

The Ebb and Flow of Ideas in Nation-Building: The Tumultuous Run of *The Times of Vietnam*

“The press must provide a forum for differing opinion,” Vietnam’s first English-language newspaper, *The Times of Vietnam*, confidently declared in one of its first editorials, because “open criticism” was “an essential attribute” of South Vietnam’s democratic revolution and its goal to ensure “the people have full possession of their political and economic rights.”¹ The very first article, in fact, celebrated that President Ngo Dinh Diem had already led the South Vietnamese to shake “themselves loose from both the shackles of colonialism and the tentacles of Communism,” as well as “all forms of corruption” from the past.² From such idealistic and optimistic beginnings, *The Times of Vietnam* eventually devolved into an infamous mockery of the values it originally espoused. The Americans who flooded South Vietnam in the early 60s saw *The Times of Vietnam* as a propaganda “mouthpiece” representing the worst elements of President Diem’s government.³ Saigon’s public, likewise, viewed the publication with such misgivings that the paper’s offices were ransacked in the aftermath of the 1963 coup that overthrew Diem. This discreditable ending is typically all that is remembered of the paper, but there is more to the story. The development of *The Times of Vietnam* has much to tell us about the ebbs and flows of building a political culture in a decolonizing nation riven by disagreements and contests. With its foundations in the idealism of what was possible as a new nation joining the free world to its headlong crash into postcolonial realities of civil war, foreign intervention, and political upheaval, *The Times of Vietnam* was a microcosm of President Ngo Dinh Diem’s Republic of Vietnam, its collapse, and the origins of America’s Vietnam War.

Recent scholarship surrounding the Vietnam War has led to what Edward Miller and Tuong Vu described as “the Vietnamization of the Vietnam War.”⁴ Debates on the Vietnam War from the 1970s through 90s generally centered on American actions and questions that mattered most to Americans, with the Vietnamese and other perspectives pushed to the background. Over the last two decades, however, historians have

expanded the scope of study to explore the international and Vietnamese dimensions of the conflict. Scholars utilizing Vietnamese sources and centering Vietnamese agency have thoroughly re-evaluated the early years of the Republic of Vietnam under President Ngo Dinh Diem (1955-1963) in particular, yielding a more nuanced portrait of the era and the origins of the Vietnam War. South Vietnam was once viewed as an artificial state built mostly on American intervention, but new studies have demonstrated how nation building in South Vietnam was a complex phenomenon where American influence was tempered and modified by significant South Vietnamese interests and contests over the direction of their new nation.⁵ Similarly, new scholarship like that of Nu-Anh Tran, Jason Picard, and others has demonstrated that South Vietnam's journalists and intellectuals engaged in contentious dialogues on the young nation's affairs despite restrictions on political freedoms under Diem's government.⁶

This article builds on that work and contributes to the goal of creating a more comprehensive view of Vietnam's many conflicts and America's involvement in them. Although some random issues and articles of *The Times of Vietnam* can be found in various American archives, the author was able to access all issues at the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City. Additionally, research into the South Vietnamese Presidential records in the National Archive II in Ho Chi Minh City and the US Information Agency at the National Archives in College Park, as well as the author's work with founding publisher Nguyen Thai on his memoir *Crooked Bamboo*, inform this study.⁷ These sources demonstrate that nation building in South Vietnam was negotiated and contested between various Vietnamese and American interests, and the ultimate outcome was contingent upon this complex negotiation between all those interests. *The Times of Vietnam* itself is an example of this, with Vietnamese and Americans contributing jointly to a project aimed "to bridge the gap of misinformation and misunderstanding" between the two nations as they were embarking on their joint nation-building effort.⁸ The failure of those hopes for the paper, like the failure of the First Republic of Vietnam under Diem, so long taken for granted in American memory and scholarship, deserves greater scrutiny and explanation.

Founding Vietnam's First English-Language Newspaper

The Times of Vietnam was founded in 1956 by Nguyen Thai, a young man recently returned to Vietnam after going to college in the United States, an unusual background in those days. During his time in America Thai had studied journalism, learned about the American way of life, and helped a family friend who was in virtual exile from Vietnam. That family friend, a peer and colleague of Thai's mandarin father, was Ngo Dinh Diem. When Diem was appointed Prime Minister in June 1954, Thai followed him back to Vietnam and served in various capacities including as Diem's translator. The idea for starting an English-language paper was proposed to Thai at a dinner party with

American and Vietnamese officials, and Thai found it to be a perfect opportunity to promote the future of South Vietnam he believed in.

Thai certainly understood that Vietnam's postcolonial situation and the ongoing contest between communists and anticommunists would restrain some progress towards democracy. As he later wrote, Thai did not anticipate "ideal democracy" in South Vietnam and could believe in a government that at least brought "an acceptable degree of honesty, integrity, and efficiency" to the many problems "deep-rooted in Vietnam's traditional past and colonial heritage."⁹ He did believe, however, that one major step South Vietnam could take towards building a democratic culture was fostering a relatively free and independent press. Furthermore, since the democratic vision for South Vietnam was based on integrating American ideas and aid with South Vietnamese culture and conditions, creating an English-language paper would help Vietnamese and Americans "bridge the gap" of misunderstanding and work together equally with "the vitality" of two "traditionally freedom-loving" peoples.¹⁰ Finally, promoting English was part of the goal of the paper, providing employment to other American-educated Vietnamese and something to read in English. As *The Times of Vietnam* enthused in 1958, "English learning [was] no doubt one of the most exciting characteristics of Saigon life," and paper itself was at the center of that.¹¹



Figure 1: Nguyen Thai (right) with Ngo Dinh Diem (center). From the archives of Nguyen Thai, used with permission.

The paper started as a weekly paper in early 1956 and expanded to daily in 1957. Thai was the principal editor and publisher and modeled his paper after the *Manchester*

Guardian, a major British paper dedicated to press freedom and liberal values (known as *The Guardian* since 1959). Gene and Ann Gregory also invested in Thai's paper and helped run it. Gene had first arrived in Vietnam as a US Information Service employee during the early 50s. Gene and Ann were close to Diem's brother and right-hand-man Ngo Dinh Nhu and his wife, Madame Nhu. The Nhuses were a power center unto themselves within Diem's family-centered regime. Nhu was leader of the regime's secret Can Lao political party, Diem's closest and most trusted advisor, and the driving force behind most of the government's intelligence, internal security, and diplomatic activities. Madame Nhu served as first lady to her bachelor brother-in-law Diem as well as eventually becoming a leading figure in the National Assembly and in several mass organizations like the Women's Solidarity Movement. The friendship between the Gregoryses and the Nhuses grew throughout the 1950s including family outings and trips together as well as a series of interlocking mutual business interests. By the late 50s, both Vietnamese and Americans around Saigon whispered that Gene and Ann were "the Nhuses' American friends and propagandists."¹²

Although a lively press scene existed in Vietnam before World War II, the shocks of the Second World War and First Indochina War set back the growth of the newspaper-centered Vietnamese political culture. The dual attacks on press freedom from both returning French colonialists and the communists left a journalism profession in Vietnam that was severely handicapped. While dozens of daily and weekly papers were published in Hanoi and Saigon in the 1950s, these papers had small circulations, intense pressure to self-censor, and tenuous finances. The dangers of engaging in honest reporting meant that popular publications often relegated news to small corners of the back pages while "crimes, murders, and hair-raising reports on human monsters [were] regularly front paged."¹³ Consumers, meanwhile, read newspapers "with considerable skepticism" because of how the French, Viet Minh, and Vietnamese political parties clearly utilized the press as "a propaganda instrument."¹⁴ Because of these challenges and ongoing political turmoil, papers were short lived enterprises prone to rapid collapse, which continued in South Vietnam.¹⁵ *The Times of Vietnam* was born into this press atmosphere filled with challenges to objective journalism and to democratic debate.

At the same time, the creation of the Republic of Vietnam and the project of giving substance to the democratic rhetoric deployed by Ngo Dinh Diem revitalized the Saigon press. New publications appeared that tested the new republic's freedoms and contested what its future should hold.¹⁶ Papers in Saigon had the opportunity to define the political culture of an independent nation. That was complicated by the presence and influence of the US in South Vietnam's nation building project, however. Communists argued that American activity amounted to an extension of colonialism and some historians still contend that America "invented" South Vietnam, but even if it was sometimes unequal there certainly was a partnership between Americans and South

Vietnamese that required negotiation and collaboration. An English language paper was a perfect tool for furthering that work, providing a medium to exchange ideas and perspectives between Vietnamese and Americans, while also practically furthering the work of defining Vietnamese republicanism through practicing press freedom.

According to Thai, financing the paper was not a challenge because of Thai and Gene Gregory's connections, but the origins of the paper later raised questions about where the money came from. It was common for the CIA to assist English language newspapers around the world during the Cold War, and both Thai and Gene Gregory had outward appearances of involvement in covert activities. After the collapse of Diem's government in November 1963, Newsweek snarked that Americans in Saigon "widely assumed" Gene "was some sort of super-intelligence agent, a flabby James Bond."¹⁷ As a rare American-educated Vietnamese with American friends that included CIA operative Edward Lansdale, Thai also attracted some suspicions in Saigon. Declassified records discourage the idea that there was a direct link between the men and their paper to the CIA, however. Because of the rumors, Paul Kattenberg of the State Department inquired with the CIA in 1963 about *The Times of Vietnam*, and the CIA explicitly informed Kattenberg that *The Times of Vietnam* "was not founded by [the] CIA," had never "received any CIA subsidy in any form," and had never been supported "directly or indirectly."¹⁸



Figure 2: The first office of *The Times of Vietnam*. From the archives of Nguyen Thai, used with permission.

Publishing a paper in English presented significant practical challenges, but there were advantages also. French and Vietnamese language papers were subject to existing

censorship regulations left over from French colonial laws and wartime restrictions, but the new English language paper's status was more ambiguous and there were no government censors who could even read English proficiently at first. Nguyen Thai's close relationship with Diem also inclined the censors to be hands off with the paper, so *The Times of Vietnam* did not face the same kind of scrutiny and control as the rest of the Saigon press. On the other hand, the fact that typesetters in Saigon also did not speak English complicated production of the paper. Ann mostly managed the proofreading process, which required endless corrections because typesetters would make an error, Ann would correct it, then the typesetters would make a new error later in the very same sentence. Hoping to be helpful, the typesetters would even make superfluous corrections on their own, for example changing a word like "dependence" to a word they were more familiar with like "independence." Even for employees who had fluent English skills, English was still their third language after Vietnamese and French. As a result of such challenges, *The Times of Vietnam* was, especially in the eyes of American journalists, a "crude product" and the publication expressed exasperation at being on "the receiving end of all the left hooks" for typos and grammatical errors.¹⁹

A Bridge Between Vietnamese and Americans

Although it was closely aligned with the government, *The Times of Vietnam* also displayed an independent streak in its early years. Even after Nguyen Thai left the paper in the hands of Gene and Ann to take over Vietnam Press, *The Times of Vietnam* ran moderate criticisms of the government and was once suspended temporarily over an editorial on Thailand that the regime considered irresponsible.²⁰ As late as 1969, the paper criticized the government for failing in its "duty to diffuse information, and not to withhold it."²¹ Perhaps the most meaningful example of the paper criticizing Diem came in the wake of the 1960 Caravelle Manifesto. The Manifesto condemned the regime and its policies, particularly the lack of political freedom in the country and harsh but ineffective security measures. It was signed by eighteen prominent politicians and intellectual leaders, including eleven former government ministers.²² Weeks later, after Diem gave minor and belated concessions in response to the Manifesto while also having police monitor the signatories, *The Times of Vietnam* expressed dissatisfaction, arguing that "the government should exercise more tolerance with unfavourable [sic] and even hostile press reports."²³

Even amidst government efforts to control the press, debate between the dozens of daily and weekly papers in Saigon was robust, in part because most papers were aligned with political factions who supported them. *The Times of Vietnam* occupied a unique spot in that discourse, both participating in it as well as summarizing and framing the discourse for Americans in Vietnam. The paper had regular features of translated articles from other Saigon publications as well as frequent commentary on Saigon's press controversies. *The Times of Vietnam* advocated for a balance between

government supervision of the press and press freedom because of the context of decolonization and conflict. War and colonialism had left a press lacking in “journalistic tradition” with “everpresent” “journalistic corruption,” which made it both more difficult and more important to find “the right middle between the sensational and the proper.”²⁴ The public did not appreciate the “serious journalism” necessary in a democracy, while too few journalists were willing to engage in serious journalism and those who did were “considered a nuisance by far too many government officials.”²⁵ The paper welcomed opposition speaking out at times and generally resisted government overreaches like shutting down opposition papers, but it was also quick to call out what it viewed as sensationalism and “opposition for opposition’s sake.”²⁶ After three weekly papers connected with prominent oppositionist and Caravelle Manifesto signee Dr. Phan Quang Đán were raided and closed, *The Times of Vietnam* criticized both the opposition and the government’s response, opining that “two wrongs does not make one right.”²⁷

Undoubtably, one of the paper’s clearest political themes was promoting the partnership and shared vision of the US and South Vietnamese government for building a stable and prosperous South Vietnam. Overall, the paper saw the Republic of Vietnam as a noble and hopeful experiment in decolonization, challenged by the threat of communism but empowered by American assistance to join an international community defined by growing freedom and prosperity. The paper did not hesitate to criticize Americans when their actions insulted Vietnam’s sovereignty or undermined the nation building project, however. When Scripps-Howard foreign correspondent Albert Colegrove published a series of muckraking articles on the problems of South Vietnam in 1958, *The Times of Vietnam* rushed to attack Colegrove and defend the government. *The Times of Vietnam* rebutted the Colegrove’s charges and scolded him that South Vietnam was “not an American protectorate” and certainly not “a child without experience.”²⁸ Going even further, *The Times of Vietnam* attacked Colegrove personally, claiming that he did all his research in the “archives of the Rue Catinat and of the Phoenix Bar,” an allusion to Colegrove’s not-so-secret liaisons with an escort in Saigon.²⁹ Generally, however, it emphasized the goodwill of both sides in the partnership and tried to foster greater understanding on both sides. While some Americans deserved criticism for occasional overreaches, *The Times of Vietnam* argued consistently that “American aid, for all its errors and limitations, has stood between us and chaos.”³⁰

The Times of Vietnam coordinated extensively with the American Friends of Vietnam (AFV) along with Oram Inc., Diem’s New York public relations firm that quietly guided the AFV behind the scenes. Gene Gregory was a member of the AFV and participated in many of its activities, including helping to coordinate Diem’s triumphal 1957 state visit to the US. The AFV and *Times of Vietnam* also regularly swapped articles and information to support each other. *The Times of Vietnam* highlighted AFV

conferences and activities in the US to emphasize the sympathy that Americans had for South Vietnam's future, while the AFV utilized *The Times of Vietnam* articles as evidence of the good that the US was doing for South Vietnam. The paper frequently featured reports on the travels and activities of AFV members to highlight the reciprocal and sympathetic friendship of the US and wider free world for Vietnam. As one of many examples, in July 1956 the paper ran an article titled "Crusade of Friendship by Angier Biddle Duke," which celebrated Duke's philanthropy on behalf of South Vietnam as the President of the International Rescue Committee and held his work up as evidence that generous beneficence was "part of the American way of life."³¹ For its part, the AFV celebrated and supported *The Times of Vietnam*. When AFV Chairman Gen. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel visited in 1956, the mutual love was evident from his statements and an official AFV motion "welcoming *The Times of Vietnam* 'as a worthy contribution toward greater understanding between the peoples of the US and Vietnam.'"³²

Nguyen Thai initially hoped his appointment to lead Vietnam Press would be temporary and he could eventually return full time to his paper. He continued to be involved in the paper and retained ownership for some period, including during its expansion into a daily paper in the fall of 1957. His role at Vietnam Press also gave him powerful indirect influence, because the government-run news agency supplied much of the content for Saigon's papers, including English-language content that Thai inaugurated as director general of Vietnam Press. A significant portion of *The Times of Vietnam*'s content was made up of Vietnam Press articles. After more than a year at Vietnam Press, however, Diem made it clear to Thai that he would not be allowed to leave government service and so Thai sold his shares and ended his involvement with the paper. Gene and Ann Gregory ran the paper thereafter, with an assumed Vietnamese name as the editor and publisher to avoid the appearance of being foreign manipulators of Vietnamese readers and to preserve the paper's image as an authentic Vietnamese voice accessible to Americans.



Figure 3: Nguyen Thai (left) with Gene (third from left) and Ann Gregory (second from right). From the archives of Nguyen Thai, used with permission.

The Gregorys' business interests often overlapped with the AFV's propaganda efforts and the journalism of *The Times of Vietnam*. Gregory had secured lucrative export and import licenses in South Vietnam and owned the "Vietnamese Development Company" (VIDECO). VIDEKO was a major operation by the early 1960s, with hundreds of Vietnamese employees and engaged in exports and imports of a range of items. Amongst its projects were several that were entangled in government and AFV propaganda operations, including importing portable radios and batteries to run them (a project the US Information Service considered expensive and inefficient). The Gregorys, like their patrons the Nhuss, had a habit of mixing government business with their personal interests.³³

From Journalism to Regime Propaganda

A major turning point in South Vietnam occurred in November 1960 when three battalions of ARVN paratroopers launched a coup attempt. Frustrated with the regime's failure to halt the emerging insurgency against the government in the countryside, the regime's favoritism of loyalists within the military, and many of the same criticisms as the Caravelle Manifesto, coup forces seized key points throughout Saigon on the morning of November 11. When they failed to immediately overrun the Presidential Palace, however, the coup leaders opened negotiations with Diem. The negotiations caused confusion within the coup forces and allowed Diem time to call loyal

reinforcements to Saigon. By the next day, the coup leaders recognized they had been outmaneuvered and fled to Cambodia. Although the regime had survived and the continuing loyalty of many ARVN officers was some reassurance for Diem and Nhu, it was clear that anticommunist opposition to the regime was rising and that it was somewhat connected to American officials in Saigon who were also dissatisfied with Diem's lack of progress. Consequently, Diem and the Nhuses became more suspicious of those they believed to be disloyal in the wake of the coup attempt, including elements of the ARVN, the anticommunist opposition in Saigon, US Embassy officials, and journalists whether foreign or domestic.³⁴

The failed coup thus decisively altered the regime's approach to the press. The domestic Vietnamese language press was essentially purged, with multiple papers attacked or shut down by the government, followed up by a tightening of the government's censorship and the creation of new papers that US Information Service officials quickly identified as "propaganda instrument[s] of the government."³⁵ For the foreign journalists in the country and the nascent English language press, the regime's attitude shifted from one of mostly negligent indifference to a more deliberately repressive approach as well. The Nhuses led this effort, both on behalf of the regime and as a method of consolidating their power within the regime, and *The Times of Vietnam* was vital to that strategy. The paper was useful to the regime as a method of cloaking their demands to American officials in the guise of an authentic and independent Vietnamese voice, giving a false impression of mass support for the regime and its desires.

Following the coup, the paper echoed the regime's anger and blamed the coup attempt on "our foreign friends," American reporters, "who all too often know Viet Nam only through Radio Catinat," a nickname for the cafes along Rue Catinat where journalists supposedly picked up and spread rumors.³⁶ It was after the 1960 coup attempt that the paper became a "mouthpiece" for the Nhuses. The paper transitioned from journalism aimed at connecting Americans and Vietnamese to a propaganda tool of the regime, often utilized to divide the growing number of anticommunist rivals to the regime from Americans. Americans were frequently urged not to listen to the "malcontents" who supposedly spread rumors of exaggerated problems in South Vietnam out of jealousy, spite, or greed.³⁷ The paper's change of slogan to "*The Times of Viet Nam: A Chronicle of the Nation's Progress*" indicated its dedication to putting a positive spin on the government's message. When the government claimed it had killed 67 Viet Cong, *The Times of Vietnam* could be counted on to exaggerate the victory, absurdly claiming officials were too modest and "the number of Communists killed must greatly exceed 67 since there were a great number of blood stains left on the ground."³⁸ Jose Mayor, a Filipino reporter for *The Times of Vietnam*, informed USIS that after the coup attempt the paper was "getting direct instruction from the [Presidential] Palace" where both Diem and the Nhuses lived. Whether it was exaggerating body counts, cutting

“mention of American aid,” promoting “anti-US materials,” or attacking the American press, *The Times of Vietnam* consistently followed the regime’s desires after late 1960.³⁹ The reversal of the paper’s position on American aid, from promoting and defending it to attacking it was particularly noteworthy, especially because American aid and efforts were dramatically increased after Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961. As Diem and Nhu were seeking to manage their relationship with the US and not lose control amidst the flood of American aid and advice, *The Times of Vietnam* became a crucial tool for them in shaping narratives and messaging with their American allies.

The Times of Vietnam also noticeably shifted its position on the internal politics of the Diem regime without explicitly acknowledging it. Nguyen Thai had been clearly aligned with President Diem and was skeptical of Diem’s family, whose unofficial power Thai saw as corrupt and illegitimate. Although Thai would become disillusioned with Diem by the end of the 1950s, he originally liked and respected Diem, viewing him as a beloved elder and a respectable and honest leader. Consequently, Thai had emphasized the power and vision of President Diem and reported on South Vietnamese politics as if it was a nation ruled by laws. This approach aligned with Diem’s preferences for the government’s public relations. Behind closed doors, Diem repeatedly urged US Information Service officials and American journalists to “not refer to personalities” or “mention any of his family.”⁴⁰ Following the failed coup and without Nguyen Thai pushing against it, however, *The Times of Vietnam* greatly expanded publicity on the Nhuses. Madame Nhu’s role in the regime was especially promoted on the front pages of the paper after late 1960, with her Women’s Solidarity Movement and National Assembly activities frequently highlighted.⁴¹ This was part of a larger publicity campaign by the Nhuses, who at the same time also pressured the US government for greater coverage in American propaganda, including specifically for “more closeups” of Madame Nhu. American officials were reluctant to honor the request and confused by the contradiction of Diem’s orders, but in the end mostly acquiesced to the Nhuses’ demands to avoid involving the US in the “friction between Diem and Nhu.”⁴²

The “mouthpiece” phase of the paper is generally what it is remembered for, thanks to the direct role it played in the growing conflict between the US government and the Diem regime and its brazen attacks on Americans that the regime considered enemies. Foremost amongst those enemies were American journalists like David Halberstam, the US Information Service (USIS) in Saigon, and the CIA, all of which became frequent targets of the paper in 1962 and 1963. The regime came to see USIS as perhaps the most dangerous of the “schemers” and “contrivers” trying to “sabotage the war effort,” rivaled only by the CIA. The regime not only had *The Times of Vietnam* launch “attacks on USIS,” but Madame Nhu also personally claimed that USIS was amongst the “pro-coup agents” who thought it would be “a good thing to overthrow the Viet-Nameese government.”⁴³ When public pressure did not force USIS back to the “mere process of communicating the word” of the regime, the Nhuses escalated the stakes even

further with one of their favorite tactics. Before the November 1st coup, there were plentiful “rumors, probably officially inspired, of plans for sacking [the] Embassy and USIS” during “spontaneous” riots. The regime also made sure that its lists of Americans targeted for assassination—which included USIS leaders and staff—were no secret.⁴⁴ In the final phases of the regime’s downfall in the fall of 1963, the paper played a direct role in the Nhus’ maneuvering to maintain their power. In the most stunning development, *The Times of Vietnam* published a front-page article in early September that directly accused the CIA of coup plotting.⁴⁵ Using the paper to directly confront the US was a move by the Nhus to shame the US into backing down, but this backfired. While Diem tried to convince newly arrived Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. that he was a good and loyal ally, the confrontational tactics of embarrassing and harassing the US fed into the Kennedy Administration’s antipathy for the regime.

Ultimately, *The Times of Vietnam* faced the same fate as the regime because of how closely it had tied itself to the Nhus. The 1963 coup was welcomed by the South Vietnamese, with celebrations in the streets and “spontaneous, though maybe not,” mobs tearing down regime symbols like *The Times of Vietnam*’s office.⁴⁶ Ann Gregory sought refuge in the US Embassy during the coup, while Gene was out of the country at the time. They were not permitted to permanently return after the coup and had to give up their paper and import business. Without the backing of the Nhus, they would have been in danger because of their well-known connections to the regime.⁴⁷

While *The Times of Vietnam* has only been remembered for its spectacular and stunning role in the drama that led to Diem’s demise, the paper represented far more than its ending. Overall, it showed many of the dilemmas of journalism in decolonization and nation building. The failure of the paper’s original mission, promoting understanding between Vietnamese and Americans and furthering progress towards political freedom in South Vietnam had serious repercussions. Promoting understanding and partnership between Vietnamese and Americans, developing nation and developed, was fraught with unforeseen obstacles. Reviving moderate political discourse and constructing a postcolonial political identity amidst war, revolution, and reaction proved to be difficult and dangerous tasks. The failures of these endeavors left a weak political foundation both to South Vietnam and to the alliance between Americans and Vietnamese.

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Author's note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force Academy, the Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

Notes

¹ "Our Editorial Policy," *The Times of Vietnam*, March 3, 1956, 8; "A Democratic Revolution," *The Times of Vietnam*, January 28, 1956, 1, 6.

² "Elections for the Assembly of Viet Nam," *The Times of Vietnam*, January 14, 1956, 1, 4.

³ David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire: America and Vietnam During the Kennedy Era*, Revised ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 103; William Prochnau, *Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett--Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles*, (NY: Vintage Books, 1996), 3, 126; Stanley Karnow, "The Newsmen's War in Vietnam," *Nieman Reports*, December 1963, 5.

⁴ Edward Miller and Tuong Vu, "The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Second Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 1.

⁵ Nu-Anh Tran, "The Neglect of the Republic of Vietnam in the American Historical Memory." In *The Republic of Vietnam, 1955–1975: Vietnamese Perspectives on Nation Building*, ed. Tuong Vu and Sean Fear, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 173–78; Edward Miller, "The Postcolonial War: Hue-Tam Ho Tai and the 'Vietnamese Turn' In Vietnam War Studies." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 12, no. 3 (2017): 14–22.

⁶ Nu-Anh Tran, "South Vietnamese Identity, American Intervention, and the Newspaper *Chinh Luan* [Political Discussion], 1965-1969" *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1 (1-2), 2006: 169-209; Jason Picard, "Renegades': The Story of South Vietnam's First National Opposition Newspaper, 1955-58," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10 (4), 2016: 1-29.

⁷ Files of The President of the First Republic (Phủ Thủ Tướng Đệ Nhất), Vietnamese National Archives No. 2 (Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia II (Vietnamese National Archives II), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. Hereafter abbreviated respectively as: PTTĐN, TTLTQB2 and NARA.

⁸ “People to People Understanding: Foundation of Public Policy,” *The Times of Vietnam*, March 9, 1957, 8.

⁹ Nguyen Thai, *Is South Vietnam Viable?*, (Manila, Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., November 1962), X, 16-17. Nguyen Thai grew disillusioned with Diem by 1959, with the fraudulent 1959 National Assembly elections being the final straw. It took him until the fall of 1961 before he could arrange an excuse to leave the country and service in Diem’s government, which came in the form of a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard. Once in the US, he networked with Vietnamese and Americans familiar with the situation in Saigon, and by late 1962 completed his analysis of the failures of Diem, *Is South Vietnam Viable?*.

¹⁰ “People to People Understanding,” *The Times of Vietnam*, March 9, 1957, 8.

¹¹ Dinh Bich, “For Sale: English Lessons,” *The Times of Vietnam*, August 16, 1958, 8. Nguyen Thai, *Crooked Bamboo* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2019), 44-45.

¹² Thai, *Crooked Bamboo*, 53-54; Monique Brinson Demery. *Finding the Dragon Lady: The Mystery of Vietnam's Madame Nhu*, (NY: Public Affairs, 2013), 142.

¹³ “More News for the Press, Please!,” *The Times of Vietnam*, January 13, 1958, 6; “Madman Kills Others Then Himself,” *The Times of Vietnam*, May 3, 1958, 4.

¹⁴ Ed Robinson to Mr. Anspacher, “Appraisal of Press Section Operations,” June 17, 1961, Box 2, Entry P 795, RG 84, NARA.

¹⁵ Donald L. Guimary, “The Press of South Vietnam: A Recent Perspective,” *Gazette* 21, no. 3 (August 1975), 163-164.

¹⁶ Jason A. Picard, “‘Renegades’: The Story of South Vietnam’s First National Opposition Newspaper, 1955-1958,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10, no. 4 (Fall 2015), 1-2.

¹⁷ “The Gregorys of Saigon,” *Newsweek*, September 23, 1963, 40.

¹⁸ Philip B.K. Potter to Paul Kattenburg, “Mr. Gregory and the Times of Vietnam,” November 20, 1963, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room (<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom>); “The Gregorys of Saigon,” *Newsweek*, September 23, 1963, 40.

¹⁹ Thai, *Crooked Bamboo*, 43-45; “Eng&ish / nEnglish, eNGLISH,” *The Times of Vietnam*, April 13, 1957, 8.

²⁰ “Journalism Limited,” *The Times of Vietnam*, June 22, 1957, 8; Ton That Thien to Anne Gregory, June 3, 1957, Folder 22012, PTT, TTLTQG2; Anne Gregory to Ton That Thien, June 3, 1957, Folder 22012, PTT, TTLTQG2; “Questions Which May Be Raised by Congressional Investigation Groups,” no date [c. late 1959], Box 1, Entry P 795, RG 84, NARA.

²¹ “Public Information,” *The Times of Vietnam*, July 19, 1960, 4; “Free to Serve,” *The Times of Vietnam*, October 28, 1960, 4.

²² Nu-Anh Tran, “Will the Real Caravelle Manifesto Please Stand Up? A Critique and a New Translation,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* (2023) 18 (3): 1–55.

²³ “‘Critics Are Acceptable, Provided They Are Impartial,’ President Says,” *The Times of Vietnam*, May 13, 1960, 1. “The Press and Criticism,” *The Times of Vietnam*, May 17, 1960, 4.

²⁴ “Furthering American-Vietnamese Relations,” *The Times of Vietnam*, April 20, 1957, 8.

²⁵ “Journalism Limited,” *The Times of Vietnam*, June 22, 1957, 8

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