

# **Examining the Demographic Changes of the Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam Since 1975**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines demographic developments of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam since 1975. It begins with the patterns of demographic change since the mid-1970s that shows a considerable decline in the number of Chinese as indicated by the official censuses of 1976 and 1979. The period was characterized by large-scale migration of the Chinese out of the former Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam) and the former Republic of Vietnam (ROV or South Vietnam). The policies of socialist transformation were a major factor in the exodus from the South while in the North it was the deterioration in relations between Vietnam and China that triggered the exodus. The Chinese population has continued to diminish up to 2009 but at a more moderate pace than in the late 1970s.

**Key words:** Ethnic Chinese, Vietnam, China, demography, migration

## **Introduction**

This study investigates demographic developments relating to the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. A core dimension is the patterns of growth and decline in the number of Chinese in Vietnam since 1975 when the Vietnam War came to an end. The context in which the demographic changes have taken place is outlined and factors influencing the patterns of change and their effects on migration flows are identified and analysed.

The terms “Chinese community” and “ethnic Chinese” refer to persons living in Vietnam who identify themselves as being of Chinese ethnicity, regardless of their citizenship. The term “Overseas Chinese” is not used as it denotes a citizen of either China or Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese

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research on the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam uses the term “microethnic” to denote all minority groups in the country and “macroethnic” to denote the majority group, i.e. Kinh, which is the official name used in Vietnamese censuses. The rationale is that terms such as “Chinese minority, Overseas Chinese, Chinese Community, or Chinese migrants” have derogatory and discriminatory connotations associated with the nationality policies of the French colonial authorities and the authorities in South Vietnam (Mac, 1994a: 219 and 1994b: 42). However, the terms “Chinese community” and “ethnic Chinese” are used in this study.

Official terminology in the Vietnamese censuses in the former North Vietnam and also in Vietnam as a whole after 1975 identifies three ethnic groups as ethnic Chinese. These are the Hoa, the Ngái, and the Sán Dìu.<sup>2</sup> Vietnamese authorities seem to associate the Hoa as Han Chinese in origin and the Ngái and Sán Dìu as non-Han people from China.

This study begins with an outline of the demographic development of the Chinese followed by an examination of the policies and developments in the former Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) after 1975; the exodus of Chinese from the former Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) in 1978; and the large-scale exodus by boat in 1978 and 1979. The reliability of the Vietnamese population statistics is next assessed, following which developments relating to the Chinese in the country since 1979 and the continued decline of the Chinese population are examined. The study concludes by giving a summary of the main findings and the broad analysis.

### **Demographic Developments after 1975**

The first official census was carried out in unified Vietnam in 1979, and repeated thereafter every ten years. A census carried out in the former South Vietnam in early 1976 provides the basis for an official estimate for the whole country. This estimate and the four censuses of 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009 provide data on the Hoa and the Sán Dìu. The 1979 census provides a figure on the Ngái group, namely, 1,318 persons (*Census 1979*, 1983: 104). This group is omitted in the 1989 census, but re-appears in the 1999 census with a figure of 4,841 (*Census 1999*, 2001: 21), and is reported as 1,035 in the 2009 census (*Census 2009*, 2010: 135). Given the lack of comparative data for the Ngái and the small number of the group it will not be the subject of further attention in this study.

The population of the Hoa in Vietnam has declined unabated since 1976 (Table 1). From 2.6 per cent of the total population in 1976, the Hoa made up barely 1 per cent in 2009 (Table 2). The population in Vietnam as a whole has been growing since 1976 and the Hoa were the second largest ethnic group after the majority Kinh community. In 1989, they had dropped to fifth place and continued to decline further to eighth place by 2009. The Hoa community is

the only major ethnic group whose number has diminished between 1976 and 2009 (*Census 1976*, 1976: 18, *Census 1979*, 1983: 104, *Census 1989b*, 1991: 66, *Census 1999*, 2001: 21, *Census 2009*, 2010: 134).<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Number of Hoa in Vietnam 1976, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009

Estimate/Census	Total	Increase/Decrease (%)
1976	1,236,000	-
01-10-1979	935,074	-24.35
01-04-1989	900,185	-3.73
01-04-1999	862,371	-4.20
01-04-2009	823,041	-4.78

Sources: *Census 1976*, 1976: 18; *Census 1979*, 1983: 104; *Census 1989b*, 1991: 66; *Census 1999*, 2001: 21; *Census 2009*, 2010: 134

Table 2. The Hoa as a Percentage of the Total Population of Vietnam, 1976, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009

Estimate/Census	Hoa	Total Population	% of Hoa
1976	1,236,000	48,060,000	2.57
01-10-1979	935,074	52,741,766	1.77
01-04-1989	900,185	64,375,762	1.40
01-04-1999	862,373	76,323,173	1.13
01-04-2009	823,071	85,846,997	0.96

Sources: *Census 1976*, 1976: 18; *Census 1979*, 1983: 104; *Census 1989b*, 1991: 66; *Census 1999*, 2001: 21; *Census 2009*, 2010: 134

It is necessary to examine the demographic evolution of the Hoa in the former North Vietnam and South Vietnam after 1975. Census data show a significant and dramatic depopulation of the Hoa community from a quarter of a million in 1974 to a mere 53,000 in 1979, or a decline of 79 per cent. The number has since hovered around 50,000 or so up to 2009 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Hoa in Former Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1974, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009

Census	Total	Increase/Decrease (%)
01-04-1974	256,534	-
01-10-1979	53,672	- 79.08
01-04-1989	49,040	- 8.63
01-04-1999	50,172	+6.39
01-04-2009	52,116	+3.87

Sources: *Census 1974*, DRV, 1976: 28; *Census 1979*, 1983: 105-115; *Census 1989b*, 1991: 68, 70-91; *Census 1999*, 2001: 22-50; *Census 2009*, 2010: 148-164

In the former South Vietnam, the decline in the population of the Hoa community was continuous but more gradual. After a 7.6 per cent reduction between 1976 and 1979, the decline had stabilized at 3 to 5 per cent between each census up to 2009 (Table 4).

Table 4. Number of Hoa in Former Republic of Vietnam  
in 1976, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009

Census	Total	Increase/Decrease (%)
01-02-1976	949,825	-
01-10-1979	877,691	- 7.59
01-04-1989	850,614	- 3.09
01-04-1999	809,516	-5.08
01-04-2009	770,955	- 4.76

Sources: *Census 1976*, ROV, 1976: 339; *Census 1979*, 1983: 115–124; *Census 1989b*, 1991: 69, 91–114; *Census 1999*, 2001: 51–82; *Census 2009*, 2010: 149–225

Changes in the population of the Sán Dìu group contrast sharply with that of the Hoa. Unlike the Hoa, this group has been growing in number from 57,440 in 1974 to 146,821 in 2009. The growth is particularly significant in relative terms in the 1980s and 1990s (Table 5).<sup>4</sup>

Table 5. Number of Sán Dìu in Vietnam in 1974, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009

Census	Total	Increase/Decrease (%)
01-04-1974	57,440	-
01-10-1979	65,808	+ 14.57
01-04-1989	94,630	+ 43.80
01-04-1999	126,237	+ 33.40
01-04-2009	146,821	+ 16.31

Sources: *Census 1974*, DRV, 1976: 28; *Census 1979*, 1983: 104; *Census 1989b*, 1991: 66; *Census 1999*, 2001: 21; *Census 2009*, 2010: 148

The distribution of the Hoa and Sán Dìu ethnic groups in the major cities and provinces in 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009 is shown in the Appendices. It is clear that, unlike the Hoa, the majority of the Sán Dìu reside in the former North Vietnam.

From the mid-1970s to 2009, the decline in the population of the Hoa is in sharp contrast to the growth of the Sán Dìu. This period has witnessed an overall growth in the Vietnamese population. Given this situation, the study will explore contending explanations to the demographic decline of the Hoa ethnic group between 1975 and 2009 with a focus on the late 1970s.<sup>5</sup> As the pattern of Chinese migration from Vietnam varied considerably and different factors affected the outflows from different parts of the country, it is necessary to study the situations in the North and the South of the country separately.

The causes behind the decline of the ethnic Chinese population will be sought within the context of the overall policy of the Vietnamese authorities towards this community. Socialist economic policies to nationalize private trade, enterprises and land were adopted to transform South Vietnam into a socialist and classless society in line with the North Vietnam model (Amer, 1991: 16, 24). The implementation of such policies directly affected Chinese business interests and could have forced some Chinese to leave. However, the most dramatic decline in the Chinese population occurred in former North Vietnam during the second half of the 1970s, and this decline cannot be explained by the implementation of socialist policies that had been in place since 1954. Other causes have to be identified, both internal to Vietnam and in its relations with China.

### **The Chinese in the South: Spring 1975 to Spring 1978**

#### **Economic Policies**

After the end of the war in 1975 the Vietnamese authorities faced two major challenges. The first was to rebuild the country that had been devastated by the Vietnam War, and the other was to transform the economy and life in South Vietnam in keeping with the socialist ideals of the North (*On the Eve*, 1986: 12, K. Nguyen, 1985: 2). One of the measures to cope with unemployment in the larger cities, primarily in Ho Chi Minh City,<sup>6</sup> was to send people to so-called New Economic Zones (NEZ). Parts of the countryside in the South had been abandoned during the war arising from the forced movement of the population into strategic hamlets and the spontaneous migration to the cities to avoid the war. After 1975 a NEZ programme was introduced to carry out the resettlement of areas abandoned during the war (*The Boat People*, 1979: 25-26). The NEZ was also connected with the restructuring of the economy. The aim was to encourage people who were found in “unproductive” activities in the larger cities to engage in production in the NEZ. This would fulfil the goals of increasing food production by cultivating more land and promoting state control of the economy. In agriculture, the authorities attempted to collectivize the peasantry in the South. This succeeded in the centre of the country, but not in the Mekong delta, which remained largely non-collectivized even by the end of the 1970s (4th National Congress, 1977: 64, 95; Fforde and De Vylder, 1988: 61 and 1996: 128-129; *The Boat People*, 1979: 25-26; Vo, 1990: 72-79).

The Vietnamese authorities also initiated several moves in order to gain control over the economic life of the South. In late September 1975 a currency reform was announced. The old currency was to be replaced and a certain amount of the new currency would be put into state-controlled accounts (Tran, 1993; Woodside, 1979: 394). At the same time a campaign code-named “X1” was launched against the “comprador bourgeoisie” who had large assets

and whose industrial and commercial properties were to be confiscated (Tran, 1993: 81-82; Vo, 1990: 64-66). To curb speculation, hoarding of goods, and tendencies to monopolize the market, enterprises were mandated to register their machinery, vehicles, spare-parts, and stocks (Stern, 1985a: 259-263 and 1987a: 123-124).

Beginning in October 1975 a campaign was launched to establish consumers' co-operatives, initially to serve as an alternative to the open market but eventually to effect control over the distribution of goods. In June 1976 special taxes were imposed on excess profits to curb hoarding of commodities and speculation by businessmen (Tran, 1993: 83; Woodside, 1979: 395). Despite continued efforts during 1977, state control over the economy in the South was not achieved (Stern, 1987a: 132-133; Woodside, 1979: 392-398).<sup>7</sup>

These failures prompted the authorities to implement harsher measures on the capitalist dominated economy and a campaign code-named "X2" was launched on 23 March 1978 (Amer, 1991: 84; BBC/SWB/FE 1978a: B5-9; Vo, 1990: 89). The clampdown on private business affected the entire Ho Chi Minh City but was most severe in Cholon in which ethnic Chinese were concentrated (Chanda, 1986: 231-233; Chang, 1982a: 27; Vo, 1990: 89). The goods of thousands of retailers were confiscated and many persons were ordered out of the city to settle in the NEZ. The authorities stepped up the establishment of consumer and marketing co-operatives and state-run stores in an attempt to gain control over trade and on 31 March all private trade in the country was banned (Chang, 1982a: 2; Stern, 1987a: 134-135, 141; *Vietnam Courier*, May 1978: 14-15; Vo, 1990: 89-90). Finally, the currency reform introduced on 3 May removed the old and foreign currencies in exchange for only a limited amount of the new currency for each person or family (Chanda, 1986: 233; Evans and Rowley, 1984: 54).

In view of their economic prominence in the country, the Chinese were most adversely affected by the new policy of socialist transformation. In 1975 the Chinese community controlled the largest share of the processing industry, wholesale trade, and import-export trade and about half of the retail trade and the banking and finance sectors (Tran, 1992: 18; Vo, 1990: 68).<sup>8</sup> The clampdown on private trade launched in late March 1978 put a large number of Chinese out of work. The former businessmen and traders were "shifted to production", i.e. sent to the NEZ. Life was hard in the NEZ and very different from that in the cities and many opted to leave the country (Amer, 1991: 56).

However, Chinese business networks that still remained were used to organize illegal channels to help those who wanted to leave the country. Despite the anti-bourgeoisie campaign, trade links between the Chinese in Vietnam and in other Southeast Asian states, in particular Singapore, continued to function (Stern, 1987a: 141).

### **Socialist Transformation and Its Target**

Outwardly, the policy of socialist transformation was not targeted against any particular ethnic group (Duy, 1978: 83-89; T. Nguyen, 1978: 11-17). In fact, Vietnamese research on the ethnic Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City made no reference to the policy of socialist transformation of the late 1970s (Mac, 1994a: 208-212 and 1994b: 36-38).

The policy to transform the economy of the South into a socialist one was bound to impact the Chinese community more severely than any other ethnic groups, and this was readily acknowledged by the Vietnamese authorities (Tien, 1978: 28-30). Not surprisingly, the majority of those who were arrested in the first campaign against the “comprador bourgeoisie” in September 1975 were ethnic Chinese. The trial against “speculators and hoarders” in January 1976 counted many Chinese among the prosecuted. Nevertheless, the new economic policies were not aimed solely at the Chinese as other ethnic groups were also affected.<sup>9</sup> In actual fact, policy statements by the Vietnamese referred only to the need to break the economic structure and the capitalist dominance (Do, 1978: 51-57; 1979: 10-18; C. Nguyen, 1975: 24-28; Vu, 1978a: 103-111 and 1978b: 67-79). A Vietnamese source argued that:

To restore and develop our economy and advance to socialism, we must eliminate the comprador bourgeoisie and carry out the socialist transformation of private capitalist trade and industry - regardless of whether or not it is a Hoa or a Vietnamese (Tien, 1978: 29)

There were cases in which businessmen who had established good contacts with representatives of the new authorities before and/or after 1975 were treated more leniently than others. Such preferential treatment benefited businesspeople of both Chinese descent and other ethnic groups.

### **Political Dimension**

It is likely that the Vietnamese authorities were aware of the problems that they had to face from the Chinese community in the re-structuring of the economy of the South, but they were probably not expecting political challenges. However, the Vietnamese claimed that this was precisely what happened. Vietnamese research shows that the period from spring 1976 to spring 1979 was characterized by an “explosion” of the “Chinese-national” idea among the Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City (Mac, 1994a: 209 and 1994b: 36). In fact, as early as May 1975, several incidents were reported to have taken place and Vietnam alleged that agents from China helped set up several new organizations among the Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City. One of the main goals of these organizations was a campaign to encourage the Chinese to acquire

Chinese citizenship and in which the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi was allegedly involved (*Vietnam Courier*, 1978a: 73-74 and 1978b: 82; De L'affaire, 1978: 83-101).

China made several allegations relating to how the Vietnamese authorities acted with regard to the question of citizenship of the ethnic Chinese. First, in January 1976 "Chinese residents" in the former South Vietnam were allegedly required to register their citizenship. Seemingly the result of the registration campaign did not satisfy the Vietnamese authorities as more ethnic Chinese than expected claimed to be Chinese citizens. Second, according to China, the ethnic Chinese were ordered to register again but this time according to their citizenship status in the pre-1975 period. Third, China claimed that in February 1977 "Chinese residents" were required by the Vietnamese authorities to fill in printed forms to receive "citizenship cards". Fourth, China accused Vietnam of discriminating against the ethnic Chinese by cancelling household registers, reducing food rations, withholding jobs, and imposing exorbitant taxes, with the aim of forcing them to become Vietnamese citizens. In essence, China was protesting against the oppressive character of the Vietnamese actions (*Peking Review*, 1978b: 28-29).

The Vietnamese description of the above course of events was that immediately after the "liberation" of South Vietnam in 1975, Vietnam had undertaken a registration of foreign residents and no "Vietnamese of Chinese origin" had asked to be registered. The Vietnamese standpoint was that the issue of the nationality of the ethnic Chinese had been settled before 1975 and they were to be regarded as Vietnamese citizens. However, the Vietnamese authorities regarded some members of the Chinese community as foreign nationals and they were treated accordingly. The Vietnamese also emphasized that these persons had not been forced to become Vietnamese citizens (*Vietnam Courier*, 1978a: 72; Ky, 1978: 23-28).

Although the two versions contradicted each other on some central issues, it can be assumed that a number of ethnic Chinese declined to register themselves as Vietnamese citizens in January 1976. The registration campaign was in fact part of the preparations for elections to the National Assembly to be held in April 1976 (Porter, 1982: 85; *The Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, 1985: 43). It can also be assumed that the Vietnamese authorities at least started to treat as "foreign residents" those ethnic Chinese who refused to register as Vietnamese citizens and this implied restrictions on employment opportunities and involvement in economic activities (Amer, 1991: 41). These restrictions were formalized in 1978 (Decision No. 122-CP, 1978: 8-9):

Foreign nationals residing in Vietnam can choose their trade or profession freely, in keeping with Vietnamese law, with the exception of the following:

1. Fishery.



2. Forestry.
3. Repair of communications and radio and television equipment.
4. Driver of motor coaches and skipper of motor launches.
5. Printing, engraving and type casting.
6. Type-writing, mimeographing, photocopying.

For the exercise of their trade or profession, foreign nationals shall register their occupation with a competent Vietnamese organ.

The policies of the Vietnamese authorities towards the ethnic Chinese led to open protests. In March 1978 several demonstrations by the Chinese were reported in Ho Chi Minh City (Chang, 1982a: 26). Several hundred persons demonstrated against the sending of people to the NEZ and against the drafting of young men into the army. Some demanded to be repatriated to China (Chanda, 1986: 232; Chang, 1982a: 26). Another demonstration involving about 100 persons occurred in August 1978 to demand, among other things, Chinese citizenship (Mac, 1994a: 210 and 1994b: 37).

The main reason for rejecting Vietnamese citizenship seemed to be that the pragmatic reasons for adopting it during the pre-1975 years so as to engage in many economic activities were no longer justified.<sup>10</sup> An additional reason for claiming to be Chinese citizens in the post-1975 period was most probably the hope that, as foreign nationals, the ethnic Chinese would be allowed to leave the country, just as the French and Indian nationals were allowed to do so (Amer, 1991: 54, 1992: 12; Benoit, 1982: 158).

The political and economic changes after 1975 led to a steadily increasing number of people leaving South Vietnam by boat. By the end of 1976 some 5,619 had arrived in other Southeast Asian states and the number rose to 21,276 a year later.<sup>11</sup> In 1978 the number of “boat people” rose sharply from 2,500 a month to 5,000 (see Figure 1).

There is a connection between the number of people leaving the South by boat and the economic policies of the Vietnamese authorities. The trends in departure by boat in 1978 and 1979 indicate other factors behind the exodus. Before discussing this issue, it is necessary to examine events taking place in the North Vietnam in 1978.

## **The Exodus of Ethnic Chinese from the North in 1978**

### **Chinese and Vietnamese Views on the Exodus**

Indications of the large-scale exodus of the Chinese became evident on 30 April 1978 when the Head of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council in Beijing claimed that the Vietnamese authorities had stepped up their expulsion of “Chinese residents” from the early part of the month. Chinese sources stated that the number of expelled persons had

reached 40,000 and seemed to be increasing (BBC/SWB/FE 1978b: C/3; Note of the Foreign Ministry of PRC, 1978: 49; Godley, 1980: 35).

At the bilateral level China had raised the issue of the expulsion exercise with the Vietnamese on three occasions. However, despite the Chinese reaction, the exodus continued and more than 50,000 people had crossed over to China by mid-May and increased to more than 160,000 by July (Note of the Foreign Ministry of PRC, 1978: 51; *On Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents*, 8 August, 1978: 39 and 9 June, 1978: 12).

In this context it should be noted that the Vietnamese authorities began to move the population away from the border between Vietnam and China in 1977 in order to improve security in the north-western border provinces. By October 1977 the Vietnamese authorities were expelling ethnic Chinese who were illegally residing in the country. These Vietnamese measures were reportedly affecting only a small number of the Chinese living in the border region (Porter, 1980: 56; Note of the Foreign Ministry of PRC, 1978: 49). China raised the issue with Vietnam on 27 October 1977 (Note of the Foreign Ministry of PRC, 1978: 51). If the events in 1977 did not seem to have caused any exodus, what were the reasons behind the sudden and massive exodus of ethnic Chinese from the northern parts of Vietnam, beginning in April 1978?

China alleged that Vietnamese policies were responsible for the outflow of ethnic Chinese and the stepping up of the expulsion and extension of the area affected by the campaign had led to an increase in the number of people who left. The Vietnamese authorities were accused of having “purposefully applied a policy of discrimination, ostracism, and persecution against Chinese residents” (Note of the Foreign Ministry of PRC, 1978: 50-51).

Vietnam rejected these allegations and claimed that the outflow had been triggered by a campaign launched by China in order to frighten the Chinese community in Vietnam. China was accused of using loudspeakers along the border, radio broadcasting and the infiltration of its agents among the Chinese in Vietnam. The central theme of the campaign was the probable outbreak of war between the two countries in which the Chinese community in Vietnam would be caught in the middle (Amer, 1991: 47-48; Y. Nguyen, 1978: 40-50)

China refuted claims that it had instigated the rumour campaign (*On Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents*, 25 July, 1978: 171-175 and 15 August 1978: 56; *Peking Review*, 1978a: 15) and implied that the Vietnamese authorities themselves were spreading the rumours. However, refugees leaving Vietnam mentioned that Vietnamese authorities had attempted to halt the exodus by reassuring them that war would not break out between Vietnam and China (Benoit, 1982: 150-151; *The Boat People*, 1979: 85-87).

### Factors Behind the Exodus

To understand the impact of the rumours of impending war in the border region, it is necessary to examine the context within which the rumours were spread. First, the Vietnamese authorities were conducting a campaign against Chinese illegally residing in the country. Second, Vietnam was moving people away from the border, in a move that confirmed the rising tension between the two countries. These Vietnamese actions gave credence to the rumours of an approaching war. Under these circumstances the Chinese in Vietnam became acutely aware of the mounting tension between the two countries. Caught in a dilemma, many opted to leave for China rather than be trapped in a war. This triggered the outflow of Chinese from the border provinces and had a snowball effect throughout northern Vietnam.<sup>12</sup> Hence the prime reason behind the exodus from the border provinces was the fear of a war between China and Vietnam.<sup>13</sup>

Chinese living in other parts of North Vietnam that were removed from the border regions were relatively less affected by the rumours of impending war. Nevertheless, policies were also introduced to curb private trade in the North. In the case of Haiphong, a third of the market activities were still in the hands of private traders in 1977. This campaign against private trade affected a considerable number of people, among them many ethnic Chinese (Woodside, 1979: 404). Similar campaigns in other places might not have caused the outflow of Chinese to China in the spring and summer of 1978 but most probably added to the pressure to leave.

The major part of the Chinese in the North lived in Quang Ninh province and worked mainly as fishermen, foresters and craftsmen. In the urban areas they were mainly workers and technicians. The Chinese community of North Vietnam played an economic role that was different from that of their counterpart in the South. Prior to the exodus some 160,000 Chinese were found in Quang Ninh province, comprising slightly more than a fifth of the total population. The Chinese provided much needed manpower to the industrial and mining sectors and the departure of almost the entire Chinese community badly disrupted the economy of the province (V. Nguyen, 1978: 54-55).

Another issue that caused anxieties within the Chinese community was the question of nationality (Benoit, 1982: 145). According to Vietnamese authorities, the issue of citizenship had been settled in the 1950s and the ethnic Chinese were regarded as Vietnamese citizens. Some refugees viewed the issue of citizenship as important both for economic and sentimental reasons while others showed less concern about it.<sup>14</sup>

From the above analysis it may be concluded that the major underlying and immediate factor behind the exodus of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam in 1978 was the rumour of an impending war between China and Vietnam. Other factors such as the question of nationality,

the expulsion of illegal Chinese migrants from the border region and economic policies aimed at curbing private business contributed to the exodus but did not trigger it.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam from mid-1978 to mid-1979**

### **Continued Exodus and Vietnam's Response**

The situation of the ethnic Chinese during the year from mid-1978 cannot be properly understood without taking into account the diplomatic discussions between China and Vietnam on the question of the Chinese in Vietnam in June-July and August-September 1978. The discussions ended without any agreement and exacerbated bilateral relations. To stem the large-scale influx of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, China decided to close the border in July 1978.<sup>16</sup> But some 40,000 persons still managed to enter China to increase the total to 200,000 by the end of 1978 (Chang, 1982a: 52). The closure of the border led to an increase in departures by boat either to China or to Hong Kong (Wain, 1981: 73-74).

In June 1978 two events raised the hopes of those who wanted to leave Vietnam. First, China dispatched two ships to repatriate "victimized Chinese residents". Second, the Vietnamese authorities started to register ethnic Chinese who wanted to leave for China. Estimates of the extent of registration of the Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City ranged from 30-40 per cent to about 75 per cent by the end of 1978 (Benoit, 1982: 88-89; Chang, 1982a: 39-40; Porter, 1980: 57).

The Vietnamese initiated the registration campaign despite the fact that no agreement existed between the two countries. In the absence of any forthcoming agreement from the negotiations, the Chinese ships returned empty. Thus the large number who had registered to leave the country began to search for alternative means to do so.

Suspicious of the loyalty of the Chinese community, Vietnam responded to the situation with two main measures. The first was the expulsion of ethnic Chinese from the Communist Party, the administration, and the army as well as from all employment regarded as sensitive to national security. This policy was most effectively carried out in former North Vietnam, where the Chinese had been integrated into the socialist system since 1954 (Benoit, 1982: 140, 149, 152; *The Boat People*, 1979: 88; Wain, 1981: 73). The other was the introduction of a system of semi-legal departure that was open only to the Chinese and administered by the Public Security Bureau (PSB). In essence, Chinese who wanted to leave had to pay, through Chinese organizers, a fixed fee that was handed over to a PSB official. Furthermore, they had to pay for boat, fuel, and other necessities like anyone else who attempted to leave (Amer, 1991: 85-87; Benoit, 1982: 116-133, 157-160; Chang, 1982a: 50, 1982b: 222-223; Porter, 1980: 57-58; *The Boat People*, 1979: 108-112; Wain, 1981: 16-35, 84-122).

### The Semi-legal Departure System and the “Boat People” Crisis

In order to assess when the semi-legal departure system was introduced and for how long it was in operation, the patterns of arrivals of people to various destinations in East and Southeast Asia during 1978 and 1979 have to be examined (Figure 1).

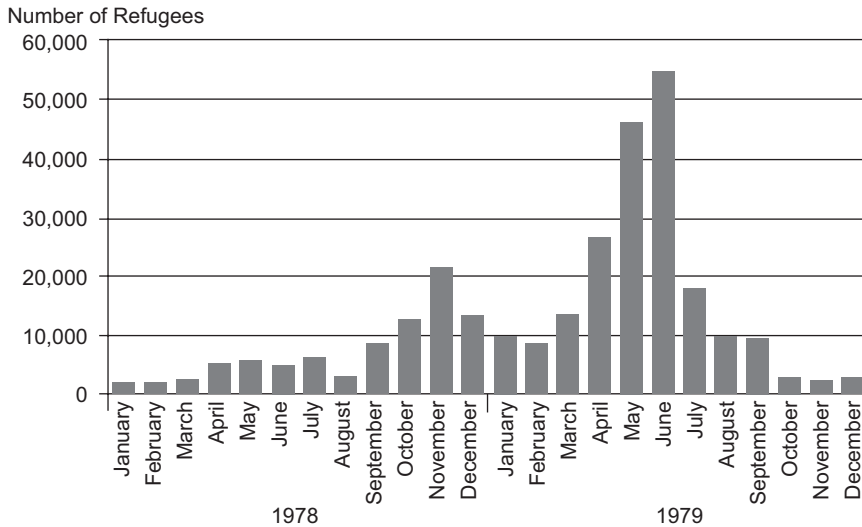


Figure 1. Arrivals of Vietnamese Refugees by Boat in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong in 1978 and 1979<sup>17</sup>

There are at least three explanations for the patterns shown in Figure 1. The first is departure by land to China up to mid-July 1978 and, following the closure of the border, by boat primarily to Hong Kong. The second is that the Chinese were not singled out for discrimination prior to August 1978. The last explanation is that persons leaving Vietnam by boat did not arrive in the countries of destination until several weeks later. The statistics in Figure 1 seem to indicate that the semi-legal departure system began in August 1978 which is why the arrivals by boat in other countries increased sharply from September 1978.

The volume of refugees increased gradually each month in 1978, reached a peak in November before falling off in early 1979. It rose sharply again in April and May and reached an apogee in June and petered off in the last three months of the year. To explain these fluctuations, it is necessary to ask if the Vietnamese authorities had changed the semi-legal departure system and/or their policy towards the ethnic Chinese, and what was the impact of international events on the situation in Vietnam during this period.

The decline in the number of arrivals between December 1978 and March 1979 may indicate a shift in policy that made it more difficult for people to leave. If this was so, this policy must have been implemented in November, taking into consideration the time needed

to reach the different destinations by boat. The policy shift was probably connected to a conference on refugees held in Geneva in December 1978 where the Vietnamese refugee problem was discussed. However, the figures do indicate that the shift in policy may have been disregarded or ineffective in parts of the country (Amer, 1991: 87; Benoit, 1982: 160; Porter, 1980: 58; *The Boat People*, 1979: 108, 124-129; Wain, 1981: 69, 193).

The sharp increase in the number of arrivals during the period April-June 1979 indicates that the semi-legal departure system was again fully implemented and most likely stepped up. In view of the increasing number of “boat people” from Vietnam to other countries from April to June 1979, a new conference on refugees was convened in Geneva in July 1979 in which the Vietnamese representatives pledged to do their utmost to stem the outflow of people (Wain, 1981: 221, 225). The decline in the number of Vietnamese refugees to other countries in July indicated that Vietnam had indeed begun to halt the outflow in June. That the decline in July was not a temporary fluctuation was confirmed by the sharp drop in the number of arrivals in October to the pre-April 1978 level.

Furthermore, a feature of the exodus was the large number of people heading for Hong Kong. From Figure 2, it is clear that the number of arrivals reached “crisis” proportions during the months of April to July 1979 (Mignot, 1984: 20; JCFAD Australia, 1981: 71) (Figure 2). The majority of these boat people were ethnic Chinese who made up, according to an estimate of arrivals between 1 January and 21 July 1979, 83.2 per cent of the total (Mignot, 1984: 21).

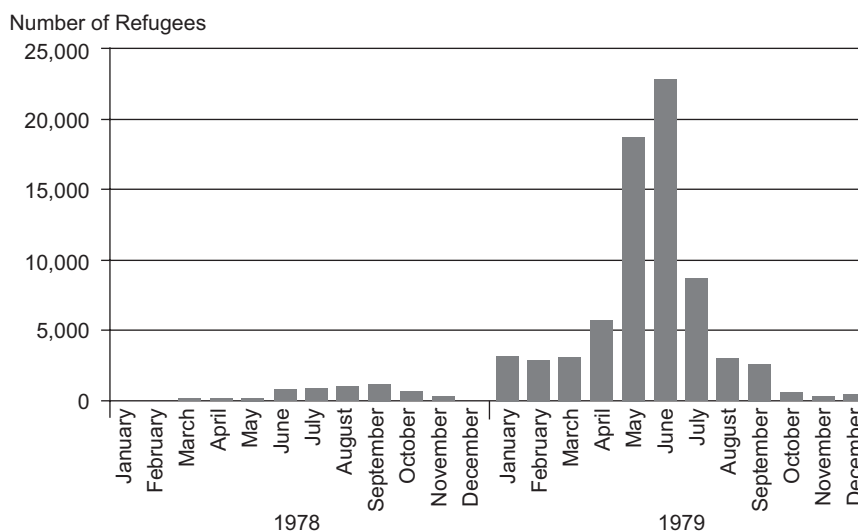


Figure 2. Arrivals of Vietnamese Refugees by Boat in Hong Kong in 1978 and 1979<sup>18</sup>

Judging from accounts given by refugees reaching Hong Kong during the period of April-June 1979, the Vietnamese authorities were implementing a policy that was tantamount to an expulsion of the remaining ethnic Chinese in the North. Some refugees reported that the Chinese were assembled at information meetings by the Vietnamese authorities and informed of the threat of a new Chinese military intervention (this occurred in the wake of the Chinese attack on Vietnam in February-March 1979).<sup>19</sup> They were offered two options, either to be transferred to the NEZ, at a safe distance from Vietnam's border with China, or to leave the country. Many of the Chinese were well established in Vietnamese society and had remained in the country in spite of the increased pressure on them during 1978. However, by the time of the meetings many had opted to leave. Others who given their background were pessimistic about establishing themselves in a new country chose to remain and be transferred to the NEZ (Benoit, 1982: 140-152; Porter, 1980: 58-59; Quinn-Judge, 1985: 4; Wain, 1981: 77-78).

### **Reliability of Vietnam's Population Statistics<sup>20</sup>**

Whether the official figures of Hoa in Vietnam correctly reflect the magnitude of the exodus of ethnic Chinese in 1978 and 1979 is an issue that has to be addressed. An assessment of the number of people who left the country during these two years could help resolve this issue.

From the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975 to the end of September 1979, 306,851 persons reached the shores of neighbouring countries by boat (JCFAD Australia, 1981: 71, 73; UNHCR, 1980; Wain 1981: 227).<sup>21</sup> This figure does not take into account that there was an estimated 10 per cent to as much as 70 per cent of casualties among those who the country by boat (Chang, 1982a: 59-60 and 1982b: 230; Condominas and Pottier, 1982: 91; *The Boat People*, 1979: 80-81; Wain, 1981: 83). The best approximation available seems to be around 10 per cent. This was because the northern route to Hong Kong was safe from pirates and the boats followed the Chinese coastline to avoid bad weather or for ease of obtaining provisions. Another reason was that Western resettlement officers working among the arriving refugees assessed that some 10 per cent would have perished. Lastly, as the refugees reacted strongly to news that boats had capsized, it was unlikely that such tragedies were common (*The Boat People*, 1979: 81; Wain, 1981: 83).

If the figure of the number of boat people from Vietnam is increased by 10 per cent, the total number of departing persons would be 337,536. The percentage of ethnic Chinese among those leaving by boat has been estimated at 60-70 per cent,<sup>22</sup> or between 202,521 and 236,275 persons based on a total number of departing persons of 337,536. An estimated 260,000 persons<sup>23</sup> left by overland route to China among whom 230,000 were reported to

be ethnic Chinese.<sup>24</sup> According to these estimates a total of 597,536 persons would have left Vietnam by September 1979 and the total number of ethnic Chinese among them would have been in the range of 432,521 to 466,275.

Official Vietnamese statistics in 1976 show a total of 1,236,000 Hoa or 2.57 per cent of the total population.<sup>25</sup> The 1979 census reported that 935,074 persons were Hoa out of a total population of 52,741,766. If the estimated 597,536 who had left are added to that figure, the total population in Vietnam would have been 53,339,302 at the time of the 1979 census.<sup>26</sup>

Assuming that the Hoa population had remained at 2.57 per cent of the total population of 53,339,302, as in 1976, they would have numbered 1,370,820 in 1979. This would correspond to a difference of 435,746, which corroborates well with the above estimate of the number of ethnic Chinese who had left Vietnam. It may be concluded that the Vietnamese figure for 1979 regarding its Hoa population of 935,074 may be regarded as reasonable.<sup>27</sup>

## **The Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam since late 1979**

### **Changes in Economic Policies**

Vietnam faced many problems in 1978 and 1979. Internally there was the mass exodus of primarily ethnic Chinese coupled with a worsening economic situation. Externally Vietnam was engaged in military conflicts with Cambodia, leading up to Vietnam's military intervention in late December 1978,<sup>28</sup> and with China, leading to the Chinese attack on Vietnam in February-March 1979.<sup>29</sup> The Vietnamese authorities responded to the challenge of the economic crisis by revising its economic policies. The decision was taken at the Sixth Plenum (Fourth National Congress) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in September 1979. In the agricultural sector one of the policy changes was the introduction of a "contract system" by which families could "contract" land on short term basis for their own use and to sell the produce from the land. In the industrial sector, priority was given to the production of consumer goods and incentives were used to stimulate production. Private enterprises and co-operatives were encouraged in the light and export oriented industries (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996: 130-131; Stern, 1985a: 346-348 and 1985b: 523-525; Tan, 1985: 23-31; Vo, 1990: 82, 91).

These moves to liberalize the economy led to the re-emergence of private markets and distribution systems. Despite these reforms, the economy continued to deteriorate in 1980 and prompted the authorities to respond by introducing directives to expedite implementation of the reforms in early 1981 (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996: 131-132; Stern, 1985a: 350-351, 357-365 and 1985b: 525-527, 530-534; Tan, 1985: 36-37).

The re-enforcement of the reforms resulted in a temporary improvement of the economy



but at the cost of higher inflation. Another side-effect of the revival of a private sector was diminishing state control over the economy. To counter this development, the Third Plenum (Fifth National Congress) of the CPV's Central Committee in December 1982 launched a campaign to gain control over private business and industry through registration, regulations, and taxation over a period up to 1986 (Stern, 1985a: 351-352, 359-367, 1985b: 528, 531-536, 1988a: 144 and 1988b: 120-121; Tan, 1985: 37-44).<sup>30</sup>

The liberalization of the economy benefited ethnic Chinese involved in business but the campaign to assert state control over the economy must also have affected them. The goal of the authorities was seemingly to diminish the predominance of Chinese business in certain sectors of the economy. This was reflected in official references to Chinese-dominated sectors of the economy as the worst offenders against the new regulations (Amer, 1991: 112-113; Stern, 1985a: 352-353 and 1985b: 527). These references could also reflect the re-emergence of Chinese influence over some sectors of the economy that was contrary to the ambition of the authorities to promote state control.

With the continued disappointment of economic development during the first half of the 1980s, a more thorough liberalization of the economy was introduced by the Sixth National Congress of the CPV in December 1986, i. e. the policy of renovation or "Doi Moi" (6th National Congress, 1987; Fforde and De Vylder, 1988: 71-73 and 1996: 142-144; Stern, 1987b: 269-279 and 1988a: 144-145 and 1988b: 120-121; Vo, 1990: 160-169, 181-187). Real changes did not take place until early 1988 and new targets for economic development were set at the Seventh National Congress of the CPV in 1991 (EIU, 1995-96: 13-14; 7th National, 1991). The policy of reform and renovation was endorsed and re-affirmed in the Eighth to Eleventh National Congresses between 1996 and 2011 (8<sup>th</sup> National Congress, 1996; 9<sup>th</sup> National Congress, 2001; 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress, 2006; and 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress, 2011).

The economic reforms introduced in September 1979 gave the ethnic Chinese, who had the ability and the means, opportunities to engage in private business activities. While the Chinese were successful in exploiting the new opportunities, uncertainties over longer-term prospects led them to take a cautious approach. The more thorough economic reform policies and their implementation since the late 1980s made it possible for the Chinese to expand their business activities and to gain control over a substantial part of the economy. As their confidence over the authorities' long-term economic objectives improved, they began to increase their investments by drawing resources pooled within the community or from relatives who had left the country after 1975, and through joint ventures with foreign partners. The early 1990s saw the emergence of large Chinese controlled companies such as the Viet-Hoa Construction Company (also in hotel and banking), Viet Huong Instant Noodle Processing Company, and Binh Tien (Biti's) Footwear Enterprise.<sup>31</sup>

### **Vietnam's Policies towards the Ethnic Chinese**

During 1979 and the first half of the 1980s the ethnic Chinese were still regarded as some kind of “fifth column” working in favour of China’s interests. The Vietnamese authorities seemed to perceive the Chinese as a coherent group only in relation to China. But certain officials began to realize that they could contribute to the development of the economy (Stern, 1985a: 353-357 and 1985b: 532-533). The “China-connection” continued to be a theme in Vietnamese publications up to 1985. Nevertheless, the trend was towards making a distinction between different social strata of the Chinese community (Dang *et al.*, 1984: 259, 263-264; K. Nguyen, 1985: 385-386, 398-401; Unger, 1987-88: 613).

In November 1982 the CPV adopted Decree No. 10, which included “guide-lines” with regard to the “Hoa people”. The most important clause was a reference to the “Hoa people” as Vietnamese citizens with the same duties and rights as all other citizens of the country. However, it was also decreed that the Hoa were not accepted as officers in the armed forces and other security related employment.<sup>32</sup> This seems to confirm that – due to the suspicions of their allegiance – the ethnic Chinese had earlier been removed not only from positions that were deemed sensitive from a security point of view, been also from ordinary jobs.

In October 1986 the government adopted Decree No. 256 which was important for its silence on any restrictions on employment of the Chinese in different fields of society. It also reaffirmed the citizenship of the Hoa and their duties and rights (Mac, 1994a: 174-179). In Ho Chi Minh City the Municipal Party Committee adopted Decree No. 23 in 1985 and Decree No. 85 in 1990 to re-activate the role of the Chinese in such fields as education, culture and journalism.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the second half of the 1980s witnessed a policy trend aimed at re-integrating the Chinese into Vietnamese society. Initially efforts in re-integration were frustrated by the CPV decree of 1982. Eventually, in the early 1990s preparatory work on a new decree relating to the Chinese was initiated.<sup>34</sup> In June 1991, the Seventh National Party Congress of the CPV adopted a policy to guarantee to the Hoa community:

all civil rights and civic duties, to respect their culture and script, and to create conditions for them to work confidently, contribute to the building of Vietnam and cultivate friendly relations between the peoples of Vietnam and China (7th National Congress, 1991: 124)

The first issue to be addressed in the new Decree would be to restore full civil rights and duties to the “Hoa” community along the lines expressed in Decree No. 256. It is also noteworthy that the CPV identified a positive role for the community in contributing to good relations between Vietnam and China. This has to be understood in the context of the

process of normalization of relations between China and Vietnam that became formalized in November 1991.<sup>35</sup>

While work on a new Decree was in progress, the re-integration process of the Chinese community continued in practice, as can be seen in the field of education. In Ho Chi Minh City a society was set up in the early 1990s to assist in preparing a Chinese curriculum and to raise funds for Chinese education.<sup>36</sup> Fund raising is essential as the Government is not able to provide adequate funding for the education sector generally. Also in Ho Chi Minh City measures were taken to encourage Chinese students to enrol in higher education, though initial success was not comparable to that in primary education.<sup>37</sup>

The new Party Decree No. 62 was adopted on 8 November 1995 and formulated in accordance with the aims outlined at the Seventh National Party Congress in 1991. The most important aspect of the new Decree was the removal of the most discriminatory clause in the 1982 Decree that had placed restrictions on employment. The recognition of the Chinese as Vietnamese citizens enjoying the same rights and duties as all other citizens includes those joining the CPV and the mass organizations of Vietnam. The cultural and educational rights of the Chinese are safeguarded to allow Chinese children to learn “Mandarin” in schools and to gain access to tertiary education. The Decree also sets forth favourable conditions to mobilize the economic potential of the Chinese community to take part in the economic development of the country. It is also notable that the Decree makes a distinction between the “Hoa” who are Vietnamese citizens of Chinese ethnic origin and the “Hoa Kieu” who are Chinese citizens of China or Taiwan residing in Vietnam.<sup>38</sup>

On 3 August 1996 the Vietnamese Government adopted Decree No. 501 relating to the ethnic Chinese. Whereas the CPV Decree of 1995 provides general guidelines, the Government Decree is a legislative decision that contains detailed provisions for implementation in practical terms.<sup>39</sup> Through these CPV and Government Decrees, the formal re-integration of the Chinese into Vietnamese society is put in place.

### **The Orderly Departure Programme**

Since 1979 a considerable number of Chinese have left Vietnam either through the Orderly Departure Program (ODP)<sup>40</sup> or illegally by boat. The ODP was a programme through which people with relatives living abroad could leave from 1979 to 1994. As many Chinese had left during the “boatpeople crisis” of 1978-1979, a considerable number of those who remained had relatives living abroad and were thus eligible to leave through the ODP. According to unofficial estimates, about 50 per cent of those departing through the ODP during the period that was run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (1979-1991) were ethnic Chinese. Up to the mid-1980s the Chinese made up some

70 per cent of the ODP departures, and steadily decreased thereafter to about 20 per cent in 1991.<sup>41</sup> By the end of 1991, 352,300 persons had officially left through the ODP (UNHCR, 1993: 26),<sup>42</sup> among whom were some 175,000 Chinese who left between 1979 and 1991.

The declining percentage of ethnic Chinese among those leaving through the ODP can be explained by two factors. The first was the overall improvement of relations between the Vietnamese authorities and the Chinese, and the other was the liberalization of the Vietnamese economy. However, despite the declining percentage of Chinese among those who left through the ODP, they still made up a much larger percentage than their share of the overall Vietnamese population.

### **Assessing the Continued Decline in the Number of Ethnic Chinese**

The censuses of 1999 and 2009 clearly indicate that the Hoa population has continued to decline during the 1990s and the 2000s. The ODP was still in effect in the early years of the period 1989 to 2009, but ceased to be a direct factor thereafter. However, it is a fact that the large-scale migration in the late 1970s coupled with legal departure through the ODP had created a substantial number of ethnic Chinese living abroad and hence a larger number of the Chinese (Hoa) remaining in Vietnam have relatives abroad. The percentage of Chinese with relatives residing abroad is much higher than other ethnic groups in Vietnam. The population figures do indicate a continued migration of Chinese from Vietnam at a higher pace than their own natural growth in Vietnam. The extensive family links overseas among the Hoa with the large numbers who left Vietnam in 1978 and 1979 still has an impact on the demographic developments of the community. The re-settlement of those who had first reached other Southeast Asian countries and Hong Kong and later settled primarily in Australia, North America and Western Europe made possible legal migration through the ODP up to 1991 and through national programmes thereafter; hence the continued decline in the number of Hoa as shown in the 2009 census.

### **Conclusions**

This study shows that after 1975 and in particular during 1978 and 1979 there was large-scale migration of ethnic Chinese or Hoa from Vietnam. This process accentuated the imbalance in the distribution of the Hoa between the North and South of Vietnam, a phenomenon that is originally caused by the large influx of Chinese migrants to the South during the second half the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. About half of the Hoa currently live in Ho Chi Minh City and 93.7 per cent live in the South.

While the Hoa have suffered from a relative decline in number since 1975, the Sán Dìu group has been growing at a seemingly uninterrupted pace over the same period. It may be argued that the Sán Dìu have not been targeted by any discriminatory measures of the Vietnamese authorities. One explanation for this is that the majority of the Sán Dìu live in rural areas of the North and away from the border with China. Based on the Vietnamese censuses up to 2009 there is no indication that the Hoa population has been growing in size. Instead, the trend is towards a continued decline as indicated by the 2009 census.

It is unlikely that a return migration of ethnic Chinese to Vietnam will occur in the future. There is considerable reluctance to allow those who left in the 1970s to return to Vietnam. One of the reasons is the need to keep out anti-Party and anti-Government activists. Another reason is that this policy would create a precedent with repercussions especially with reference to refugees who left Vietnam for China in 1978 and 1979. UNHCR (2013) statistics show that Chinese refugees who entered China in 1978 and 1979 and their descendants have now reached 301,018 in number. The return of these refugees was discussed during negotiations for full normalization of relations between China and Vietnam in 1991 but did not result in any agreement. This issue continues to remain as a potential source of tension in bilateral relations.<sup>43</sup>

What could then be the assessment of the situation of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and the policies of the Vietnamese authorities since 1975? The situation of the Chinese in Vietnam appears to have stabilized in the 1990s with the formal re-integration of the Hoa community into Vietnamese society. This situation may be contrasted with the one prevailing in the late 1970s. In looking back at the evolution during the second half of the 1970s and the policies of the Vietnamese authorities during that period, two major observations can be made. First, the implementation of economic policies contributed to the mass migration of the Chinese primarily from the South. Second, the deterioration of relations with China led to the adoption of increasingly discriminatory policies towards the Chinese. As has been argued in a recent study, the human security of the ethnic Chinese was “seriously affected” and that “discriminatory policies toward the remaining ethnic Chinese in Vietnam caused an even deeper human security crisis for this community” (Amer, 2012: 474).

While the Party Decree of 1995 and the Government Decree of 1996 were formal attempts to re-integrate the Chinese into Vietnamese society, future policy decisions with regard to the Chinese community are likely to be limited in scope or piecemeal in nature. Re-integration at the local level, as in Ho Chi Minh City where almost 50 per cent of the Hoa live, was accomplished in practice by the early 1990s. It would seem that this re-integration process had its own momentum that out-paced that at the national and central levels. Based on this line of argument, the 1995 and 1996 Decrees seem to re-confirm an evolution that had

already taken place in Vietnamese society.

A pertinent question to ask is whether the process of integration will be pursued further or if there are potential pitfalls that may lead to the re-emergence of past problems and possibly a new mass migration of Chinese. The future development will depend on the nature of official economic policies that had been a major contributing factor to the mass migration of the Chinese from the South in the past. As long as the policies of economic renovation and reform are pursued, such a situation will not recur. Another important consideration is the impact of relations between China and Vietnam. In principle, the maintenance of good bilateral relations will benefit the Chinese in Vietnam. If a deterioration of relations occurs it could produce some negative repercussions on the Chinese but unlikely to cause another exodus similar to that of the late 1970s as there are no longer large Chinese communities living in the border region or in other parts of the North. The repercussions on the Chinese in the South can be expected to be limited as they live far away from the Chinese border and are unlikely to be caught in a new conflict situation. Given the geographical distribution of the Chinese in Vietnam the authorities have less reason to be concerned about the loyalty of Chinese in a future conflict with China. Consequently, discriminatory measures against the Chinese community are also less likely to be implemented in the future.

## Appendix 1

Number of Hoa and Sán Dìu in Vietnam based on the Census of 1979

City/Province/Region	Hoa	Sán Dìu
Ha Noi Capital	3,817	1,762
Ho Chi Minh City	475,739	no figure
Hai Phong City	3,618	no figure
Ha Tuyen Province	11,581	5,211
Cao Bang Province	1,997	no figure
Lang Son Province	4,057	no figure
Lai Chau Province	2,116	no figure
Hoang Lien Son Province	1,891	no figure
Bac Thai Province	4,866	20,542
Son La Province	no figure	no figure
Vinh Phu Province	no figure	14,222
Ha Bac Province	11,843	11,798
Quang Ninh Province	5,117	10,477
Ha Son Binh Province	no figure	no figure
Hai Hung Province	1,584	1,004
Thai Binh Province	no figure	no figure
Ha Nam Ninh Province	no figure	no figure
Thanh Hoa Province	1,085	no figure
Nghe Tinh Province	no figure	no figure
Binh Tri Thien Province	1,407	no figure
Quang Nam – Da Nang Province	6,688	no figure
Nghia Binh Province	3,509	no figure
Phu Khanh Province	7,820	no figure
Thuan Hai Province	15,470	no figure
Gia Lai – Kon Tum Province	1,140	no figure
Dak Lac Province	1,870	no figure
Lam Dong Province	12,066	no figure
Song Be Province	20,458	no figure
Tay Ninh Province	7,727	no figure
Dong Nai Province	85,379	no figure
Long An Province	5,342	no figure
Dong Thap Province	4,567	no figure
An Giang Province	16,157	no figure
Tien Giang Province	11,004	no figure
Ben Tre Province	8,317	no figure
Cuu Long Province	20,491	no figure
Hau Giang Province	92,200	no figure
Kien Giang Province	37,232	no figure
Minh Hai Province	40,064	no figure
Vung Tau – Con Dao Region	3,144	no figure
Total of Cities/Provinces/Reg.	931,363	65,016
Official Total	935,074	65,808

## Appendix 2

Number of Hoa and Sán Dìu in Vietnam based on the Census of 1989

City/Province/Special Area	Hoa	Sán Dìu
Ha Noi City	2,648	2,728
Ho Chi Minh City	433,551	6
Hai Phong City	2,210	7
Cao Bang Province	1,226	6
Ha Tuyen Province	12,151	8,153
Lang Son Province	2,532	61
Lai Chau Province	2,512	2
Hoang Lien Son Province	1,339	20
Bac Thai Province	3,433	28,471
Son La Province	136	11
Vinh Phu Province	323	20,928
Ha Bac Province	14,049	17,060
Quang Ninh Province	3,567	14,691
Ha Son Binh Province	242	19
Hai Hung Province	1,188	1,265
Thai Binh Province	123	3
Ha Nam Ninh Province	418	5
Thanh Hoa Province	603	2
Nghe Tinh Province	309	4
Quang Binh Province	31	0
Quang Tri Province	100	0
Thua Thien - Hue Province	477	0
Quang Nam-Da Nang Province	4,460	0
Quang Ngai Province	570	0
Binh Dinh Province	1,764	0
Phu Yen Province	970	1
Khanh Hoa Province	4,769	0
Thuan Hai Province	14,313	11
Gia Lai-Kon Tum Province	963	5
Dac Lac Province	2,440	31
Lam Dong Province	11,180	21
Song Be Province	17,456	72
Tay Ninh Province	4,900	0
Dong Nai Province	107,867	283
Long An Province	2,793	0
Dong Thap Province	5,315	0
An Giang Province	17,910	1
Tien Giang Province	7,902	0
Ben Tre Province	7,213	0
Cuu Long Province	21,619	0
Hau Giang Province	103,905	0
Kien Giang Province	35,236	0
Minh Hai Province	41,006	1
Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Area	1,935	0
Total of Cities/Provinces/Special Area	899,654	93,868
Official Total	900,185	94,630



### Appendix 3

Number of Hoa and Sán Dìu in Vietnam based on the Census of 1999

City/Province	Hoa	Sán Dìu	City/Province	Hoa	Sán Dìu
Ha Noi	1,530	182	Quang Nam	1,106	23
Hai Phong	1,229	35	Quang Ngai	230	0
Ha Tay	170	99	Binh Dinh	880	7
Hai Duong	1,147	1,516	Phu Yen	536	29
Hung Yen	68	12	Khanh Hoa	3,731	2
Ha Nam	39	9	Kon Tum	127	36
Nam Dinh	109	4	Gia Lai	670	34
Thai Binh	69	0	Dak Lak	5,016	626
Ninh Binh	33	0	Ho Chi Minh	428,768	39
Ha Giang	6,369	26	Lam Dong	15,352	383
Cao Bang	163	18	Ninh Thuan	2,479	12
Lao Cai	794	28	Binh Phuoc	7,947	155
Bac Kan	1,153	84	Tay Ninh	3,892	0
Lang Son	2,452	112	Binh Duong	14,455	11
Tuyen Quang	6,768	11,007	Dong Nai	102,444	541
Yen Bai	669	37	Binh Thuan	11,204	30
Thai Nguyen	2,573	37,365	BR - Vtau	10,761	25
Phu Tho	274	95	Long An	2,721	5
Vinh Phuc	53	32,495	Dong Thap	2,629	0
Bac Giang	17,375	23,779	An Giang	11,256	3
Bac Ninh	57	53	Tien Giang	4,917	3
Quang Ninh	3,382	17,216	Vinh Long	6,091	0
Lai Chau	2,838	41	Ben Tre	5,213	0
Son La	147	25	Kien Giang	32,693	0
Hoa Binh	179	5	Can Tho	22,824	0
Thanh Hoa	327	8	Tra Vinh	9,835	1
Nghe An	189	11	Soc Trang	68,404	1
Ha Tinh	16	0	Bac Lieu	22,619	0
Quang Binh	27	0	Ca Mau	10,576	0
Quang Tri	107	1	Total of Cities and	862,731	126,237
TT – Hue	390	5	Provinces		
Da Nang	2,299	3	Official Total	862,371	126,237

## Appendix 4

Number of Hoa and Sán Diu in Vietnam based on the Census of 2009

City/Province	Hoa	Sán Diu	City/Province	Hoa	Sán Diu
Ha Noi	2,134	832	Bình Định	651	5
Ha Giang	7,062	74	Phu Yen	482	38
Cao Bang	132	89	Khanh Hoa	3,034	5
Bac Kan	1,062	232	Ninh Thuan	1,847	3
Tuyen Quang	5,982	12,565	Binh Thuan	10,243	57
Lao Cai	822	24	Kon Tum	138	105
Dien Bien	2,445	22	Gia Lai	653	137
Lai Chau	802	33	Dak Lak	3,476	236
Son La	195	35	Dak Nong	4,686	617
Yen Bai	597	37	Lam Dong	14,929	662
Hoa Binh	156	42	Binh Phuoc	9,770	365
Thai Nguyen	2,064	44,134	Tay Ninh	2,495	5
Lang Son	2,147	213	Binh Duong	18,783	383
Quang Ninh	4,375	17,946	Dong Nai	95,162	850
Bac Giang	18,539	27,283	Ba Ria – Vung Tau	10,042	138
Phu Tho	231	228	Thanh Pho Ho Chi Minh	414,045	224
Vinh Phuc	72	36,821	Long An	2,690	2
Bac Ninh	118	124	Tien Giang	3,863	4
Hai Duong	1,242	1,872	Ben Tre	3,811	0
Hai Phong	1,171	89	Tra Vinh	7,690	2
Hung Yen	41	83	Vinh Long	4,879	0
Thai Binh	61	28	Dong Thap	1,855	0
Ha Nam	28	6	An Giang	8,075	2
Nam Dinh	154	22	Kien Giang	29,850	3
Ninh Binh	25	9	Can Tho	14,199	1
Thanh Hoa	288	30	Hau Giang	6,363	0
Nghe Anh	156	26	Soc Trang	64,910	0
Ha Tinh	15	3	Bac Lieu	20,082	0
Quang Binh	22	1	Ca Mau	8,911	0
Quang Tri	90	8	Total of Cities and Provinces	823,071	146,821
Thua Thien Hue	429	6	Official Total	823,071	146,821
Da Nang	1,684	9			
Quang Nam	943	49			
Quang Ngai	173	2			

### Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the origins of the term “Overseas Chinese”, see Wang (1985: 69-84).
- 2 Based on decision No. 121 – TCTK/PPCD on the ‘Nomenclature of Vietnamese ethnic groups’ by the General Department of Statistics on 2 March 1979. The ‘Nomenclature’ has been used in Dang *et al.* (1984, 1986, 1993, 2010). See also *The Socialist Republic of Vietnam* (1985: 45-51).
- 3 A major ethnic group is defined as numbering at least 40,000 persons in the 1979 census.
- 4 The figure for 1974 refers to the DRV only. The 1976 census in the former ROV put the number of Sán Diu at nine persons (*Census 1976 – ROV*, 1976: 340).
- 5 Unless otherwise indicated, the terms “ethnic Chinese” or “Chinese” are used synonymously with “Hoa”.
- 6 Saigon, the capital of the ROV, was renamed Ho Chi Minh City on 2 July 1976 and encompasses Saigon and Cholon which is mainly inhabited by ethnic Chinese. The core of Cholon corresponds to Districts 5 and 6 in Ho Chi Minh City.
- 7 Widespread drought in the North in 1977 caused a deficit of several million tons of rice in the country (*On the Eve*, 1986: 12).
- 8 For a detailed study on the economic activities of the ethnic Chinese prior to 1975, see Tran (1993: 41-76).
- 9 On arguments that the authorities were solely attacking Chinese businessmen and trying to interrupt the social order of the Chinese community, see Stern (1985a: 259–275, 1987a: 120-134).
- 10 For further details pertaining to the ROV policies towards the ethnic Chinese see Amer (1991: 18-23, 2011b: 177-185). On the situation of the ethnic Chinese in the ROV, see also Li (2011: 52-61).
- 11 The number of registered arrivals was 377 in 1975, 5,242 in 1976 and 15,657 in 1977 (JCFAD Australia, 1981: 71; *The Boat People*, 1979: 31).
- 12 According to China, 95 per cent of the more than 160,000 persons who reached China up to late July/early August 1978 were from northern Vietnam (*On Viet Nam’s Expulsion of Chinese Residents*, 25 July 1978: 173 and 28 July 1978: 177).
- 13 China refuted the notion that the rumours of war were the cause of the exodus and blamed it on the Vietnamese who were said to be persecuting the Chinese, see for example, *On Viet Nam’s Expulsion of Chinese Residents* (10 June, 1978: 124-125).
- 14 These refugees were from Hanoi and not the border provinces, see Benoit (1982: 144-145).
- 15 The rumours of an impending war between China and Vietnam and other factors behind the exodus are discussed and assessed by Han (2009: 20-28).
- 16 For an overview and analysis of the diplomatic dispute between China and Vietnam over the question of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, see Amer (1991: 57-77).
- 17 For a discussion on the reliability of different statistics on the refugees, see Amer (1991: 82-84, 96). It is noted that up to mid-1979 ethnic Chinese made up an estimated 60 to 70 per cent of the refugees.
- 18 Figure 2 is derived from Amer (2011a). The figures are taken from Mignot (1984: 20) with reference to the UNHCR. With reference to the Hong Kong Government’s *Monthly Statistical Report* of June 1993, Skeldon (1994: 98) provides a total number of 77,863 for the two years that differs slightly from Mignot’s total figure of 77,277. But there is a considerable discrepancy between the respective year, 1978 and 1979, in the two sources. Skeldon puts 1978 at 9,115 and 1979 at 68,758, while Mignot puts 1978 at 5,257 and 1979 at 77,277. One of the reasons for this discrepancy seems to be that Skeldon (1994: 92) refers to the arrival 3,318 people on one freighter on 23 December 1978 and they were obviously not included in the December figure provided by Mignot (1984: 20), i.e. 19 people.
- 19 The most extensive and detailed study on the Chinese attack on Vietnam in February-March 1979 is Chen, 1987 (Chapter five deals specifically with the military operations: 98-117).
- 20 The section is derived from Amer (1991: 105-108).
- 21 The figure does not include the 130,000 persons who arrived in the United States in 1975.

- 22 Author's communication at the UNHCR office in Hanoi on 7 February 1990.
- 23 Figures provided by China to the UNHCR (UNHCR, 1989).
- 24 An estimated 30,000 of the 260,000 were Vietnamese (Chang, 1982a: 57). According to one estimate, quoted in the *Census 1989a* (1991: 3), the 260,000 were all "Vietnamese of Chinese origin".
- 25 In Amer (1991: 106-107) the percentage was put at 2.575. Thus the calculations in the following will yield slightly different figures compared with the earlier study.
- 26 This total figure disregards the fact that people leaving leads to a decrease in the number of births. Thus, under normal conditions the figure for the total Vietnamese population would have been somewhat higher.
- 27 As in Amer (1991: 107-108 footnote 11) the following line of argument by Chang must once again be refuted: "Although the boat people have included both Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese, if the 70 per cent proportion, which the ethnic Chinese are estimated to have constituted of boat refugee population may be used as a general guide, one can well also conclude that the entire Chinese population in South Vietnam has now been all but completely eliminated." (Chang, 1982a: 60, 1982b, 320).
- 28 For a historical background to the conflict between Cambodia and Vietnam, see Heder (1978: 3-17). For an analysis of the conflict, see Heder (1982: 22-67). For a detailed study of the territorial claims of the two countries during the military conflict, see Amer (1994a: 195-201).
- 29 The dispute relating to the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam was the issue which brought the conflict between China and Vietnam to public attention, but other factors also contributed to the deterioration of bilateral relations and eventually to the Chinese attack in 1979, such as different perceptions of the Soviet Union and relations to and influence in Cambodia. For a detailed account of the overall deterioration of bilateral relations, see Amer (1994b: 357-363, 368-376; 1999: 69-72, 98-104; 2004: 113-116); Chen (1987); Duiker (1986); Gilks (1992); Lawson (1984); Ross (1988); and Woodside (1979: 381-409).
- 30 It should be noted that Vo (1990: 124-169) does not refer to such a campaign.
- 31 Information about these companies has been obtained during the author's visits to Ho Chi Minh City in November 1993, December 1994, December 1995, December 1996, and December 1997. For more details on the economic activities of the ethnic Chinese in the 1980s and early 1990s, see Tran (1993: 87-100).
- 32 Based on discussions with researchers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in February-March 1992, November 1993, December 1994, December 1995, November-December 1996, and December 1997. See also Hiebert (1991: 24); Tran (1993: 90).
- 33 Personal communication, Mr. Nghi Doan, Representative of the 6th Municipal Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, 26 March 1992. Mr. Nghi Doan was also Head of the Chinese Committee as well as Honorary Chairman of the Sponsorary Society of Teaching Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City.
- 34 Based on author's discussions with researchers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City between 1992 and 1997.
- 35 For details on the normalization process between China and Vietnam, see Amer (1994b: 363-368, 376-383; 1999: 73-74, 105-108; 2004: 117-121).
- 36 Personal communication, Mr. Nghi Doan on, 26 March 1992.
- 37 Based on author's discussions with researchers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in February and March 1992, November 1993 and December 1994.
- 38 Author's discussions with official and researchers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in December 1995, in November-December 1996; and in December 1997.
- 39 Author's discussions with officials and researchers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in November-December 1996, and December 1997.
- 40 On 12 January 1979 it was announced that the Vietnamese Government had decided to permit the orderly departure of persons who wished to leave the country. On 30 May 1979 an agreement was reached between Vietnam and the UNHCR to facilitate the implementation of this Orderly Departure Program (ODP) (*Those Who Leave*, 1979: 22, 39-40, *Vietnam Courier*, 1979: 3).

- 41 The estimates obtained through the author's communication with Mr. Nguyen Trong Dieu of the ODP in Hanoi on 6 March 1992.
- 42 Official figures obtained by the author through the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry in Ho Chi Minh City in December 1996 put the number of persons who had left though the ODP up to the end of 1991 at 351,708.
- 43 Author's discussions with officials and researchers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in February-March 1992, in November 1993, December 1994, December 1995, November-December 1996, and December 1997. The issue of the ethnic Chinese who left for China in 1978-1979 was incorporated in the Joint Communiqué issued the end of CPV General Secretary Do Moi and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet's visit to Beijing from 5 to 10 November 1991 (BBC/SWB/FE 1991: A3/1, *Vietnam Courier*, 1991a: 1, 3, b:1, 3).

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