



AN OUTLINE OF THE CONFLICTS AND OF CANADIAN POLICY

Since 1945 the situation in the peninsula of Indochina has never ceased to be of military significance. Few conflicts, except perhaps that in the Middle East, have been so complex. Indochina has witnessed in a little over forty years a series of events which include the brutal end of the Japanese occupation, the closing days of French colonial rule, the growth of regional powers such as China and Japan, the intervention of the Superpowers — that of the United States being the most dramatic — and finally the extraordinary strife between fellow members of the Socialist Bloc. Historical antagonisms of a secular nature as well as the current tensions between East and West have been superimposed on a plethora of revolutionary ideologies and national interests.

Vietnam, in particular, has served as a sort of mirror to reveal the inability of the West to understand the fierce determination of a people who were ready to make any sacrifice to preserve their independence and to attain the ultimate goal of reunification. It has also brought to light the great difficulty the West has in understanding a government which does not operate on the same logical plane, but instead treats all initiatives as part of a long-term plan. Western governments, always transitory and ever under pressure, have been brought face to face with a Communist Party which is relatively monolithic, looks at things from a “long term” point of view, and follows a single line of thought, namely that of President Ho Chi Minh. The countries in Indochina have also been the victims of many lost opportunities, for some of which they have only themselves to blame. For example, the end of French colonialism was less peaceful than might have been the case, US intervention could have been carried out more wisely, and Vietnam itself might have been