

EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION: JAPAN AND THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IN THE 1960S-1970S

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Abstract. The twentieth century gave rise to a unique context and significantly altered the world order and the position of states in international relations. The regional and world wars occurred consecutively, creating a bias in research reflected in the last decade's publications, where mainstream research has focused on issues of war and conflict. Undeniably, those wars had decisively shifted the fate of many countries; it would be flawed if studies only focused on war issues and underestimated non-military issues. For example, in the circumstances of the twentieth-century conflicts, particularly in the context of the Cold War, Japan and the Republic of Vietnam maintained a special relationship, not just a military alliance, but laid the first foundations for becoming cooperative partners in developing a modern education. The studies on educational cooperation between the two countries in this period are limited, lacking systematic research on this issue. Hence, this research paper not only helps to fill the gap in the educational cooperation relationship between Vietnam and Japan in the 1960s and 1970s, but more importantly, it will help to clarify a historical lineage of educational collaboration. Although it is not the main thread of the twentieth century, it has a lasting impact on the long-term development of the two countries and shows the trend of cooperation in the post-Cold War modern era.

Keywords: International Relations, Education Cooperation, Japan, Republic of Vietnam, Cold War.

1. Introduction

The twentieth-century world wars, from World War I and World War II to the Cold War, reshaped the order of leading countries in many ways. Few benefited from the conflicts to promote their position from ground zero to the “hero”, e.g., the United States. Few bitterly shrank their privileged areas when facing the dynamic waves of liberal movements, e.g., England and France. Many were ill-fated, suffering lingering impacts of the war damage, e.g., Vietnam and Japan. Having long-century relationships and being nurtured in the Sino cultural spectrum, Vietnam and Japan subsequently reacted similarly toward historical chaos. In the context of the Cold War and the “hot” war in Vietnam, the two countries maintained not only military connections but also humanitarian rapprochement, especially in education cooperation.

Regarding the scholarship on Japan-Vietnam relations throughout history, particularly during the Cold War period, notable works include *Japanese Relations with Vietnam: 1951-1987*, conducted by Masaya Shiraishi and published in 1990 at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

By combining chronological and synchronous prisms, the study has brought a systematic and comparative viewpoint of the relationship between the two countries in the 1951-1987 period. Important events decisively influenced the foreign policies of Vietnam and Japan, such as the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan's war reparation programs with other countries, and the handling of the complex relationship between Japan and the two Vietnams in the war context, which are mentioned and analyzed. This work is impressive in producing valuable data, detailing the cooperation activities between the two countries within its research scope. Similarly, from the side of Vietnamese researchers, the aspect of Vietnam-Japan relations in the context of the Vietnam War has also been noticed, but only in favor of economic analysis. The aspect of cultural cooperation was mentioned in some papers, for instance, "Vietnam - Japan relations through cultural journeys" written by Pham Hong Thai in the conference proceedings *Vietnam - Japan Relations: Past, Present, and Future* (Ngo & Tran, 2005), "Cultural Relations between Japan and South Vietnam (1954-1975)" written by Do Thanh Binh and Pham Anh, published in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (3/2008). In these writings, educational cooperation between the two countries was initially uncovered but not systematically explored.

Although many works by Japanese, Vietnamese, and international researchers have analyzed the two countries' relationship, the aspect of education collaboration has not yet been placed at the center of scholarship. Hence, examining how Japan and the Republic of Vietnam developed their education and the cooperation of the two countries in this field will be fruitful for those concerned with understanding this neglected aspect. In other words, this helps to know the path Japan took from a military ally to an educational partner. Furthermore, this study provides insight into the essence of diplomatic relations, where Japan and the Republic of Vietnam adjusted their policies to suit new international situations. Last but not least, despite the Republic of Vietnam's collapse in 1975 and the two Vietnams being unified into one under the leadership of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Government, the cooperation between the two countries was not interrupted but remained continuous. Notably, the legacies of educational collaboration between the two countries in the 1960s and 1970s laid a steady foundation for better and comprehensive cooperation in the present.

2. Content

2.1. Determinants of Vietnam-Japan Relations

2.1.1. International Circumstances

After World War II, a new world order emerged, marked by the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, representing two opposing ideologies: capitalism and socialism. With the fall of fascism, capitalist countries began to express new concerns as the socialist system gained momentum and expanded globally. This ideology encouraged the rise of national liberation movements across continents, signaling the decline of old colonialism. Among the Allied powers in World War II, major countries like the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom quickly shifted from cooperation to confrontation. Prime Minister Churchill's declaration of the "Iron Curtain" in 1946 [1] and the establishment of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 [2] initiated a new form of international conflict a conflict without a clear front or direct military engagements between major nations, yet it was nonetheless intense and dominated international relations for over four decades. This period is known as the Cold War.

Vietnam and Japan were both strongly impacted by World War II and the Cold War. In the final stages of World War II, the Vietnamese revolution gained momentum after decades of preparation in terms of organization, solidarity, and fighting spirit. The Vietnamese people found themselves in a convenient situation as fascism faced inevitable collapse, the Japanese forces in Indochina had lost their fighting spirit, and the French army had not yet returned to Indochina. In September 1945, although Vietnam had claimed their independence, the Vietnamese people still

could not live in peace due to the intentions of the major countries, especially between the U.S. and France, on the Indochina affairs. For thirty consecutive years, from 1945 to 1975, the Vietnamese fought resolutely against French colonialism and American imperialism to defend the independence and regain the unity of their country. In particular, during the period from 1954 to 1975, Vietnam was directly influenced by the Cold War confrontation among major countries. The country became divided, resulting in two opposing political regimes: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and the Republic of Vietnam in the South. The unique nature of the war in South Vietnam during these years made it a focal point for global attention, serving as a key example to understand international relations within the context of the Cold War.

Following its defeat in World War II and the devastating impacts of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan faced significant challenges. The country was compelled to comply with the Allied forces' decisions regarding disarmament and demilitarization. During this period, Japan adjusted its domestic and foreign policies to align with the new circumstances. To promote national recovery from the war's consequences, the Japanese Government prioritized economic goals over military and defense. Additionally, Japan relied on the presence of American forces and equipment stationed in its territory as a protective measure for its security [3]. The close relationship between the United States and Japan established after World War II served as a bridge for reconnecting Japan with Vietnam, particularly with the Republic of Vietnam, in the second half of the 1950s.

American support in the 1940s and 1950s helped revive the Japanese economy. In September 1951, the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty were signed, making Japan part of the U.S. anti-communist network in the Western Pacific. During the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of the Cold War, the U.S. sought to strengthen the “Free World” and encouraged close allies like Japan to take a more proactive role in sharing the responsibilities and burdens that the U.S. was shouldering as a leader. For various reasons, including prior commitments and agreements regarding Japan's demilitarization, Japan opted to “appear” and “intervene” in the Vietnam War through non-military projects focused on economic development, health, culture, and education.

2.1.2. Diplomatic Policies Shaping Japan–Republic of Vietnam Relations

The Republic of Vietnam was officially established in 1955 with substantial support from the United States [4]. In U.S. policy, South Vietnam played a crucial role in preventing the spread of communism. Due to its strategic importance, the Republic of Vietnam received significant military and socio-economic aid from the United States. This assistance aimed to portray South Vietnam as a “democratic” government that could serve as a counterbalance to the communist government in North Vietnam. Consequently, Japan's aid and cooperation with the Republic of Vietnam, particularly through non-military programs and projects, aligned with the U.S. strategy of building a “strong government” in South Vietnam.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the foreign policy of the Republic of Vietnam Government aimed at the following main goals:

- 1. Strengthening national sovereignty, preserving territory, building a political system, and striving for self-reliance.*
- 2. Stopping and preventing the expansion of influence by North Vietnamese Communists and dependent forces in the international arena.*
- 3. Strengthening the effectiveness of the latter armistice control agency and gaining the legitimate right to self-defense of the Republic of Vietnam within the framework of the common self-defense of the Southeast Asian region.*
- 4. Expanding international cooperation and diplomacy to contribute to the implementation of the post-war economy [5].*

In particular, the content of the fourth goal emphasized: “In this goal, the government of the Republic of Vietnam not only aimed at traditional allied countries but also emphasized the need to establish contacts with old and new countries, especially countries in the non-aligned bloc. Further tightening diplomatic relations with neighboring countries was also a priority goal in the foreign policy of the Republic of Vietnam because these countries would be easy gateways for communist infiltration.

The Republic of Vietnam Government recognized the importance of expanding, promoting, and strengthening diplomatic relations with countries around the world. They understood that participation in international forums and conferences offered a valuable opportunity to advocate for solidarity and unity in global obligations. This stance clearly reflected the views of Saigon's political leaders regarding the ongoing war in Vietnam.

Finally, the government aimed to rally support from the free world in various areas, including economic, social, educational, and technical assistance, to help restore the country after the war” [5].

Regarding Japan's foreign policy, in 1957, a year after Japan was admitted to the United Nations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the first issue of its blue paper. This document highlighted the significance of economic diplomacy, particularly toward Asian countries. Three fundamental principles were established as the foundation of Japan's foreign policy:

1/ She should respect the United Nations as a pivotal institution in promoting world peace and harmony;

2/ She should develop harmonious relations with “liberal democratic countries”;

3/ She should act positively as a member of Asia [3].

In outlining those principles, the blue paper also clarified several important tasks: (1) A “good neighbor” policy toward Asian countries; (2) economic diplomacy; (3) readjustment of U.S.-Japanese relations [3]. It is evident that the core of this policy involves utilizing foreign activities beyond diplomatic scope to maximize benefits in Japan's economic expansion abroad, with a focus on the Southeast Asian region. This policy is also the basis for establishing and maintaining diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Vietnam in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

On December 11, 1967, Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato declared the Three Non-Nuclear Principles: “My responsibility is to achieve and maintain safety in Japan under the Three Non-Nuclear Principles of not possessing, not producing, and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons, in line with Japan's Peace Constitution”[6]. This declaration also guided the cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Vietnam within the non-military framework through economic, cultural, social, and educational projects.

2.1.3. Japan-Republic of Vietnam Relations

The first Japanese Consul, Akira Konagaya, was sent to South Vietnam in February 1955. Shortly after, in March 1955, Nguyen Ngoc Tho was appointed as Consul on the Republic of Vietnam side. Soon after their appointments, both legations were elevated to the status of embassies. Akira Konagaya became an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in March 1955, while Nguyen Ngoc Tho received his promotion in June 1955. This marked the official establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Vietnam. Following this, ambassadorial exchanges occurred between the two nations. Noteworthy Japanese ambassadors included Kanichi Kubeta, Tashuichikong, Maoriaoki, Hideo Kitahara, Fumitiko Togo, and Yasuhi Nara. From the Republic of Vietnam, notable ambassadors included Bui Van Thinh, Nguyen Duy Quang, Nguyen Huy Nghia, Do Vang Ly, Nguyen Van Kieu, Vinh Tho, and Nguyen Trieu Dan [7].

The Republic of Vietnam was selected as one of the recipients of reparations from Japan. An agreement regarding these reparations was signed between the Japanese Government and the Saigon Government on May 13, 1959, and it went into effect on January 12, 1960. According to this agreement, a grant of \$39 million was allocated to the Republic of Vietnam over a period of five years. The grant was distributed as follows: \$27.8 million for the construction of the Da Nhim hydroelectric power plant, \$7.5 million for consumer goods, \$2 million for additional projects at the discretion of the Saigon authorities, and \$1.7 million to cover the expenses of the South Vietnamese delegation in Tokyo that was responsible for reparation affairs. On the same day, a basic loan agreement was also signed, providing \$7.5 million to the Republic of Vietnam during the first three years, followed by an additional loan of \$9.1 million over the next five years starting in 1965 [3].

In the 1960s and 1970s, Japan allocated a vast amount of aid to various fields of the Republic of Vietnam, detailed as follows:

Table 1. Japan's Aid to the Republic of Vietnam Government (1964-1973)

Fields	1964-1970	1971	1972	1973
Agriculture	1.030.000	237.000	928.000	45.000
Education	641.778	395.000	145.000	216.000
Health	5.090.868	2.077.000	5.025.000	4.086.000
Public Transportation and Electricity	3.060.000	840.000	2.200.000	900.000
Relief	1.477.270	-	1.055.000	-
Social Aids	-	844.000	230.000	1.200.000
Technical Aids	158.056	-	22.000	-
Training	195.906	68.000	-	160.000
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	29.000
Total	11.653.878	5.361.000	9.605.000	6.636.000

Source: Documents on diplomatic relations between the Republic of Vietnam and Japan in 1967-1974. Presidential Office of the Second Republic of Vietnam Files, File No.2056, National Archives II, Vietnam, (in Vietnamese).

Although aid for the educational field accounts for a modest proportion compared to the Agriculture and Electricity sectors, this is one of the main areas that both governments focused on in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the policy-making process, the Japanese government expressed significant concern about its relations with South Vietnam: "For the past several years, our country has continued aid to South Vietnam on a grant basis, from a 'humanistic point of view', as to such fields of social welfare as medical treatment, education, food, and clothing. In addition to such grants, however, the South Vietnamese Government is strengthening its request to our country, also to aid in directly contributing to economic development" [9].

By the early 1970s, Japan's financial assistance to the Republic of Vietnam Government had increased. In the first half of the 1960s, after completing the payment of war reparations, the Japanese provided a humble amount of aid to South Vietnam, except for technical assistance based mainly on the Colombo Plan and emergency aid on a humanitarian basis. After the Nixon Doctrine was announced in 1969, Japan increased both grant aid and loans to the Republic of Vietnam [10].

2.2. Educational Cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Vietnam

2.2.1. Training

Educational cooperation activities between South Vietnam and Japan began even before the two countries officially declared diplomatic relations. This early collaboration was influenced by international relations, particularly the dependence of both the Republic of Vietnam and Japan on U.S. policies. Under the Colombo Plan, from April 1954 to December 1959, ten Japanese experts traveled to Vietnam, which included seven agricultural experts, one industrial expert, and two educational experts [3]. From 1954 to 1969, as part of the Colombo Plan, Japan provided specialized training for 129 Vietnamese students [11].

In addition to providing training in Japan, Japanese professors and researchers were also sent to Vietnam. In September 1964, a Japanese professor arrived in Vietnam to serve for two years. Then, in August 1965, a Japanese lecturer came to assist the Saigon Language School, taking over from the previously mentioned professor [11].

During the period from 1960 to 1972, Japan sent 230 specialists to the Republic of Vietnam, received 486 people for training, and provided scholarships for 241 students [10].

In July 1970, a representative of the Japanese Government signed an agreement for technical cooperation with the Faculty of Agriculture at Cần Thơ University. This collaboration focused on mechanical education and agricultural mechanics. As part of this agreement, the Japanese Government would send experts to South Vietnam and accept students for postgraduate training. This initiative laid the important foundation for Cần Thơ University to become “the largest agricultural research and teaching center in the Mekong Delta today” [12].

During his visit to Japan from June 5 to June 20, 1971, at the invitation of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professor Nguyễn Ngọc Huy explored various cultural, educational, and economic institutions. He also met with Vietnamese students studying in Japan, including those who studied at Osaka University, held meetings at the Phan Sào Nam Assembly Hall in Tokyo, and with members of the Đông Du group in Tokyo [13].

Medical training has played a significant role in the educational cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Vietnam. On June 10, 1967, an agreement was signed to provide medical aid to Vietnam. This agreement included sending medical experts to Vietnam, supplying machinery, equipment, and pharmaceuticals, as well as assisting in the construction of a neurosurgery department and a residence for Japanese medical experts. In addition, research and training scholarships were offered to Vietnamese professionals [11]. From 1954 to 1975, the Ministry of Health of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam sent approximately 70 groups of doctors, specialists, and medical officials to Japan for training in various medical fields. These specialties included anesthesia, surgery, medical observation, neurosurgery, family planning, thoracic surgery, tuberculosis, parabacteria, and cancer. Additionally, training was provided in related health fields such as family planning management, local administrative training, statistical medical information, medical logistics, and the prevention and control of local diseases in Southeast Asia” [14].

In the 1960s and 1970s, many civil servants and students from various ethnic groups traveled to Japan to study as part of training and cooperation programs between Japan and the Ministry of Ethnic Development of the Republic of Vietnam. This initiative aimed to improve the livelihoods and enhance the intellectual capabilities of ethnic minorities in the country. Each year, the Japanese Venerable Mr. Yoshioka Tochi awards several scholarships to ethnic minority students for studying in Japan. Additionally, the Republic of Vietnam received about ten scholarships from Japan annually under this program. Statistics indicate that in the years 1972, 1973, and 1974, dozens of individuals studied in Japan, including notable names such as Cil-Dok, R'Com H'Tlot, Vi Thi Thuy, Vi Hoang Chieu Thuong, Siu H'Dit, Dao Thi Uyen, and Tounen Han Thi Hanh [14].

By 1974-1975, approximately 1,000 Vietnamese students were studying in Japan, mostly males who were self-funded. The main fields of study were agriculture, industry, economics, physics, mathematics, and international relations [11].

At the Saigon University of Letters, in the early 1970s, the Japanese Language Department was established. Some scholars, such as Cham Vu Nguyen Van Tan, translated two books, “History of Japan” and “History of Japanese Thought”; Thich Thanh Kiem compiled “History of Japanese Thought”. Later, historian Vinh Sinh wrote “Modern Japan” [11].

In Saigon, there are also several Japanese schools (Nihonjin Gakko) that accept children, kindergarteners, primary and secondary school students (grades 1 to 9). The students are children of embassy staff, aid agencies, and Japanese companies operating in Saigon [15].

Compared to the large number of Vietnamese students studying in Japan, the number of Japanese students studying in Vietnam is somehow modest. However, this remains a significant number for Japan to build and develop the Vietnamese Studies department at Japanese universities in the later periods. During that period, Masaya Shiraishi, a notable researcher on Vietnam-Japan relations, studied in Vietnam

2.2.2. Supporting Activities for Education Development

In the 1960s and 1970s, in addition to direct training cooperation activities, Japan also allocated a number of budgets to support the construction of facilities and provide educational facilities for educational institutions in South Vietnam. Most of these budgets were derived from specific exchanges, grasping the actual needs of the Republic of Vietnam's education. For example, on September 3, 1965, a delegation of Japanese parliamentarians visited the Minister of Culture and Society. The issue of education was one of the key issues raised in the meeting. The educational situation in the Republic of Vietnam was summarized as follows:

“In Vietnam, primary education is compulsory and free; however, due to the war situation, compulsory education is not fully applied. In secure areas, 85% of children go to school; in insecure areas, the rate is lower...”

The raising and educating of orphans due to the current situation has orphanages and the National Martyrs' Children Schools.

The adult education program is focused on the most, especially for those over 16 years old, with three goals: 1) To increase economic production capacity; 2) To participate more in civic duties; 3) To improve the educational level for the whole” [16].

He continued to emphasize:

“The adult education program aims to provide educational opportunities for a group of youth who have been unable to attend school for over 10 years due to the ongoing war. Additionally, it seeks to leverage the skills of older individuals once the war comes to an end.

...To implement this program, we will employ specialized instructors and advanced methods, including the use of radios to deliver teaching materials to remote areas.

On this occasion, we would like to extend our gratitude to the Japanese Government for their generous donation of 5,000 radios for use in schools. These radios will be beneficial not only for students but also for teachers, facilitating the effective delivery of our educational program.” [16]

The Minister highlighted the educational cooperation between the Republic of Vietnam and Japan, affirming, “Students studying abroad in Japan return not only with advanced technology but also with the spirit of the Japanese people.” A notable example is Venerable Thích Thiên Ân, a former student who studied in Japan and then taught at the University of Letters. He wrote books on Japanese education and culture to share with Vietnamese scholars and students [16].

On March 27, 1968, Senator Takeichiyo Matsuda, former Minister of Education of Japan, discussed with the Embassy of the Republic of Vietnam in Tokyo about aid to Vietnam. He said that Japanese leaders were trying to concentrate a large budget (subsidized by the Japanese budget

and contributed by business circles) to raise Vietnamese orphans. Some children could be sent to Japan to be raised in Buddhist or social centers [8].

Mr. Đoàn Bá Cang, Ambassador of Vietnam to Japan, provided information about the presentations of Mr. Hideo Kitahara, Ambassador of Japan to Vietnam at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focusing on the issue of aid to the Republic of Vietnam, in which he emphasized the aid project for Cần Thơ University to turn this university into a cultural center [17]. In 1969, Japan provided Cần Thơ University of Agriculture and Forestry with 46,000,000 Yen in aid [18].

In the meeting on September 4, 1970, the Vietnam-Japan Committee proposed 12 projects to discuss cooperation between Vietnam and Japan, 2 of which were educational projects: 1) Construction of two children's education centers, and 2) Educational television. Although these projects were not later prioritized, it is evident that the authorities consistently emphasized the importance of education, particularly in specialized subjects. This focus laid the groundwork for the development of future proposals.

In November 1971, Japan and the Republic of Vietnam signed an agreement on the Japanese Government providing aid to the Republic of Vietnam for an orphan training center in Tân Hiệp, Biên Hòa. The estimated budget for this construction was about 220 million Yen [8].

In the first half of the 1970s, the Republic of Vietnam also received many non-refundable aid packages from Japan for educational projects. For example, in 1971, the construction of a vocational training center for orphans cost 220 million Yen; in 1973, expansion of a vocational training center for orphans cost 272 million Yen; in 1974, provision of equipment for a vocational training center for orphans cost 90 million Yen (equivalent to 360,000 USD) [14].

It can be observed that during the 1960s and 1970s, educational cooperation between the Republic of Vietnam and Japan took place with relative frequency, supported by a variety of funding sources. Although the scale of these collaborative training programs remained limited, their focus aligned closely with the key areas that the education system in South Vietnam most urgently required and that Japan possessed comparative strengths in, namely, agriculture and medicine.

Particular attention was given to special groups within the educational system, such as students from ethnic minorities and adults who lacked access to formal education, through joint programs supported by both governments. These initiatives played a significant role not only in the modernization of education in South Vietnam and in efforts to overcome the deep-rooted legacy of the French colonial education system from previous decades, but also in helping the Republic of Vietnam avoid the “monopolization” of American educational influence during the 1960s and 1970s.

2.2.3. Legacies

In 1973, Japan established official diplomatic relations with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. By 1975, following the end of the Vietnam War and the reunification of the country, the foundations of cooperation formed between Japan and Vietnam during the earlier period were continued and further developed, particularly in the area of educational cooperation. The educational initiatives that took place in the 1960s and 1970s provided valuable legacies, not just in the field of education itself but also in strengthening and promoting the relationship between Japan and Vietnam. The continuation of facilities and human resources are two significant legacies derived from the cooperative relationship during the war.

The educational equipment supported by Japan for centers, institutes, and schools in South Vietnam continued to play its role, becoming even more meaningful in the 1970s and 1980s when Vietnam, having just emerged from the war, had to face the embargo policy of the U.S. and its allied countries.

In particular, the human heritage has helped maintain and connect the two countries even during the period when Vietnam and Japan fell into a “frozen” period in diplomatic relations from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Many former Japanese students have made outstanding contributions to the dissemination and connection of the two countries' cultures, such as Mr. Nguyen Dinh Hoe, who studied at Tokyo University and later returned to Vietnam to open Dong Du Japanese Language School, one of the largest Japanese language schools in Ho Chi Minh City. Mr. Huynh Mui, who studied at Tokyo University, returned to Vietnam to teach and became the principal of Thang Long University, Hanoi, from 2004 to 2009 [15]. Prof. Vinh Sinh studied International Relations at the University of Tokyo and is currently a professor at the University of Alberta in Canada. He specializes in Japanese and East Asian history.

One of the prominent former Japanese students is Prof. Tran Van Tho. He studied economics at Hitotsubashi University and is a professor at Waseda University. Although he has lived and worked in Japan for many years, he still retains Vietnamese nationality. In 1990, he was one of three foreign scholars invited to be a professional member of the Japanese Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, a position he held through many Japanese Prime Ministers. He also made positive contributions to the development of the Vietnamese economy. He collaborated in the Economic Reform Advisory Groups or in the Policy Research Board of the Vietnamese Prime Ministers, such as Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet and Prime Minister Phan Văn Khai. He is the founder of the Vietnam Asia-Pacific Economic Center (VAPEC) in Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City. Additionally, he has contributed significantly to Vietnamese education, drawing on his experiences in Japan. He has also served as a visiting professor at institutions such as Hanoi National University, Ho Chi Minh City National University, and Da Nang University [19]. In 2017, Prof. Trần Văn Thọ was appointed as one of 15 members of the Economic Advisory Group for Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, established under Decision 1120-QĐ-TTg [20]. In 2018, Prof. Tran Van Tho was awarded the Order of Sacred Treasure, Gold Rays with Rosette in recognition of his contributions to the development of economic ties between Japan and Vietnam, deepening the country's understanding of Japan.

Besides those, many Vietnamese students who studied abroad in the 1960s and 1970s are now working in fields related to the relationship between Japan and Vietnam.

3. Conclusion

Changes in international relations during the Cold War led to the official reconnection between Vietnam and Japan, specifically starting with the Republic of Vietnam in South Vietnam, and later encompassing both North and South Vietnam following 1973. It is evident that the cooperation activities between Vietnam and Japan, particularly in the field of education, were significantly influenced by the context of war. The conflict not only facilitated the rekindling of relations between the two countries but also shaped the nature of their cooperation in the 1960s and 1970s. From Japan's perspective, the severe consequences of World War II prompted the country to focus on economic development as a means of recovery. As a result, Japan's ties and cooperative initiatives with the Republic of Vietnam were centered around non-military programs and projects, including humanitarian, medical, economic, cultural, and educational efforts.

The war situation also profoundly influenced the specific content of cooperation in the field of education between the Republic of Vietnam and Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Japan's support for adult education programs or projects to build vocational training centers for orphans in South Vietnam was a direct requirement of a developing education system during wartime.

Although the scale was modest, educational cooperation activities between the Republic of Vietnam and Japan during this period were implemented diversely, not only training cooperation in Vietnam and Japan but also support for facilities, educational materials, and the exchange of

experts and lecturers. Educational cooperation activities in the 1960s and 1970s also left valuable legacies in terms of both facilities and human resources for Vietnam's education in the following period.

It can be affirmed that educational cooperation has created conditions for establishing continuous connections in the relationship between the two countries, is the driving force to promote mutual understanding, and brings the relationship between the two countries increasingly closer.

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