



TPP: Great for Vietnam's Communist Leaders; Bad for Americans

Hanoi watchers are glued to the drama: Over the past week they have been following closely the details of the Communist Party's power struggle, allegedly between Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung — and their respective supporters. According to some analysts, the political turmoil extends beyond merely a two-faction conflict. In a January 14 article in *The Diplomat*, Jonathan D. London writes that “Perhaps most strikingly, a struggle has emerged over the decisional authority of the current general secretary, the 16-member Politburo he leads, and the 175-member Party's Central Committee, with a host of retired and current party power-brokers seeking influence to the best of their abilities.”



Only a few weeks earlier, on December 16, Vietnamese police arrested prominent human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai on charges of conducting propaganda against the state, which can carry a lengthy prison term. The arrest has caused a global outcry by human rights organizations and has been condemned by some governments. However, the Vietnamese government has been escalating its human rights abuses, even as the United States, the European Union, and other nations have increased their foreign aid and trade with the Hanoi regime.

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Politburo intrigue, Communist Party power struggle, religious persecution, human rights activists arrested, Internet bloggers imprisoned, journalists disappear. Yep, that's one of our TPP “partners,” the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It is the most tyrannical and corrupt of the 12 Pacific Rim member states (the others being Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States) that make up the Trans-Pacific Partnership. But the U.S. trade lobby won't let the regime's “minor peccadillos” stand in the way of more taxpayer-financed aid and expanded relations with the political heirs of Ho Chi Minh.

As we reported in our recent article, [TPP's State-owned Enterprises: Unleashing the Big Foreign Gorillas on Mom & Pop](#), a major concern for American workers, as well as American businesses (at least the small and medium-sized ones not connected to Wall Street) will be the impact that State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) of TPP member states are certain to have on many sectors of our economy. Vietnam, being a communist state, has many SOEs that will be likely to take advantage of the new features of the TPP, and the exemptions the Vietnamese dictatorship has crafted into its [Annex IV SOE](#) provisions under the TPP.



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And the same globalist oligarchs at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, Export-Import Bank, and other institutions that transformed Communist China in less than four decades from a grubby, destitute, no-tech, Third World nation into an economic-technologic-military powerhouse are now planning to do the same for Communist Vietnam. Or, I should say, they are planning to accelerate what they have already been doing for Vietnam for over a decade. The politicians and corporate cheerleaders who regularly sing the praises of Vietnam's "vibrant and growing economy" don't mention that any real prosperity realized by the regime has come as a result of billions of dollars in aid from USAID (our official foreign aid program), Export-Import Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), IMF and World Bank, the federal Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), and others.

Your Tax Dollars at Work

Let's examine a small sampling of not-so-small gratuities bestowed upon Vietnam by the generous globalists, starting with the World Bank, which the U.S. taxpayers have funded for more than half a century. The World Bank website lists [237 projects](#) that it has financed (or is continuing to finance) in Vietnam. Here are a few taken randomly from the first two pages of the list, beginning at the top with the most recent (2015) going back to 2012:

- Vietnam Dam Rehabilitation and Safety Improvement Project — \$415 million
- Sustainable Agriculture Transformation Project — \$238 million
- Second Ho Chi Minh City Environmental Sanitation Project — \$450 million
- Transmission Efficiency Project — \$500 million
- Vietnam Power Sector Reform DPO3 — \$200 million
- Result-Based Northern Mountains Urban Program — \$250 million
- Economic Management Competitiveness Credit 2 — \$250 million
- Vietnam Irrigated Agriculture Improvement Project — \$180 million
- Central Highlands Poverty Reduction Project — \$150 million
- North East and Red River Delta Regions Health System Support Project — \$150 million
- Danang Sustainable City Development Project (SCDP) — \$202.5 million
- Economic Management Competitiveness Credit 1 — \$250 million
- Mekong Delta Transport Infrastructure Development Project - Additional Financing — \$228 million
- Results-Based Rural Water and Sanitation under the National Target Program — \$200 million
- Distribution Efficiency Project — \$448.9 million

A few hundred million here, a few hundred million there — it begins to add up, no? The World Bank website [says](#): "Vietnam's shift from a centrally planned to a market economy has transformed the country from one of the poorest in the world into a lower middle-income country. Vietnam now is one of the most dynamic emerging countries in East Asia region."

Vietnam a "market economy"? Really, how so? By any meaningful metric it's still centrally planned; it's just that central planners from World Bank, Export-Import Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Goldman Sachs have joined with the central planners from the Vietnamese Communist Party and called their creation a "market economy." Much of the big World Bank buildup of Vietnam took place while Robert Zoellich (Goldman Sachs, CFR, Aspen Institute) was World Bank president (2007-2012). Before going to the World Bank, Zoellich was George W. Bush's trade representative, where among other things, he played a major part in pushing the Vietnam Trade Agreement through Congress in 2001, and helped launch what became the TPP. Obama's current trade representative Michael Froman (Citigroup,



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CFR) is pushing the same agenda.

It's much the same over at Export-Import Bank, where, for example, we find an Ex-Im press release for June 13, 2010 that [proclaims](#): "Vietnam is one of the world's key growing economies. Ex-Im Bank is pleased to provide a USD\$500 million financing facility to support the nation's infrastructure growth."

How very magnanimous of the good folks at Ex-Im to administer our tax dollars to such a worthy cause!

However, our public servants over at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) are no less benevolent, as this [press release](#) of June 29, 2011 attests: "OPIC will provide up to \$50 million in financing for the Mekong Renewable Resources Fund (MRRF), which will invest in renewable resource opportunities in the Lower Mekong countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, specifically in the environmental services and infrastructure; renewable energy; and energy efficiency sectors."

Then there is USAID, our federal "foreign aid" program, which is, in reality, a "rob the American taxpayer to fund foreign dictators, kleptocrats, and mass-murderers" program. The [USAID website tells us](#):

Vietnam has undergone an economic transformation in recent decades and has risen to the status of a lower middle-income country. However, sustained progress is threatened by poor governance, a weak business environment, limited transparency, and health and environmental problems. Our assistance is accelerating Vietnam's transformation to a responsible, more inclusive partner and a market-based economy, and addressing the legacies of the past conflict between our countries.

One example of USAID's largesse is the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI). According to the USAID website, "Part of the LMI, ECO-Asia is a \$29 million, seven-year regional project of USAID which was started in 2005 to promote sound environmental governance in Asia."

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been yet another enormous funnel for billions in aid to Vietnam's dictators. According to the ADB's own latest fact sheet (from April 2015), [Asian Development Bank and Viet Nam: Fact Sheet](#), it has shoveled out nearly \$14 billion to Vietnam.

"Since resuming operations in Viet Nam in 1993," says the fact sheet, "ADB assistance has amounted to \$13.91 billion (as of 31 December 2014). This includes 150 loans totaling \$13.34 billion, 287 technical assistance projects amounting to \$266.55 million, and 32 grants totaling \$307.99 million. The sectors receiving the largest share of cumulative lending have been transport and communications (32.3%), energy (17.6%), and agriculture and natural resources (13.1%)."

Those who wish to learn more details about where their tax dollars are going can visit ADB's Vietnam Projects webpage [here](#). Want details on a couple of the ADB's numerous handouts to the Vietnamese gulag masters? OK, there is, for instance, the Power Transmission Investment Program — Tranche 3, which was very recently approved (December 18, 2015), which is a \$71.01 million "loan," meaning it may be paid back, theoretically, eventually — but most likely not. Many ADB and World Bank loans never are paid back, of course; they just perpetually roll over. But even when the taxpayers don't pick up the tab on an ultimately defaulted loan, we end up paying in multiple other ways: the interest for their no-interest, or low-interest loans, the risk insurance on their risky loans, and our own higher borrowing costs because available capital is already preempted by the generous bankers at ADB-World Bank.

But here are some [details](#) about the ADB Vietnam program that I-you-we have "invested" in:

The investment program will contribute to meeting electricity demand growth of industrial,



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commercial, and residential consumers in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner. The outcome of the investment program is enhanced capacity of the transmission network to balance power load. The investment program also supports partial implementation of National Power Sector Development Master Plan VII to meet growing electricity demand of industrial, commercial and residential consumers throughout Viet Nam, and improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the National Power Transmission Corporation (NPT)-the entity responsible for financing, managing and operating the transmission network to ensure reliable electricity supply.

Then there's the [Water Sector Investment Program](#) for which ADB approved (on December 16, 2015) a \$205 million loan. According to ADB, "The proposed Project 4 to Hanoi Water Company Limited (HAWACOM) will improve water services for 3 million people, and provide piped water connections for 740,000 people for the first time, including about 23,000 poor.... HAWACOM is the project owner and implementing agency for Project 4, while the executing agency is the Hanoi Peoples Committee."

The Hanoi Water Company Limited (HAWACOM) is, of course, a State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) and the Hanoi Peoples Committee is the typical Communist Party operation.

Yes, while the Obama administration's EPA is shutting down electric power plants and ripping out hydropower dams here, and driving American farmers, ranchers, miners, and manufacturers out of business with taxes, regulations, and lawsuits, it is helping Vietnam build dams, power plants, and infrastructure, along with a massive expansion of Vietnam's agricultural and manufacturing sectors. If Congress passes the TPP, this process will accelerate dramatically.

All of this generosity on the part of the USAID, World Bank, ADB, Ex-Im Bank, etc., is buying us the undying affection of the people of Vietnam and causing the ruling Communist Party to "let freedom ring," right? Well, no, obviously, as the recent stories at the top of this article indicate. For a little more perspective on that score, one of the many sources we can consult is a report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) entitled, ["U.S.-Vietnam Relations in 2014: Current Issues and Implications for U.S. Policy,"](#) published in June 2014.

"Vietnam is a one-party, authoritarian state," notes the report. "The government security organs maintain an extensive surveillance network throughout the country that allows it to monitor the daily activities of Vietnamese citizens when it chooses to do so." "On the one hand," says the CRS study, "the gradual loosening of restrictions since Vietnam's doi moi ("renovation") economic reforms were launched in 1986 has opened the door for Vietnamese to engage in private enterprise and has permitted most Vietnamese to observe the religion of their choice. On the other hand, the authorities crack down harshly on what they deem to be anti-government activity. According to numerous accounts, since at least early 2007 the Vietnamese government's suppression of dissent has intensified and its tolerance for criticism has lessened markedly. These trends appear to have continued into the first half of 2014, particularly with ongoing arrests of Internet activists, notwithstanding the government's release of some high-profile political prisoners in the early spring."

Yes, we shower them with aid year after year, and our elected leaders, diplomats, and business titans clink champagne glasses with them and make pretty speeches — and our Politburo "partners" continue to act like Communist thugs. As we pointed out in our 2012 article [Hillary in Hanoi: More Foreign Aid & Trade ... and More Lip Service on Human Rights](#), we should expect no change in the behavior of the criminals in charge of the regime in Hanoi until those who are aiding and abetting them (i.e., the criminals in charge of the regime in Washington, D.C.) are held to account.



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Photo: American and Vietnamese flags

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