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ARMY GAMES – THE BRIDGE TO TIGHTEN THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN VIETNAM AND RUSSIA IN THE TIME OF COVID 19

Abstract. Army Games is an international military sports festival, where militaries of various countries send the cherry-picked forces to compete in a diversity of sports. Participating in Army Games helps to improve the combat capability of the armies which is also an opportunity to build up trust and strengthen the friendship for peace between nations and peoples, especially during the time when Covid-19 is complicated. The Vietnamese People's Army team officially participated in the Army Games in 2018 with 3 competitions. By 2021, the Vietnamese team has improved in both quantity and quality, participating in 15 competitions. And especially, Vietnam is now the host country of 2 competitions which are «Sniper Frontier» and «Emergency Area». Thereby, I decided to choose the topic ***"Army Games - The bridge to tighten the friendship between Vietnam and Russia in the time of Covid-19"***. I have analyzed the influence of Army Games on the progress of Vietnam - Russia friendly cooperation within 3 main theses: Army Games helps to tighten military & defense cooperation; Army Games helps to promote culture, tighten cooperation in the fields of Culture - Economy - Society; Army Games also promotes the friendship between Vietnamese and Russian people.

Keywords: Army Games, diplomatic relation, Vietnam – Russia, Covid-19, etc.

Introduction

Diplomacy is an important issue in a country's policy. One country may develop dramatically if it holds a reasonable foreign policy. However, foreign policy is also the thing that can make a country backward and underdeveloped. Vietnam is not an exception to that trend. As a country heavily affected by wars, Vietnam has always pursued a foreign policy of peace, stability, cooperation and development. This has affected the entire policy of the Vietnamese state in all aspects such as politics, economy, society, national defense and security, etc. In particular, national defense and security is a sector that Vietnam attaches great importance to. Building a strong military force capable of defending the country as well as regional peace and stability is a concern that Vietnam always focuses on and strives for. Therefore, the Army Games is a major event of the Vietnamese People's Army, giving them the opportunity to communicate with the armies of other countries and improve their combat techniques. At the same time, this is also an opportunity to help Vietnam have more access to new defense weapons and equipment, thereby assisting us in obtaining the most accurate assessment to make procurement decisions to serve the purpose of military modernization. This is also the policy of the Communist Party of Vietnam as well as the Ministry of National Defense. Participating in the Army Games since 2018, up to now, after 3 years of officially participating, Vietnam has performed superbly and achieved many accomplishments in the sports festival. In particular, 2021 is a year in which the whole world has to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the fact that the special Army Games event was held in 11 countries with more than 100 military teams participating has demonstrated the efforts to prevent the epidemic issues as well as the solidarity of countries around the world. For the above reasons, I have chosen "Army Games - The bridge to tighten the friendship between Vietnam and Russia in the time of Covid-19" as the study topic to participate in the seminar with the strive to learn more about the Army Games military sports festival as well as its impacts on the diplomatic perspective of the two countries - Vietnam & Russia - especially during the COVID-19 time.

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I. The diplomatic relation between Vietnam and Russia in the context of COVID-19

Vietnam is a small country located on the Indochina peninsula, belonging to Southeast Asia. Geographically, Vietnam is extremely distant from Russia. Centuries before the October Revolution, Vietnam was located outside the sphere of Russian political interests. Therefore, although in the development history, the two peoples of Vietnam - Russia had had very early contacts, before the October Revolution, the two countries had almost no diplomatic relations.

The 19th century marked an extremely powerful transformation of the world. Russia, at that time, was a vast empire, while Vietnam was the target of colonial invasion by the French colonialists. The gunfire of the French invasion broke out when the feudal system of Vietnam was being in serious crisis. Facing the strength of the French army, the Nguyen dynasty court accepted to sign surrender treaties, turning Vietnam into a colony of the French colonialist. From an independent, sovereign and unified nation, Vietnam was divided into 3 parts with three different names: Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina. Then, they merged two other French colonies which were Laos and Cambodia, forming the "Indochina Federation". During that time, Nikolai (then the Crown Prince) became the first Russian statesman to visit Vietnam. On March 28, 1890, he arrived at the mouth of the Dong Nai River, then docked at Saigon harbor. After that, Nikolai II and his entourage also visited Cam Ranh in March 1892[145].

However, when it comes to the initiator of the close relationship between the two countries, it is none other than President Ho Chi Minh. On June 5, 1911, Nguyen Tat Thanh (the young name of Ho Chi Minh) left to find a way to save the country at a very young age and from a colonial, semi-feudal society. At that time, Nguyen Tat Thanh did not have a clear concept of class, class struggle, political party, Marxism - Leninism... The baggage he carries in him is the patriotic tradition, the cultural essence, the tradition and the experience of building and defending the country of the Vietnamese people. “At first, it was patriotism, not communism, that led me to follow Lenin, believe in the Third International... I love Lenin because Lenin was a great patriot who liberated his compatriots”[146]. On July 16 and 17, 1920, the French Socialist Party's newspaper L'Humanite published the full text of Lenin's "First draft of theses on national and colonial issues"[147]. He really found the way to liberate the nation. He came to Russia, to Lenin's thought, in order to liberate the Vietnamese people from colonial oppression. In the early stages of spreading Marxism-Leninism to Vietnam, hundreds of Vietnamese students were introduced to the Soviet Union and studied at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. Those outstanding people are the "Red" seeds, sowing the seeds of revolution in the hearts of the Vietnamese people, creating an excellent generation of leaders in the early founding of the Party such as the first General Secretary of the Indochinese Communist Party - Tran Phu, General Secretary Le Hong Phong, General Secretary Ha Huy Tap, Comrade Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Comrade Tran Van Giau, etc. An exceptional event also to mention is that during World War II, Vietnamese students decided to stay and fight along with Red Army soldiers in the battle to defend Moscow. Red Army soldiers of Vietnamese nationality fought together on the battlefield and died heroically. After some time of verification, their data were verified, and then, their names were allowed into the cathedral for Red Army soldiers.

In 1950, the Soviet Union was one of the first countries in the world to recognize Vietnam as a democratic republic, demonstrating the strong solidarity of the proletarian internationalism spirit. During the two great resistance wars of the Vietnamese nation, the Soviet

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[145] *Tran Tri* The last Russian Tsar to ever come to Saigon, The Russian Newspaper (URL: https://baonga.com/sa-hoang-nga-cuoi-cung-tung-den-sai-gon.html).

[146] Ho Chi Minh full volume, Volume 12, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, 2011, p. 561.

[147] *Nguyen Ai* Quoc comes to Lenin's Thesis – The turning point of the Vietnamese revolution, Website of the Party Committee of Ho Chi Minh City [URL: https://www.hcmcpv.org.vn/tin-tuc/nguyen-ai-quoc-den-voi-luan-cuong-cua-lenin-%E2%80%93-buoc-ngoat-cua-cac-mang-viet-nam-1491880173].

Union was a dear friend who always stood side by side with the Vietnamese people, helping Vietnam politically, economically, diplomatically, etc.

The Great 1975 Spring Victory has become a glorious milestone for the Vietnamese nation. This victory marked the Vietnamese people's national democratic revolution with a complete victory, bringing the whole country together, ending the division of the country that had been going on for nearly 21 years. After 1975, Vietnam fell into a tough period due to the impact of domestic and international situations. The US embargo made Vietnam's economy difficult and stagnant. Besides, Vietnam was also caught in two border wars at the two ends of the country: the Southwestern border War and the Northern border War. The Soviet Union continued to prove itself as a dear friend among the international community. In addition to economic aid, the Soviet Union also exerted international pressure to help Vietnam and supported Vietnam in the two wars against Pol Pot in the southwest and China in the north. Not only that, with their affection, the Soviet people also helped the Vietnamese people to revive the economy, recover the production, and establish the first industry of the reunified Vietnam. Soviet experts assisted the Vietnamese people in exploiting the very first barrels of oil in the Bach Ho (White Tiger) oilfield, placing Vietnam on the list of oil and gas producers in the world. Soviet engineers also supported the Vietnamese people to build the first large hydropower plant in our country - Hoa Binh Hydropower Plant. This is a construction that symbolizes the attachment and affection of the two peoples of Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

In 1991, an incident happened to the people and state of the Soviet Union. Mistakes in domestic and foreign policy led to the disintegration of a powerful Soviet state. The state of the Russian Federation was established, which succeeded the Soviet Union in the international arena. During this period, the relationship between Vietnam and the Russian Federation was somewhat interrupted due to the difficult situation of the two countries. However, with the efforts of the leaders of the Party and the people of the two countries, the Vietnam - Russia relationship has increasingly developed and, today, evolved into a «comprehensive strategic partnership». Currently, Vietnam and Russia are partners in all fields such as politics, economy, culture, diplomacy, science, military, etc.

The diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and the Russian Federation is *a trusting friendship as well as a comprehensive and long-term strategic partnership.* Although this is not a political-military alliance, military and defense cooperation is considered a priority and a key pillar in the Russia-Vietnam comprehensive strategic partnership. The highest goal in foreign policy between Russia and Vietnam is to ensure sovereignty and independence. The two countries actively cooperate in modernizing Vietnam's defense potential in order to equip the Vietnam People's Army with technical equipment and modern weapons. Currently, in terms of scale and quality, the Russia - Vietnam cooperation in the technical and military fields has seized one of the leading positions in the Asia-Pacific region.

With such a special relationship, the foreign policy of the Party and the State of Vietnam, in general, and the foreign policy of military-defense of the Vietnam People's Army, in particular, is to make friends with all other countries as well as their militaries in order to protect the world peace and regional security. Therefore, Vietnam's participation in the international military sports event - Army Games - is a strategy that is in line with the Party's foreign policy as well as Vietnam's defense strategy.

II. What is Army Games?

An international military sports event (Russian: Армейские международные игры, a.k.a International Army Games), abbreviated as ARMY (and АрМИ in Russian), is an annual Russian multinational military sports event hosted by The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (MoD). Held for the first time in August 2015, with more than 30 countries have so far competed in a variety of competitions within two weeks for the honorary place of achievement in military sports. Due to its military nature, the event is informally known as the War Olympics. Besides the competition area, the International Army Games also includes a military amusement park, a recruitment station and souvenir shops.



Army Games: (https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fvsluh.ru%2Fnovosti%2Fobshchestvo%2Farmi-2021-tyumen-snova-prinimaet-vserossiyskie-armeyskie-igry-na-poligone-tvviku_364788%2F&psig=AOvVaw3MDzrgtUOUsNpwkliGmfFH&ust=1638351073031000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAsQjRxqFwoTCJjnhc7jv_QCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD)

1. Purpose of the sports festival

As a military sports festival organized with numerous military teams participating, the Army Games is truly a playground to help rub shoulders and improve combat skills between militaries of different countries. This is also the main purpose of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation and other countries when they decided to establish the sports festival. To prove the above point, in an interview with Army General Sergey Kuzhugetovich Shoigu – Defence Minister - he said: «The main goal of the international army sports festival is to enhance the combat effectiveness of the armed forces. During the surprise inspection in 2013, some units were not ready. Therefore, a number of measures have been taken to enhance the combat readiness and training of the army»[148].

It is reflected in the process of organizing the sports festival. Initially, there were only several basic competitions which were mainly for the ground forces. Today, the Army Games international sports festival has gradually increased in both quantity and quality of competitions, trying to cover all forces of all branches such as ground forces, navy, air forces, special forces, border guard forces, information and culture forces, etc. That is a valuable opportunity for the armies of the participating countries to rub shoulders with each other. Participating in the sports festival is an opportunity for militaries of different countries to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their combat form, thereby drawing lessons from experience to come up with a reasonable battle plan in each situation, each specific case in reality.

In addition, the sports festival is also an opportunity for Russia and other countries to display their latest weapons models to promote their image and introduce products in the field of the defense industry. Arms sales have long been a profitable business for Russia. Russia is also the

[148] *Alexander Tikhonov* Professional skill contests in the army and navy contribute to increasing the combat effectiveness of the Armed Forces of Russia and other countries participating in the Army, Red Star Newspapers, URL: http://redstar.ru/armejskie-igry-delo-seryoznoe-2/.

world's leading arms supplier beside the US, Europe and China. Therefore, the development and promotion of the image of the defense industry is something that Russian military official, as well as Russian leaders, always pay attention to. Army Games is a great opportunity for Russia and other participants to promote their defense products, expand their business, and find new defense contracts.

A typical example of this is that, in the speech of Lieutenant General Buvaltsev, one can find the goal of organizing the «Tank biathlon» - this is the first competition held in the sports festival, as a premise to organize the Army Games - was to advance the promotion of the latest Russian-made T72B tank. The fact that the militaries of other countries could directly try out the weapons that the Army Games host country manufactures has helped experts to thoroughly and accurately evaluate the tactical and technical features of each weapon line, from which, there will be considerations along with the reasonable price in order to execute wise military contracts, bringing the country's military advantages in the region and in the world. And a clearer proof of this is that for Russia alone, in the 2021 Army Games, Russia is expected to sign 45 government-level arms sales contracts that are worth about 500 billion Roubles. Representatives of 117 countries and territories participated in ARMY 2021, about 1500 domestic and foreign companies demonstrated more than 28,000 models of military and dual-use products[149]. This is truly a potential military fair, bringing great benefits to the participants.

Ultimately, the Army Games is the place to cement the cohesion between the militaries of the countries as well as develop trust between the defense ministries of the participating countries. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Army Games is not only a «playground» for servicemen to present their bravery and improve their professional qualifications but also contributes to the development of a trusting relationship - which is very important - among the Defense Ministries of the countries in order to build a peaceful community. In his closing address of the 2020 Army Games, General Sergey Kuzhugetovich Shoigu - Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation said: «In Army Games, there are only winners, no losers. Army Games is the place where new friends emerge»[150]. Surely one can say, that at the Army Games, the participating armies all earned a lot of valuable lessons, useful knowledge, and rich combat experiences from other countries' militaries, thereby deepening the relationship between them. There are countries that did not engage in a defense cooperation relationship before joining the Army Games, but after joining the Army Games, they tended to develop cooperation and exchange of tactical techniques as well as develop the defense industry. Since then, from a military sports festival, a community was established with the goal of jointly protecting world peace and security.

2. History of Army Games

On the basis of the «Tank biathlon» competition, the first Army Games was held in August 2015 with 17 teams competing in 13 competitions at 11 military training grounds. In addition, there are 6 countries participating as observers which are Brazil, Korea, Iran, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, Vietnam.

The 2016 Army Games was held from July 30 to August 13, 2016, at various military training grounds located in the territory of Russia and Kazakhstan, with 23 competitions at sea and in the air. Of the 19 countries competing, three are participating for the first time: Greece, Iran and Zimbabwe. In total, there are more than 3,500 servicemen attending the 2016 Army Games. Notwithstanding, Pakistan refused to attend the tournament. The eight countries participating as observers include Algeria, Austria, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Germany, Israel, Myanmar, Namibia.

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[149] *Thanh Binh* (translated), How many countries attended the International Military-Technical Forum (Army 2021)?, the Russian Newspaper (URL: https://baonga.com/dien-dan-ky-thuat-quan-su-quoc-te-army-2021-co-bao-nhieu-quoc-gia-tham-du.html).

[150] *Toan Oanh–Navy* Vietnamese People's Army delegation has surpassed the set target at the 2020 Army Games, People's Army Newspaper (URL: https://www.qdnd.vn/quan-doi-nhan-dan-viet-nam-tham-du-army-games-2020/doan-quan-doi-nhan-dan-viet-nam-vuot-muc-tieu-de-ra-tai-army-games-2020-634073).

The 2017 Army Games was held from July 29 to August 12 over the territories of 5 countries including Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and China. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation invited 73 countries to attend, but only 28 countries accepted the invitation. In which, Bangladesh, Israel, Laos, Morocco, Syria, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Uganda and South Africa attended the games for the first time. Compared to the 2016 Army Games, the 2017 Army Games is larger both in scope and in the number of participating countries. In addition to 9 more countries participating in the festival, the number of competitions also increased by 5 (from 23 to 28 competitions).

The 2018 Army Games was held from July 28 to August 11 in 7 countries including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Iran, Kazakhstan, China and Russia, with the participation of 5,000 servicemen from 189 teams of 32 countries. This is also the first year that the Vietnamese People's Army delegation officially attended the sports festival.

The 2019 Army Games was held from August 3 to 17 over the territories of 10 countries including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Iran, India, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, Russia and Uzbekistan. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation invited 85 countries to attend, however, only 39 countries accepted the invitation. The number of competitions increased by 4 (from 28 to 32 competitions).

The 2020 Army Games was held from August 23rd to September 5th in 5 countries including Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Uzbekistan. The 2020 Army Games had 30 competitions (down by 2 compared to 2019), with the participation of 156 teams from 32 countries.

Through 7 times of organizing, by 2021, there have been more than 280 teams from 43 countries competing in 34 competitions, and the event has been held in 11 countries including Vietnam. The 2021 sports festival is really exceptional when it is held in the context that the world is struggling with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that the sports festival was held in 11 countries with 43 participating countries has proved the solidarity and unanimity of the militaries of countries, as well as the solidarity against the epidemic. In addition to the military sports festival, the International Military-Technical Forum was also held with the participation of 97 countries, including NATO countries[151].

III. Army Games as the bridge to tighten the friendship and solidarity between Vietnam and the Russian Federation in the time of COVID-19

1. Army Games is a bridge in the field of military cooperation between Vietnam and Russia

As a country with a strategic location in the region as well as in the world, Vietnam is home to a maritime traffic route connecting Europe and Asia. Historically, Vietnam has been the assembly point of many great powers in the world. The proof is that in the twentieth century, Vietnam had to go through two major wars against the two leading military powers in the world at that time which were France and the United States. Not to mention the late 80s, Vietnam also had to confront the expansion and conflict from China as well as engage in the war to save the Cambodian people from the genocide of Pol Potism. As a country that has suffered a lot in wars, the Vietnamese Party, Government and People are always stand up for the values of peace. In order to maintain peace, the Vietnamese army needs to develop a strong force capable of dealing with hostile forces that undermine peace and stability in the region and the world. In line with those guidelines and policies, Vietnam's participation in the Army Games is a right move of the Party, State and army, in order to improve military quality, cooperate in the purchase and sale of weapons and defense equipment, and strengthen friendship and solidarity among countries with the same goal of protecting world peace and security.

[151] *Tran Giang* An Army Games Overview: history and achievements of the Vietnamese sports delegation, Young Knowledge Specialty Magazine (URL: http://ttvn.toquoc.vn/tong-quan-army-games-lich-su-thanh-tich-cua-doan-the-thao-viet-nam-40202121833810496.htm).

After participating in the Army Games 4 times since 2018, right from the first time participating, Vietnam has left a deep impression in the hearts of the people and armies of the participating countries. In the 2019 Army Games, Vietnam excellently achieved high results in registered competitions, typically:

+ The «Tank biathlon» competition: Second place in group 2 (2h25'3"). In the first time reaching the final, the Vietnamese tank team excellently won the silver medal. Lieutenant Phan Anh Tuan - an artilleryman of the first crew successfully destroyed all the first 3 targets using PKT guns at ranges of 600m, 700m, 800m, respectively. Professional Military Lieutenant Nguyen Tien Chien, driver of the 3rd crew ensured absolute safety in driving over obstacles. That was the first demonstration of the bravery of the Vietnamese People's Army soldiers in the international arena.

+ The «Safe route» competition: Third place along with Uzbekistan. In the first time participating in the tournament, the shock engineer team of the Vietnamese engineer troop was awarded the first prize for the best shock engineer team. The TMM bridging team successfully fixed the control device failure and completed the competition.

+ The «Safe environment» competition: Rank 3 in the scout car crew contest.

+ The «Sniper Frontier» competition: Rank 3 in the sniper relay race contest.

+ The «Field kitchen» competition: 3rd place in the AK47 shooting contest with a distance of 100m (103 points); second place in the combined push-ups contest; got into the 3rd stage of the cooking contest. In particular, in the cooking contest, apart from Vietnam, no other Asian teams got into stage 3.

+ The «Emergency Area» competition: Second prize.

Such achievements have greatly encouraged the spirit of the Vietnam People's Army soldiers and helped the Vietnamese team become more confident in the 2020 sports festival. The proof is that in 2020, the Vietnamese tank team has excellently ranked first in Group 2 of the "Tanks biathlon" competition, bringing home the first gold medal for the Vietnamese People's Army delegation at the Army Games.



Vietnamese tank team at Army Games 2020 (https://ictvietnam.vn/army-2020-army-games-2020-suc-manh-hien-dai-cua-qdnd-viet-nam-thoi-ky-hoi-nhap-20200914100030251.htm)

The year 2021 has seen the highest number of teams of the Vietnamese People's Army delegation participating in the competition ever. The number of registered competitions increased from 3 in 2018 to 15 with 17 participating teams. In the 2021 Army Games, the Vietnamese People's Army delegation ranked 7th out of 42 countries and territories participating in the sports festival. That shows the rapid development and great efforts of Vietnam.

In particular, in 2021, Vietnam became the host country of two competitions «Sniper Frontier» and «Emergency Area» competitions. This is a remarkable development in the defense cooperation relationship between Russia and Vietnam within the scope of the Army Games. In particular, the fact that the above two competitions were held in Vietnam during the complicated situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world has symbolized the trust of other countries in Vietnam, and, at the same time, showed the sense of responsibility and safety of Vietnam in organizing and hosting an international sports festival.



International Army Games 2021 in Vietnam (https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbaotintuc.vn%2Fthoi-su%2Fhoi-thao-quan-su-quoc-te-2021-khai-mac-cuoc-thi-xa-thu-ban-tia-va-vung-tai-nan-20210831103954494.htm&psig=AOvVaw15b_-ISeAUfnK5kalX_-pX&ust=1638352052105000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAsQjRxqFwoTCPi22Zrnv_QCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAP)

Ultimately, the Army Games is also a place for the Vietnamese People's Army to have the opportunity to try out and get acquainted with modern weapons, equipment and supplies of Russia and other countries. Since then, it has created favorable conditions for Vietnam to have assessments and appraisals before signing contracts to procure defense arms from Russia and other countries.

2. Army Games is an opportunity to promote culture and tighten the cooperation relationship in the fields of economy and society

Vietnam is a country with a history of thousands of years with a very unique culture drawn from the quintessence of regions and ethnic groups. Therefore, the promotion of Vietnamese culture to the world is a policy of the Party and State in the development of Vietnamese culture. And Army Games is a good opportunity for Vietnam to promote the image of the country and its people to friends around the world.

«Field kitchen» and «Army of Culture» are two competitions in Army Games, in which the soldiers expose their talents as well as introduce the cuisine, culture and people of their country. The Vietnamese team is always highly appreciated and imbued with Vietnamese cultural identity. The organization of these two competitions has established conditions for the participating countries to directly experience different cultures, helping other countries to better understand the country and people of Vietnam. And at the same time, the Vietnamese army and people can experience and understand the customs and culture of Russia and other countries.

The fact that Vietnam is the host of two competitions within the scope of the Army Games is also an opportunity for friends from other countries to come to Vietnam and directly experience the culture of the Vietnamese people presented within the Army Games in Vietnam. This is also a progression of the Vietnamese People's Army, contributing to the cultural and diplomatic fronts.

When it comes to the Vietnam - Russia relationship, the indispensable thing is the sturdy cooperation in the fields of education and science. The fact that the Vietnamese People's Army team participates in the Army Games with the core team of being regular military cadets trained in the Russian Federation under a scholarship signed between the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation has demonstrated the success of this partnership.

Thanks to Army Games, many cultural, economic, educational and social cooperation programs have been proposed to the parties. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Army Games stands out as a bridge for the leaders of Vietnam - Russia to discuss and offer reasonable support in the field of medical equipment or vaccines to jointly fight off the epidemic.

3. The Army Games helps tighten the friendship between the people of Russia and Vietnam

People's diplomacy is an important diplomatic channel of Vietnamese diplomacy. It can be simply understood as dialogues between the people of Vietnam and the people of other countries. People's diplomacy involved many branches, levels and social organizations as President Ho Chi Minh once said at the Diplomatic Conference on January 14, 1964: “Working as diplomats, there are not only specialized agencies such as embassies, general consulates but also other organizations such as foreign trade, culture, youth, women, and unions.”[152]. The concept of people's diplomacy was first raised in 1951 at the 2nd National Congress of the Party, but people's diplomacy was advocated by President Ho Chi Minh very early on. And it was the Army Games, along with its great influence, that further developed the people's diplomacy between Vietnam and Russia.

First, it can be said that Army Games has ignited the patriotic fire of the Vietnamese community living, studying and working abroad as well as the native people community of Vietnamese origin. As the children of a heroic nation, the Vietnamese have always possessed an undying love for their homeland. The eager eyes of the Vietnamese community who came to cheer for the Vietnamese people's army teams participating in the Army Games is a great manifestation of this national character. The proof is also that even in a remote area like Tyumen city, in Tyumen province, Siberia, where there are only 3-4 Vietnamese households living here along with a small

[152] Pham Hoang Diep, President Ho Chi Minh - the one to pave the way for Vietnamese people's diplomacy, Web portal of Relics of President Ho Chi Minh's relic site at the Presidential Palace, August 17, 2011 [URL: http://ditichhochiminhphuchutich.gov.vn/chu-tich-ho-chi-minh--nguoi-mo-duong-cho-ngoai-giao-nhan-dan-viet-nam-156].

number of Vietnamese overseas students, our people were willing to take a break from work to go to cheer when they heard that the «Safe Route» team of the Engineer Command was competing. Even for overseas students here, who have not been able to return to Vietnam for a long time due to the difficult pandemic situation, seeing the red flag with a yellow star, or hearing the national anthem, makes them feel like returning to their homeland. Together, they enthusiastically cheered for the Vietnamese engineer team and sang the song as if Uncle Ho were with us on Victory Day. Those are the images that remain most clearly in the hearts of the attendees and especially the most beautiful images in the hearts of the Vietnamese people here.



Vietnamese people come to support Army Games 2021 in Tyumen (source: Duong Thanh Nhan)

Army Games is also a place for Russians who have relations with Vietnam to understand more about the country and people of their husbands, wives, fathers and mothers. Currently, it is not uncommon for daughters-in-law, son-in-law and people who were born and raised in Russia but possess Vietnamese roots. For them, Vietnam is a faraway country that they have only heard about from their relatives. A variety of activities in Army Games with the appearance of the Vietnamese People's Army team has helped them understand more about the country and people of Vietnam, encouraging them to love Vietnam more. The picture of Russians wearing a shirt with the image of the red flag with a yellow star, or the image of Uncle Ho and Uncle Giap coming to cheer at the festival was very emotional. They joined the Vietnamese people when singing cheering songs. It can be seen that Army Games has encouraged us to get closer together, ignoring life's difficulties and disagreements. As long as you have a love for the Vietnamese land, you will all find joy and happiness when you come to the field to cheer for the Vietnamese team. This is the strength of people’s diplomacy and the unwavering belief of Vietnamese diplomacy in the international arena.

Conclusion

Currently, the common trend that countries around the world are aiming for is peace, cooperation and development. Countries are holding more and more economic, political, social, security and defense relationships, etc. For these relationships to become good and sustainable, a country needs to have excellent diplomatic relations with other countries in the region and around the world. Vietnam, after 30 years of renovation, has a great advantage that the political and social situation is basically stable. However, we are also facing huge challenges. The Party and the State of Vietnam continue to implement the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, openness, diversification and multilateralization of international relations as well as active integration into the world with the motto that Vietnam is willing to be a reliable friend and partner, a responsible member of the world community striving for peace, independence and development. In particular, in the field of national security and defense, Vietnam's development cooperation policy is clearly demonstrated through Vietnam's participation in the Army Games - an international military sports festival. The sports festival is organized with the purpose of rubbing shoulders between the militaries of different countries, in order to improve combat tactics and strengthen national defense to protect world peace and security. Vietnam has joined the Army Games since 2018 and so far, has made numerous outstanding achievements. In particular, in 2021, Vietnam is honored to be selected as the host of two competitions within the scope of the Army Games which are: «Sniper Frontier» and «Emergency Area». It is the efforts and attempts of the Party, the State and the army of Vietnam, and the recognition of international friends for Vietnam in the organization of the sports festival and overcoming the consequences of the epidemic. Moreover, Army Games not only affects Vietnam's defense policy, but it also affects foreign policy which covers abroad Vietnamese elements. Army Games is a place to bring Vietnamese people closer together, ignite the patriotic fire of expatriates, and help international friends understand more about Vietnamese culture and people.

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КОНЦЕПЦИЯ «МЯГКОЙ СИЛЫ» В ОТНОШЕНИЯХ МЕЖДУ РФ И СРВ В XXI ВЕКЕ

Аннотация. В настоящее время термин «мягкая сила» с каждым годом все чаще используется при анализе и характеристике политических курсов для налаживания как двусторонних, так и многосторонних отношений. С каждым годом Россия и Вьетнам, все более активно используют инструменты «мягкой силы» во внешней политике, в том числе и в отношениях друг с другом. Согласно Глобальному индексу мягкой силы Brand Finance за последний год Вьетнам постепенно укрепляет свою позицию в данном направлении, в то время как Россия, наоборот, теряет. В связи с этим представляется важным изучение использования Москвой и Ханоем инструментов по укреплению своих не только политических, но и культурных позиций на мировой арене в целом и в отношениях друг с другом в частности.

Ключевые слова: мягкая сила, российско-вьетнамские отношения, мягкая сила России, мягкая сила Вьетнама.

В настоящее время термин «мягкая сила» с каждым годом все чаще используется при анализе и характеристике политических курсов для налаживания как двусторонних, так и многосторонних отношений. С каждым годом Россия и Вьетнам, все более активно используют инструменты «мягкой силы» во внешней политике, в том числе и в отношениях друг с другом. Согласно Глобальному индексу мягкой силы Brand Finance за последний год Вьетнам постепенно укрепляет свою позицию в данном направлении, в то время как Россия, наоборот, теряет в вышеупомянутых рейтингах. В этом контексте представляется важным изучение использования Москвой и Ханоем инструментов по укреплению своих не только политических, но и культурных позиций на мировой арене в целом и в отношениях друг с другом в частности.

Ежегодно с 2020 года компания Brand Finance[153] составляет Глобальный индекс «мягкой силы». В 2020 году Brand Finance включила в индекс 60 стран, где Россия занимала 10 место, а СРВ занимала 50. В 2021 году в рейтинге было проанализировано уже 150 государств[154]. Вьетнам укрепил свои позиции в данном рейтинге на 3 позиции, расположившись на 47 месте, а Россия спустилась на 13 место. К слову, Германия, Япония, Великобритания, Канада и Швейцария занимают лидирующие позиции в данном рейтинге в 2021 году.

Как известно, термин «мягкая сила» был введен в политический обиход американским политологом Джозефом Наем в 1990 году. Термин обозначает способность государства влиять на мнение и деятельность различных субъектов на мировой арене (к примеру, общества, организаций, органов власти и т.д.), привлекая их внимание через демонстрацию лучших сторон страны без обращения к насилию.

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