

1660 Cambodia began to pay regular tribute as a vassal to the court of Hué.³¹

Even such a brief account of this early history suggests fascinating historical parallels with the events of today. The most important thing to notice, however, is that China has always tried to prevent the unification of Indochina. Everywhere in Southeast Asia the fundamental thrust of Chinese strategy has remained the same. By dividing the kingdoms and exploiting the rivalry between dynasties and, in more recent times, between nationalist movements, China has tried and continues to try to maintain its traditional influence. These rivalries between the various states of Indochina have also affected Siam, or Thailand as it is known today.

In modern times Vietnam has always been the most troublesome member of this fragile balancing act. It has never ceased to be at odds with China and has always wanted to control the whole of Indochina. French colonialism caused a temporary lull in these regional conflicts but they very quickly reemerged as soon as the first war in Indochina came to an end.

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On two occasions China helped Vietnam in its struggle against French imperialism. During the period from 1945 to 1954 China did not choose to confront France directly as it had during the period of colonial expansion but did provide the Viet-Minh with both ideological and material support. However, after the 1954 Geneva Conference it quickly became apparent that collaboration between the two was more a matter of words than of deeds.

In 1979 Hanoi published a white paper entitled, *The truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese relations over the last thirty years*. This study described all the obstacles which China had put in the way of Vietnamese reunification since 1954.³² While the argument is not always

³¹ Thanh H. Vuong, "Les colonisations du Viet Nam et le colonialisme vietnamien," *Etudes internationales*, vol. XVII, no. 3, September 1987, page 558.

³² Takashi Tajima, *op. cit.*, page 11.