

VIETNAM AND THE WORLD

For over four decades, The Asia Foundation has been a trusted nongovernment actor in the Asia-Pacific region, maintaining broad contacts with key government, policy, academic, and business institutions in Asia and the United States. These relationships enable the Foundation to understand the complex dynamics of change within Asian societies and their implications for international affairs.

Since the adoption of “doi moi,” or renewal policy in late 1986, Vietnam has shifted from pursuing a limited number of external relationships, primarily within the socialist world, to a strategy of regional and global integration. To this end, Vietnam has been implementing a foreign policy based on diversification and multilateralization, while expanding foreign economic relations to support the country’s economic growth. The signing of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement in July 2000 was the latest milestone in a series of Vietnamese foreign policy achievements, and offered a clear signal of Vietnam’s transition over the past decade.

As Vietnam continues to deepen its integration process, The Asia Foundation is committed to support efforts by the Vietnamese to strengthen their understanding of the dynamics of foreign policymaking in other countries, and to increase the research and analytical capacities of its country’s diplomats and researchers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN VIETNAM AND THE U.S.

Since 1998, the Institute for International Relations (IIR), Vietnam’s leading domestic think tank and training institute on foreign policy, has been the Asia Foundation’s primary partner on foreign affairs issues in Vietnam. In May 1999, working in concert with IIR, the Foundation organized a Washington, D.C. workshop for senior officials and policymakers from the United States and Vietnam in order to contribute to greater mutual understanding in U.S.-Vietnam relations. The two-day event examined political and security trends in the Asia Pacific, including U.S. involvement in the region; the Asian Economic Crisis; and specific political, security, and economic aspects of the U.S.-

Vietnam relationship.

Building on this program, the Foundation recently launched a three-year project on U.S.-Vietnam relations with generous funding from the Henry Luce Foundation. This project supports research activities which examine domestic and international factors affecting the bilateral relationship. Educational opportunities include research affiliations in the United States for Vietnamese foreign policy professionals, summer internships in Vietnam for American graduate students of international affairs, and research grants in Vietnam for American academics. Theme specific workshops and observation programs will be organized as well. Ultimately, the project aims to promote greater understanding among Americans and Vietnamese about domestic

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conditions and international factors that affect bilateral relations, leading to more informed policy making on both sides.

ASSISTING VIETNAM'S INTEGRATION EFFORT

By supporting IIR's participation in regional multilateral security forums such as Track II discussions convened by the Association for Southeast Asian Nation's Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), the Foundation has assisted IIR's effort to raise the profile of its research role domestically and internationally. The Foundation is also helping IIR expand its contacts by providing IIR scholars with research opportunities at key institutions in the United States.

Beginning in September, IIR launched a major research project entitled "U.S. Relations with Great Powers in the Asia Pacific Region," based on the premise that in the absence of a fully functioning multilateral security apparatus, larger powers will continue to play a leading role in shaping global security. The project will involve research trips to China, India, Japan, Russia, and the United States. IIR will publish a resource book for students and foreign policy practitioners based on this research. An abridged version of the study will be published in English. By funding the research, the Foundation is supporting some of Vietnam's top foreign policy analysts as they reflect on the intentions of the world's main powers, their influence on one another and, ultimately, how these factors should influence Vietnam's own foreign policymaking.

In addition, representatives from the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry's Americas Department and the Vietnam Union of

Friendship Organizations participated in a Southeast Asian workshop discussion, as part of The Asia Foundation-commissioned task force on "America's Role in Asia," which was recently submitted to the new American administration.

MODERNIZING VIETNAM'S CAPACITY FOR RESEARCH AND FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

In support of IIR's efforts to modernize its research capacity and strengthen its ability to provide quality foreign policy analysis, in 1998 the Foundation helped IIR expand its links to the Internet to increase analysts' access to low-cost information on global affairs. The Foundation also offered technical assistance for a comprehensive review of the IIR's resources and information needs. Findings revealed that IIR policy analysts had limited access to current international information, and budget constraints made it impossible to keep up with the constant need for up-to-date printed materials. The absence of a system for archiving accumulated research information also slowed the turnaround on new information requests.

Based on specific recommendations from the review, the Foundation provided new computer equipment for multiple research divisions and for the central IIR library. In cooperation with the Ford Foundation, The Asia Foundation also helped IIR set up a local area network (LAN) to upgrade its internal communication and information management. The Foundation also provided IIR with a subscription to a leading online commercial database of 117 English-language social science journals, including *World Politics*, *International Organization*, and *Pacific Affairs*. Access to modern information technology is enabling IIR to reduce costs and increase its efficiency.