacher to attend a week-long, annual conference of VIA's teachers in Viet Nam, which will be organized by VIA at a future date to be determined. The VIA will pay the cost of attending the conference.
14. VIA agrees to provide all reasonable supporting assistance to the University and the VIA teacher to further the objectives of this agreement.
15. This agreement shall be in effect for one academic year beginning 1, September____, except for item 8, which will be in effect on 1, August, _____. The agreement can be extended for an additional academic year by mutual consent of VIA and the University.

NOTE: VIA's ability to provide volunteer teachers is contingent upon VIA's ability to raise funding for the volunteers and VIA's ability to recruit qualified teachers.

In witness of these terms of agreement, duly authorized representatives of VIA and the University now fix their signatures:

for the University of _____

for Volunteers in Asia

Date

Date

Appendix D: U.S. Normalization Agenda

BEYOND NORMALIZATION: A WINNING STRATEGY FOR U.S. RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM

by Richard D. Fisher, Senior Policy Analyst

Southeast Asia – The Heritage Foundation Publication Library – Background Update No. 257, July 18, 1995. (Updating Asian Studies Center Background No. 123, "*Seventeen Years Later, Winning the Vietnam War*," May 19, 1992)

Contents:

Introduction

Why Normalization Benefits America

A Strategy for Future Relations

* Resolving the MIA Question

* Expanding Economic Freedom

* Promoting Political Freedom

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Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to his mishandling of relations with Japan and China, President Bill Clinton advanced American interests in Asia with his July 11 executive order to establish formal diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Opening formal relations with Vietnam not only will allow the United States to increase trade with that country, but may in the long run encourage Vietnam to move away from Communism. A prosperous and free Vietnam could become a valuable friend in Asia for the United States.

For this to occur, however, the Clinton Administration needs to fashion a strategy that goes beyond normalization and advances American interests in the region. Such a strategy should include continued efforts to resolve the disposition of Americans listed as missing in action during the war with Vietnam; promoting an expansion of economic freedom in Vietnam to allow for greater American trade and investment; promoting political freedom by helping Vietnam evolve from its communist political system; and supporting democratic reform in Cambodia as an example for Vietnam's future.

WHY NORMALIZATION BENEFITS AMERICA

While establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam is discomfoting to many Americans, doing so now advances American goals in Asia. First, it acknowledges that Vietnam has taken concrete steps to respond to the "roadmap" for normalization outlined by President George Bush in 1991. These include offering assistance, beginning in 1988, in resolving the fate of over 1,618 Americans listed as missing in action during the war; the withdrawal of its troops from Cambodia in 1989; and the settlement of American property claims in 1994. Normalization at this time also sends an important message to China and North Korea: Relations with the U.S. can improve if a country stops threatening its neighbors and satisfies American concerns.

Second, a formal relationship with Vietnam will enable the United States to pursue its economic interests in expanding trade and investment opportunities for American business. Vietnam's market of 70 million consumers remains highly underdeveloped, but economic reforms begun in 1989 are rapidly opening the Southeast Asian country to global commerce. Vietnam may spend an estimated \$7 billion on infrastructure projects over the next five years. American brands, technology, and expertise are in demand. Of the \$14 billion that other countries have invested in Vietnam, the U.S. accounts for the eighth largest share. About 300 American companies have opened offices in Vietnam since the 1994 lifting of the U.S. trade embargo. Now that diplomatic relations have been established, the process of granting most-favored-nation trading status will begin. This process will offer the United States opportunities to convince Vietnam to increase economic freedom by reducing barriers to trade and investment.

Third, a normal relationship will enable the U.S. to advance its concerns about the status of human rights in Vietnam and eventually to support Vietnamese who may press for greater political freedoms. Vietnam's communist regime wants to promote economic growth and suppress political freedom. As has been the experience with other communist regimes, this is very difficult to sustain in the long term. Vietnam also may learn that totalitarian or even authoritarian control is incompatible with economic growth.

A STRATEGY FOR FUTURE RELATIONS

Future relations with Vietnam will present major challenges for American policy. The Hanoi regime has proven to be tenacious and stubborn in war and peace; future relations may entail considerable friction. Washington must craft a long-term strategy to advance U.S. economic and political goals with Vietnam while realizing that their attainment may take many years. Such a strategy should include:

Resolving the MIA question.

Washington should tell Hanoi that it must continue to cooperate to the maximum extent possible in resolving the question of American servicemen missing from the war. This is a humanitarian concern that transcends all other issues in the relationship. Of the 2,202 Americans missing from the war, 1,618 were lost in Vietnam. This year the U.S. Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, which is leading the effort to investigate the fate of MIAs and recover their remains, will spend about \$100 million. This effort should be

continued. Despite increased cooperation by Hanoi in recent years, Hanoi's actions over the history of the MIA issue fuel continued suspicion that it has not divulged all relevant information. Washington should continue to press Hanoi and Moscow -- Hanoi's former ally -- to release all relevant records, including internal government documents, pertaining to missing Americans.

Expanding economic freedom.

Washington should use every opportunity to encourage Vietnam's leaders to expand economic freedom. Only greater economic freedom will sustain Vietnam's economic growth. As recently as 1978, Vietnam tried to abolish private enterprise; but in 1986, out of grave necessity, it embarked on a market reform program. The reforms proved effective, reversing chronic food shortages and leading to greater openness to foreign investment. However, Vietnam still maintains many barriers to trade and investment that must be addressed as the United States considers not only conferring most-favored-nation trade status, but whether to admit Vietnam to the World Trade Organization. Vietnam has only 6,300 private enterprises, and all but two percent of foreign joint ventures are contracted with state-owned firms. Investors face daunting barriers: arbitrary laws and regulations, a ponderously slow bureaucracy, and pervasive corruption. In the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, Vietnam ranks number 99 in economic freedoms out of 101 countries surveyed. As a consequence, most Vietnamese are very poor; average per capita annual income is about \$200.

Vietnam will join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) this month. ASEAN (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), formed in 1967 in part to oppose communist expansion, now promotes the common political and economic interests of its members. Vietnam wants to join an impending ASEAN Free Trade Area, which will require Hanoi to lower tariffs to 5 percent by the year 2007. While welcoming Vietnam's intention to join the ASEAN Free Trade Area, Washington should press Hanoi to make trade and investment rules more transparent, simplify investment procedures, rapidly privatize state-owned enterprises, and accelerate tariff reductions.

Promoting political freedom.

Washington should begin a campaign to promote political freedom in Vietnam. Vietnamese themselves inevitably will demand such freedom as a consequence of economic growth, greater contact with foreigners, and Vietnamese exiles' returning to do business. Today, however, the Vietnamese Communist Party insists on total control of political power. There is no rule of law, no freedom to oppose the government, no free press, no freedom of assembly, and the government closely monitors religious groups. Dissidents are regularly jailed.

After attending the annual ASEAN meeting of foreign ministers at the end of July, Secretary of State Warren Christopher intends to visit Hanoi.

Christopher should begin a dialogue with Vietnamese officials at the ASEAN meeting, to be continued in Hanoi, urging greater tolerance of political freedom. In future meetings, U.S. officials should tell their

Vietnamese counterparts that they will not be able fully to join Asia's rapid economic growth until economic liberalization incorporates greater political freedom.

Washington should move cautiously in developing any strategic relationship with Hanoi. While the United States and Vietnam oppose China's territorial claims to the South China Sea, the U.S. should resist the temptation to build up Vietnam as a counter to China. Vietnam and China will remain traditional adversaries regardless of the extent of U.S.-Vietnamese ties.

Potential U.S.-Vietnam military cooperation could suffer the same fate as U.S.-China military relations: military ties built during the 1980s to counter the Soviet Union were dashed in 1989 over human rights issues.

U.S.-Vietnamese military-to-military contacts already are extensive over the MIA issue. Today, however, Vietnam has closer political relations with Cuba and Iraq than with the United States. A useful military relationship with Vietnam may not be possible until it evolves significantly away from communism.

Promoting freedom in Cambodia.

To provide a positive example of life after communism for Vietnam's leaders, the U.S. should work to consolidate Cambodia's tentative transition from communist rule to democracy, and to promote sustained economic growth. Vietnam put the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) in power after its military occupation of Cambodia in 1979. In 1993 the CPP lost United Nations-sponsored elections, but today the CPP dominates a coalition government in Cambodia. Washington should strongly urge the CPP-dominated government to resist such authoritarian measures as a pending law that threatens to curb press freedoms and cease measures to suppress opposition politicians like Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy.

CONCLUSION

Normal relations with Vietnam will disappoint many Americans, especially those who made great sacrifices during the war and believe that Vietnam's communist regime was and remains untrustworthy. Yet twenty years after America's withdrawal from South Vietnam, it is becoming clear that America's sacrifice -- including the lives of 58,128 servicemen -- was not in vain. The Hanoi regime's totalitarian control is eroding as it surrenders power out of necessity to capitalist forces of trade and foreign investment.

The United States must plan to promote not only economic freedom in Vietnam, but political freedom as well. This process may take many years and cause great friction with Vietnam. But there are better prospects now to realize America's original goal: a free Vietnam that becomes a valued economic and political partner in Asia. If this occurs, the Vietnam War may turn out to have been only a lost battle. The forces of freedom and democracy for which America fought will prevail.

Appendix E: Survey on the Major Impacts of VIA Teachers on Careers and Personality of Vietnamese Students

This survey was conducted during summer 2002, via personal communications and emails to the classmates of the field researcher. There were a total of 22 persons, excluding the surveyor, all went to the same Foreign Language Department at Ha Noi University from 1990 to 1994. Out of 22 classmates, 19 were reported to be living in Ha Noi, 6 were met in person. Among the rest 16 persons contacted by email, 14 sent their replies. There is no confirmed reason for the 2 un-responded emails.

Questions:

1. Please list the three most important and memorable lessons or aspects that learning with Ms. Miranda Arana, our VIA teacher at college has brought you.
2. Please provide information about your current occupations and any further educations.
3. Any other comments about the teacher or your experiences with her are welcome.

Methods:

The researcher wants to see what teaching contents stay the longest in the memories of the students after 8 years and thus becoming most influential to their careers or important to their lives. There is no preference over what is the most important, the second or the third. The result is a total of 60 contents or ideas as each responder listed 3 items. The wording of the responses are rephrased and categorized as 8 major items. The table below will show what are most frequently mentioned to the least and after that the types of their current jobs are given to demonstrate the relations between the lessons and their life. For specific names of jobs, please refer to Appendix B. The results are as follows:

	Most Important or Memorable Lessons	Frequency	People	Percentage over total persons--contents
1	Writing resumes and interview tips	16/60	16/20	80%--27%
2	Free Writing/Writing skills	8/60	8/20	40%--13.5%
3	Critical writing and thinking	6/60	6/20	30%--10%
4	Cross-cultural understanding (of the US)	7/60	7/20	35%--10,2%
5	Confidence in speaking/seeking jobs	6/60	6/20	30%--10%
6	Independence	6/60	6/20	30%--10%
7	Qualities for life/business successes	4/60	4/20	20%--6.6%
8	Environmental Issues	4/60	4/20	20%--6.6%
9	American culture and literature	3/60	3/20	15%--5%

Foreign Business : 10/22
Foreign NGO : 2/22
Foreign Embassy : 1/22 (did not reply)
Foreign News Agent : 1/22
College Teachers : 4/22
Government business : 1/22 (did not reply)
Government Office : 2/22
Private Business : 1/22

- 1) 80% of the people replied said application technique is the most important thing to their lives.
- 2) 70% of the people are working for foreign organizations, all of whom mentioned interview skills.
- 3) 60% of them appreciated the free and critical writing or thinking they gained.
- 4) 35% of them claimed to have had better understanding of the US and appreciated it.
- 5) 80% of them were able to improve their personality and qualities they found necessary for careers.
- 6) Only 15 % of them did say they learn about American culture.

Conclusion: VIA teaching most helped promote international cooperation in business and the liberal as well as critical ways of thinking, which, according to Pamela George, are the major American qualities taught abroad although this teacher did not mean to teach American culture.

Appendix F: Host Institutions and VIA Volunteers

Institutions and Persons in charge	Addresses/Contacts
1 Ministry of Education and Training Mr. Tran Ba Viet Dung, Director-General, International Relations Dept.	49 Dai Co Viet, Ha Noi Tel: 4-869-4883, 869-4795 X277 Fax: 4-869-3243, 869-4085 Email: Tbv dung@moet.edu.vn
2 People's Aid Coordinating Committee Mr. Phan Trong Thai, Director. Mr. Nguyen Huu Huong, Program Director.	105a Quan Thanh, Ha Noi Phone: 04-843-6936 Fax: 04-845-2007 Email: Pacom@netnam.org.vn
3 Commission of External Relations of the Central Committee Communist Party of Vietnam Ms. Doan Thi Tinh, Director of Organizational and Personnel Work	1C Hoang Van Thu, Ha Noi Phone: 04-843-6278 Fax: 04-823-4514 Email: hnam2000@yahoo.com <i>VIA teacher: Shelby P. Hunt, Caucasian, M</i>
4 Ho Chi Minh Political Academy Dr. Luu Dat Thuyet, Director, Department of International Cooperation	Nguyen Phong Sac, Ha Noi Phone: 04-756-2218, 04-836-1264 Fax: 04-836-1194 Email: htqthcm@hn.vnn.vn <i>VIA teacher: Shelby. P. Hunt</i>
5 Foreign Trade University Rector: Nguyen Thi Mo Ms. Minh, Head of International Relations Department Dr. Nguyen Duc Hoat, Dean of English Department	Lang Thuong, Ha Noi Email: ftucdcom@fpt.vn Phone: (844)-775-0244 Fax: (844)-834-3605 <i>VIA teacher: Phu Huynh, Vietnamese American, M</i>
6 Hanoi University of Foreign Studies Rector: Nguyen Xuan Vang Vice-Rector: Do Duy Truyen Mr. Truong Van Khoi, Deputy Head of International Relations	Km 9, Duong Nguyen Trai Thanh Xuan, Ha Noi Email: Hufs@netnam.org.vn Tel: (844)-854-2329 Fax: (844)-854-4550 Email: Pqhqt@fpt.vn <i>VIA teacher: Mai Tran, Vietnamese American, F</i>
7 Institute of Ethnology Dr. Khong Dien , Director Dr. Pham Quang Hoan, Deputy Director	27 Tran Xuan Soan, Ha Noi Tel. (844)-825-4784 Fax: (844)-971-1435 Email: Khongdienvdt@hn.vnn.vn Tel: (844)-971-1250 Fax: (844)-971-1435 <i>VIA teacher: Elicia Berger, Caucasian, F</i>
8 Institute of International Education Jack Bailey, Director	104 Tran Hung Dao, Ha Noi 5 th floor, City Gate Building Tel: (844)-822-4093/6 Fax: (844)-822-3642 Email: iiehn@iievn.org <i>VIA educational advisor: James Vest, Amerasian, M</i>

- 9 Bac Giang Teachers' Training College
Mr. Nguyen Van Tien, Rector

Ms. Nguyen Thi Hanh, Head of Foreign
Language Department

Xa Que Nham – Tan Yen
Cay So 5 Duong 34, Bac Giang
Fax: 0240-854-230
Tel: 0240-521-868
Email: nguyenhanh45@hotmail.com
VIA teacher: Katherine Steele, Caucasian, F
- 10 University of Hue – College of Sciences
Mr. Le Van Thuyet, Director of
International Relations Office
Hue University-College of Sciences
Mr. Pham Quang Bao, Dean of English
Department.

3 Le Loi St., Hue.
Tel: (84-054)-845-658

77 Nguyen Hue St.
Tel: (84-054)-823-293 or (84-054)-846-970
Fax: (84-054)-824-901
VIA teacher: Christina Lotus, Caucasian, F
- 11 Duy Tan University
Mr Truong Nhu Phi, Head of Foreign
Relations (Main Contact)

21 Nguyen Van Linh St, Da Nang
Tel: (0511)-655- 914
Fax: (0511)-650- 443
Email: Duytandn@dng.vnn.vn
VIA teacher: John Trien, Vietnamese American, M
- 12 Da Lat University

Mr. Phan The Hung, Head of
International Relations
Ms. Le Thi Thiep,
Head of Foreign Languages Dept.

1 Phu Dong Thien Vuong, Da Lat.
Tel. (063)-822-983
Fax. (063)-822-333, (063)-823-380
Tel: (063)-834-048
Fax: (063)-823-380
*VIA teachers: Lorene Strand, Caucasian, F
Be Mai, Vietnamese American, F*
- 13 Thu Duc Agro-Forestry
Center For Foreign Studies
University of Agriculture and Forestry
Dr. Do Huy Thinh, Director

Thu Duc, Ho Chi Minh City
Tel: (848) 896-6776 or 896-0109
Fax: (848) 896-3349 or 896-0713
Email: Dhthinh@hcm.vnn.vn
VIA teacher: Rachel Chaney, Caucasian, F
- 14 An Giang University
Rector: Vo Tong Xuan

Long Xuyen, An Giang
Tel: (076)-847-770
Fax: (076)-842-560
Email: Htct@Hcm.Vnn.Vn
Vtxuan@Ctu.Edu.Vn
Agu@hcm.vnn.vn
VIA teacher: Jack Tran, Amerasian, M
- 15 Cambridge Foreign Languages Center
Director: Mr. Le Van Khoi

318 Quoc Lo 1, Bien Hoa City
Tel. (061)-828-213
Fax: (061)-825-383
Email: Ecenter@Hcm.Vnn.Vn
VIA teacher: Dorian Tran, Amerasian, F
- 16 Dong Nai Teachers Training College
Dang Hong Pho, Vice-Rector, Director of
International Relations

15 Bien Hoa City,
Tel: (061)-824-833
Fax/email: n/a
VIA teacher: Dorian Tran, Amerasian, F

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The New York Times, New York: H.J. Raymond & Co.

The Stanford Daily, daily paper, Stanford University, CA.

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<http://www.aseanfocus.com/asiananalysis/Article.cfm?ArticleID=356>
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<http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/wwwhhnus.html>
 - Douglas Peterson's speech regarding "America is the Best Country to Help Viet Nam":
http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/wwwwhwp18_2.html
 - Vietnam Democracy Act, September 6, 2001:
<http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/wwwwhwf010907.html>
 - Bill Clinton's speech to the Business Community in Ho Chi Minh City:
<http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/wwwhwjc3.html>
 - Bill Clinton's urge of democratization and freedom in Viet Nam:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1031340.stm>

- Bill Clinton's announcement of Viet Nam Bilateral Trade Agreement in Rose Garden, Washington DC: <http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/wwwhta34e.html>
- Barshefsky – U.S. Trade Representative, “U.S.-Viet Nam Trade Agreement Marks a Decisive Moment in Normalization with Viet Nam.”
<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/vietnam/btabarsh.htm>
- Robert Mallett 's speech to Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry:
<http://usembassy.state.gov/vietnam/wwwhta35e.html>
- Mark E. Manyin 's Report on the Viet Nam-U.S. Normalization Process, November 28, 2001: <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/IB98033.pdf>

VIA websites:

- Country link: Viet Nam and VIA alumni: <http://www.volasia.org/programs/volasia/>
- General Information: <http://www.viaprograms.org/>