

Conference on Vietnam, Washington D.C. Nov 16 - 17, 2000

Opening Remarks

Dean Paul Wolfowitz:

I just want to welcome everyone. I want to particularly welcome and thank Bob Scalapino for holding the conference on this topic. I don't know whether you press for time when you suggested it, but certainly we could not find a more timely point in the calendar to be addressing the issue of Vietnam. The first ever visit for a President of the United States in a unified Vietnam and a new chapter in a US Vietnam relationship. It has been major interest of us here at SAIS even before I got here. Dean Fred Brown, who started the South East Asia program, has been working in many ways with Vietnam for a very long time, including a career in the Foreign Service. We are very proud of the South East Asia program we started here under the direction of Karl Jackson and Fred Brown. We have grown from zero students a few years ago to now over forty who are concentrating on South East Asia, many of them on Vietnam. We are very pleased of having Jim Riedel back. We have a very strong delegation. We have very pleased to see so many experts on Vietnam here. I particularly want to welcome our co-sponsor from Paris, l'Association des Techniciens Vietnamiens d'Outre-Mer. It has been a pleasure to co-sponsor the conference along with Vietnamese Professionals of America. It is my turn to turn it over to Dr Scalapino, the Dean of Asian scholars everywhere.

Professor Robert Scalapino:

First let me say that it is very good to be back at SAIS to meet so many old friends and I think, as Paul has said, the timing of this meeting could scarcely had been better given the development in US Vietnam relations and more than that the broad trends in the Asia Pacific region. I am fond of saying that this is the time when every nation in the world irrespective of economic and political system must adjust to three developing but somewhat conflicting forces: internationalism, nationalism, and what I called communalism. I think that we are all aware of the rapid development of internationalism both in institutional and non-institutional forms. Some of the most effective development in Asia today come from trilateral and quadrilateral relations. Often countries focusing on singles issue when some consensus is possible. For example, in North East Asia, the United States, Japan and China have worked with considerable harmony on the Korean problem together with South Korea. The institutional developments are well known: ASEAN, the general effort to build a broader community. This has a long way to go. ASEAN for example is in some difficulty today due partly to the Indonesia difficulty. But they are efforts to bring together at least those countries that want to join in a broader group. And Vietnam has moved, as you well know in that direction. I just come back from Asia and since the rise of nationalism as one may say the resurgence of nationalism, some of the socialist countries incidentally like in China, it is in part a substitute for declining ideology in an effort to build loyalty and support. In other areas it is a response to perceived inequality or a desire to emerge in a more coherent position. But whatever the reasons, there is in my view a considerable rise in intensity of nationalistic feelings in many parts of Asia and I would not exclude the West. Finally I think that in this extraordinarily complex period, many individuals are asking the question "who am I, to

what do I belong in this". Some find answers in reemphasizing their ethnic background or joining in a more fundamentalist religious or cult factors or localism. Many problems of emerging societies therefore come in the resurgence of this communalism in a variety of forms. In all of these, factors are important in focusing on issues and problems. Vietnam I trust in this discussion will receive an objective and fair analysis. There will be, I am sure, differences of opinion and that's good. I trust that we will look at the problems that this society faces. We also look at various alternative approaches that may help in the development of the society. My own feeling is that we have here a group of individuals who spend a great deal of time trying to understand the society and its development. I think we owe a particular debt to Truong Van Thuan who has done so much to help organize this and to Fred Brown who spent an enormous amount of time bringing you together. I will close by saying that in these two days we can begin to come up with some thoughts about how and where Vietnam should go in the economic field, in the political realm, in the international area, we would have done a service. Like many socialist societies, it seems to me that the Vietnamese political elite is concerned about the degree to which economic change will affect the political system. They are also somewhat divided on the speed and nature of reform and thus it is important that this step our voices unified or different will be heard. Thank you very much.

Professor Fred Brown:

Thank you very much Bob Scalapino for those remarks. I want to recognize also Truong Van Thuan and Lam Thanh Liem who comes from Paris. Thanks for all the help they are giving SAIS for putting on this conference I think that our participants who came farthest is Adam Fforde who come from Singapore. Can anybody beat that? Anybody from Myanmar here? So he gets the prize for that. I want to go over some nuts and bolts so everybody knows when lunch is. If you are registered with us, you have lunch prepared by Le Saigonais Restaurant. This will be around 12:30 This will be followed by some remarks by James Riedel, Professor of Economics here at SAIS. We can get your coffee any time you want in mid morning, The rest room is diagonally across the vestibule. If you want a copy of the papers, please sign up. There are also copies of the participants' bio available. We are going to hold four half-day sessions. We are going to ask our panelists to speak no more than 20 minutes. Then I hope that we will have ample time for good discussions. I think that much of the value in any conference come from the discussions among the panelists but also from the audience. When you ask a question, we ask that you will be kind enough to identify yourself. This is being recorded. We will have printed conference reports. The papers will be put on-line by Vietnamese Professionals of America. So let's move to the first panel, it is being moderated by Truong Van Thuan. Thank you very much.

Truong Van Thuan:

Good morning. My name is Thuan Truong and it is a very great privilege to be here to welcome you. We have a very exciting program planned for the next two days. We have gathered leading experts who will share with you their assessment of the current situation in Vietnam and their recommendations in view of promoting the achievement of an equitable, prosperous society for the Vietnamese people. This conference is the 2nd that we have organized. We will be continuing on that path.

This event would not have been able possible without the support of a number of key personalities. On behalf of l'Association des Techniciens Vietnamiens d'Outre-Mer and the Vietnamese Professionals of America, I like to express my very deep appreciation to

- Professor Scalapino who have helped us, advised us in more ways than I can hope for
- Professor Wolfowitz, and Professor Jackson, who are providing us an opportunity to work with a leading academic institution. This has been very educational for me.
- Professor Brown who spent so much of his time to package a first-class event.

To the speakers, I like to say that the time you take away from your very busy schedule to participate in the conference is very precious to us.

We look forward to interacting with you in the course of the next two days. Thank you for being here.