

The Significance of Nationalism for the Spread of Communism to Vietnam and Cuba

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the effect that nationalism had on the spread of communism to Vietnam and Cuba during the first half of the twentieth century. Using a case studies approach to analyze the revolution of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam and Fidel Castro in Cuba, the thesis seeks to determine the extent to which nationalism directed these revolutions and their turn to communism once assuming power. The study examines the conditions that existed in each country that allowed for a nationalist revolution to be successful, and the beliefs and rhetoric of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro, the primary figures of each revolution. The thesis seeks to add to the research conducted on the power that nationalism had in the Third World from the early 1900s to 1960, and it wishes to contribute to the factors that must be considered by foreign policy makers when pursuing military action or nation-building abroad. The research shows that nationalism played a significant role in bringing communism to Vietnam and Cuba, yet due to the difficulty in measuring a core human feeling like nationalism, other factors cannot be discounted.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Literature Review	10
Chapter 3. Nationalism and its Relationship with Communism	26
Chapter 4. Vietnam	40
Chapter 5. Cuba	50
Chapter 6. Conclusion	67
Bibliography	73

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine the role of nationalism in bringing communism to two case studies, Vietnam and Cuba. In order to introduce this topic, a short historical analysis will be necessary. From the late 1940s to the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy was dominated by the tenets of containment. Containment was the United States' answer to the perceived threat of the Soviet Union spreading its communist ideology to the world. This threat seemed entirely credible following Soviet actions in Eastern Europe after WWII. The Soviet Union did not allow self-determination for the Eastern European states and instead, made Eastern Europe a Communist bloc of satellite states. Containment, then, called for the US to keep the Soviet-communist threat from spreading to other parts of the globe.¹ In order to do this, the US became involved in conflicts around the world. Two of the most devastating (or potentially devastating) of these conflicts took place in Cuba and Vietnam. The Cuban Missile Crisis involving Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the United States brought the world to the brink of nuclear destruction. The Vietnam War caused immense discontent in the US, was extremely expensive to fight, and, worst of all, led to the death of over 50,000 US soldiers.

It is not surprising that the United States was concentrated on keeping the communist ideology of the Soviets from spreading. Communists themselves believed that their ideology would be spread by the Soviet Union. In *Communism: a History*, Richard Pipes writes, "Every Communist country or Party has its own specific history and its own particular regional and local

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War, Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 27.

variations, but a linkage can always be traced to the pattern elaborated in Moscow in November 1917. This linkage forms a genetic code of Communism.”² Because of this, the United States was so blinded by the threat posed by the Soviet Union that it failed to recognize another force that allowed communism to spread to places like Cuba and Vietnam. In this thesis, I will argue that the movements that brought Ho Chi Minh to power in Vietnam and Fidel Castro to power in Cuba were nationalist in nature. The aim of this thesis will be to examine just how significant nationalism was as a force behind Vietnam and Cuba becoming communist countries. It will examine nationalism as a unifying force that acts as glue for a society by uniting them socially, culturally, and many times, politically. The thesis will discuss that the power that nationalism has over societies outweighs beliefs based on a particular political ideology and then directs that society to the choices it makes politically and economically.

The research question that will be examined then is how significant was nationalism in bringing communism to Vietnam and Cuba? The importance of examining this question lies in the actions of the United States under the policy of containment. If nationalism is as powerful of a force as this thesis seeks to establish, then the role that it played during the Cold War needs to be recognized. Containment was ultimately not successful in Vietnam as the communist North Vietnamese were able to take over South Vietnam as soon as the United States withdrew its forces in 1973. Containment did not keep Cuba from becoming communist and eventually establishing ties to the Soviet Union. So, if nationalism was a significant component in bringing communism to these countries, the United States needed to be aware of the role that it was playing in these two countries. Perhaps then, the US would not have gone to war in Vietnam or risk nuclear holocaust during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

² Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 117.

This introductory chapter will briefly examine the background of events in Cuba and Vietnam which will lay the foundation for my claim that nationalism was a significant force that propelled the revolutionary movements and eventually Vietnamese and Cuban society toward communism in these countries. It will state what the research question is that will be examined in this thesis and describe the methodology that will be used to examine the research question. This chapter will also discuss the importance of this research, examine the stakes involved, and will discuss the outline that the thesis will follow.

II. Background

A. Vietnam

The revolutionary movement of Ho Chi Minh fits the prototypical example of a nationalist movement seeking independence for its nation. Since the mid-1800s, Vietnam had been under the colonial rule of France. This changed for a time when Japan took control during World War II. It was then that Ho Chi Minh emerged as the major nationalist leader for the Vietnamese. He formed the Vietminh, a nationalist party, whose goal was to create an independent Vietnam. After Japan surrendered, the Vietminh seized the opportunity and took power. France had other ideas, however. France wanted to reestablish itself as a colonial power and would not recognize Ho Chi Minh's government. Within three months of the end of WWII, Vietnam had been split into "two hostile zones—a Communist North and a French South."³ Vietnam would be the standard for what nationalist scholar Ernest Gellner later defined as the number one "violation of the nationalist principle." This violation is the control of a society by

³ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam A Nation in Revolution* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 38-41.

outsiders, or those who do not belong to the nation. He describes nationalism as "...the feeling of anger aroused by violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind."⁴ In other words, the nationalist feelings of the population of Vietnam could not accept being ruled by a colonial power like France because it violated the basic principle of nationalism which is that each nation has a right to rule itself.

Eventually, France could no longer afford to maintain a colonial influence in Asia and a pro-Western government in South Vietnam emerged under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem. He was anti-French which won him the support of his people, and he was anti-communist, which won him the support of the US. However, this support was short-lived. Diem turned out to be a hard-lined dictator, intolerant of criticism, who suppressed all resistance, and abused the human rights of groups who opposed him. Diem looked to some like a puppet for the West and began to lose the support of his own people.⁵ This is the environment in which the Vietnam War began.

While North Vietnam may have become an interest for the USSR and China during the Cold War, the question this thesis will attempt to answer concerns the nationalist beliefs of Ho Chi Minh and the goals of the revolution it led. Did Vietnam become communist because Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist that established a government that chose communism as its governing ideology or did Ho Chi Minh use nationalism as a tool to obtain power so that his communist beliefs could rule Vietnam?

⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

⁵ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam A Nation in Revolution*, 41-56.

B. Cuba

Cuba had a history of corrupt governments throughout much of its existence. As Fulgencio Batista assumed power in 1952, there was some hope for change. This did not happen as Batista's regime was marred by corruption, its alleged ties to the mafia, and marked differences in socioeconomic classes. It was in this environment that a strong nationalist movement arose in Cuba. It put the blame for Cuba's troubles on Batista's regime and on the island's relationship with the United States. A kind of anti-American nationalism emerged. American businesses determined the economic structure of Cuba, they controlled most of the major industry and agriculture, and the American mob profited from gambling and prostitution.⁶ Batista was seen as a puppet of the United States by many of the Cuban people. The intelligentsia of Cuba believed that traditional ties to the US would have to be severed for Cuba to truly be free. In fact, the American ties to Cuba would create a violation of the nationalist principle which will be discussed in the following chapters, and this environment would allow Fidel Castro's nationalist movement to be successful. He was a charismatic, nationalist leader who used the situations in Cuba at the time to overthrow the Batista government.⁷

Castro wanted to end the socioeconomic inequality that existed during the previous regimes that had been supported by the US. Batista, and those who supported him, were profiting off of this relationship with the United States. This relationship, combined with the massive corruption in the Batista government, created an untenable situation in the eyes of the Cuban people. Therefore, Castro needed to distance himself from the appearance of governing like Batista. Castro's revolution had garnered support by denouncing the policies of the United

⁶ Gregory Tozian, *Fidel's Cuba: A Revolution in Pictures*, 46.

⁷ Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 167-169.

States and by placing much of the blame for the conditions in Cuba on America. Castro would later look to the Soviet Union for aid; especially against the threat of what he thought was an imminent US invasion. He had some reason to believe this due to the failed Bay of Pigs incident. Yet, as with Vietnam, did Castro's nationalist revolution lead Cuba to communism or was communism the result of Soviet interference?

III. Research Question/Methodology

The research question that will be examined in this paper is—how significant of a force was nationalism in leading Cuba and Vietnam in becoming communist states? In other words, this thesis will examine the reasons behind, or the forces that led to, the establishment of communism in Vietnam and Cuba. There are numerous variables that must be examined to answer this. Nationalism will obviously be the focus of the thesis but the influence of the Soviet Union, the appeal of Communist ideology, the beliefs of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro, and anti-Western or anti-American feeling must also be considered.

This question poses some challenges for the researcher in the attempt to answer it. First off, this question does not lend itself to statistical evidence. Scientific polls that might help clarify the feelings of the populace were not common in either country during the time of the revolutions. If they had been taken during the revolution or after, it would be incredibly difficult to ensure that the results obtained by polls had not been coerced in some way. In order to connect nationalism as a significant force in propelling these societies toward communism, the researcher must conduct an historical inquiry in order to examine the data.

This examination will begin with the topic of nationalism. Scholars have been grappling with nationalism since it was born in Europe at the end of the 18th century.⁸ In order to answer the research question, the thesis must examine whether nationalism was a significant factor that drove Vietnam and Cuba toward communism. The writings of Benedict Anderson, Rogers Brubaker, and Ernest Gellner will provide the main building blocks of the analysis. The relationship that communism has with nationalism must similarly be examined. If this relationship exists, would it then make Vietnam and Cuba more likely to choose communism as a governing ideology? These studies on nationalism, and how it helps to answer the research question, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Once the power of nationalism has been discussed, I will show that the revolutionary movements in Vietnam and Cuba were indeed nationalist at their core, and that this was a significant factor in determining why both countries became communist. In order to establish this, the researcher must be able to show the motivations that formed the revolutionary movements. Fortunately, both Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro were prolific in writing and speaking of their governing ideas and political ideals. By the examination of the speeches and writings of these men, can a link be established between nationalism and the actions of the revolutionary movements and the subsequent governing ideologies they chose? This will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁸ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1.

IV. Importance of Research: What's at Stake?

As the researcher, I seek to contribute to the academic work that has already been done on the topic of nationalism. It seems that the power that nationalism has over people has not been given the proper amount of attention that it is due. When this has been the case, dire consequences have occurred like the war in Vietnam or the near-tragedy that was the Cuban Missile Crisis. It may be that American policy makers still ignore national identity currents that flow through the people of different states. Setting up viable governments in Iraq and Afghanistan has proven to be extremely difficult because of the nationalist divisions that exist in those areas. It is understandable why nationalism has been overlooked. It is difficult to measure and to quantify. Academics and policy makers have a tougher time showing its effects or existence because of this. Benedict Anderson, a noted scholar on nationalism, acknowledges this dilemma when he says, "Nation, nationality, nationalism—all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse."⁹ Anderson goes on to quote Hugh Seton Watson who observes, "Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no 'scientific definition' of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists."¹⁰ This dilemma in measuring nationalism contradicts the movement of political scientists over the last century to base their findings in measurable scientific terms. This use of scientific inquiry by political scientists became a main thrust of the discipline in the hope that "scientific knowledge would emerge and contribute to improving the quality of public life in America."¹¹ So this has produced an environment whereby "the end-product of knowledge generated by political science, and passed down over the years, is shaped by institutional pressures that strongly affect both kinds of assertions which are

⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 3.

¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3.

¹¹ David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy* (New York: Yale University Press, 1984), 77.

advanced within the profession and the sort of ideas which are accorded the status of certified truth there.”¹² This is the difficulty of arguing nationalism’s power. Still, despite this obstacle, this thesis hopes to add to the discussion on nationalism, and the great power that it still holds over people.

The next four chapters will examine nationalism and the individual situations that existed in Vietnam and Cuba. I will explore the effect that nationalism had among other variables that contributed to Vietnam and Cuba becoming communist. This thesis will attempt to ascertain the significance that nationalism had as a force in Vietnam and Cuba becoming communist and seek to place the findings into context for what their implications may be.

¹² David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy*, 4.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In examining the research question, one must be aware of the vast amount of work that has been done on the spread of communism, nationalism, and Vietnam and Cuba. This paper is looking to answer the question of exactly how big of a factor was nationalism in bringing communism to Vietnam and Cuba. There are many authors that have written about the politics of these countries during this period. This chapter seeks to look at the different theories and beliefs of others who have sought to explain the development of both nations.

When looking at American foreign policy during the Cold War, it seems that US policy makers accepted that communism spread because of the Soviet Union's influence and actions in other nations. In fact, George Kennan's famous telegram details the Soviet pattern of thought which eventually led to the United States fighting the Cold War through the policy of containment. Kennan described the communist ideology as one that saw the outside world as hostile and that communism must overthrow political forces beyond their borders. Kennan also described the Soviet concept of the struggle between capitalist, democratic America and the communist Soviet Union as one that needed no time table from which to emerge victorious. The Soviets were willing to pursue communist goals by continually applying pressure to every possible area that communism could take hold, especially in Third World countries that were not stable politically. This constant pressure would enable the USSR to win eventually, so there was no great need to state a possible time frame for winning the struggle. Therefore, Kennan viewed containing communism as the solution and great test for American democracy to moderate

Soviet philosophy.¹³ It is through this lens that John Spanier examines US foreign policy during the Cold War and what Cuba and Vietnam meant to that policy. He describes the revolution in Cuba as a nationalist movement characterized with an anti-American feeling fostered by Fidel Castro himself in order to win popular support. Spanier states that Castro eventually turns to communism because he needed the organizational strength of the Communist party as well as the aid that came from the Soviet Union in the area of arms and military advisors.¹⁴ Spanier examines US foreign policy in Vietnam as well. He states that the Vietminh was organized by Ho Chi Minh to "...convert Vietnam from a feudal society to a classless communist society."¹⁵ Yet, even though Spanier identifies Ho's communist ties, he also acknowledges that the revolution that Ho led against the French was a nationalist one.¹⁶ Spanier's writing evokes the common themes of most authors that have researched American foreign policy during the Cold War period.

Robert McMahon attacks the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration, and by doing this, the foreign policy actions of most US Presidents during the Cold War. McMahon believes that the force that Third World Nationalism became was "the most significant historical development of the mid-twentieth century."¹⁷ McMahon sees the Eisenhower administration as one who refused to recognize the fundamental economic, political, and social upheaval that was happening in the Third World. He accuses the administration of seeing the world only through the "distorting lens of a Cold War geopolitical strategy that saw the Kremlin as the principal

¹³ John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1991), 34-36.

¹⁴ John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 124-125.

¹⁵ John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 92-93.

¹⁶ John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 169.

¹⁷ Robert McMahon, "Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (1986): 457.

indicator of global unrest.”¹⁸ McMahon describes the Eisenhower’s administration’s record in regard to Third World countries and their nationalist movements as “one of persistent failure.”¹⁹ If one goes by McMahon’s rationale, this view could also be attributed to almost all presidential administrations during the Cold War period whether it is the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in Vietnam or Reagan’s reaction to the Sandinista victory in elections in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

Still, how do political scientists and historians who study communism view the revolutions in Vietnam and Cuba? Stephane Courtois in *The Black Book of Communism* articulates a view that explains why American foreign policy chose containment. “Every Communist country or Party has its own specific history and its own particular regional and local variations, but a linkage can always be traced to the pattern elaborated in Moscow in November 1917. This linkage forms a genetic code of Communism.”²⁰ Richard Pipes expands on this idea in his book *Communism: A History*. He states that Courtois’ linkage alludes that communism everywhere came into existence by one of two ways. Either communism was imposed by the Soviet army like in Eastern Europe, or it emerged, usually with some Soviet help, in countries that had a similar social structure to pre-revolutionary Russia.²¹ At the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin wanted the Comintern to commit itself to championing the national cause, work with other anti-imperialist groups, and fight wars of national liberation, all the while retaining their communist identity. However, Pipes argues that most often, the attempts to implement this policy failed. He says, “...instead of exploiting the nationalists for their own

¹⁸ Robert McMahon, “Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists,” 457.

¹⁹ Robert McMahon, “Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists,” 457.

²⁰ Courtois, Stephane, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 754.

²¹ Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, (New York: The Modern Library), 117.

purposes, the communists found themselves exploited by them.”²² Therefore, Pipes argues that in countries where the Soviet army was not present, it was the nationalist movement that controlled the revolution and not the other way around.

Archie Brown is an Oxford historian and political scientist who is an internationally acclaimed authority on communism. In his book *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, he addresses communism in both Vietnam and Cuba. Brown states that communism in Asian countries was attached to the larger themes of national liberation and anti-colonialism. In fact, he argues that communism’s success was due to the fact that young intellectuals in Asian countries in the first half of the twentieth century linked their nation’s freedom with the concept that capitalism would be replaced by a socialist or communist system.²³ In fact, many Asian communists, including Ho Chi Minh, had hostility to both colonialism and capitalism due to the extreme exploitation of the local populations by foreign businesses allowed in by the colonial regime.²⁴ Brown’s conclusion is that nationalism went hand-in-hand with communism in bringing independence to Vietnam, and it was nationalist revolutionary movement led by the Soviet-trained leader of the Communist party, Ho Chi Minh, who led it. For Brown, Cuba is an unusual communist state. He explains that Cuba was liberated by an indigenous revolution like many other communist countries. However, the revolution in Cuba was not led by the Communist party. Fidel Castro did not turn to communism until after he had taken control, and when he had realized that it was “the only available long-term example of non-capitalist, post-revolutionary governance” which could be

²² Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, 119.

²³ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2009), 337.

offered to Cuba by the Soviet Union and other communist states.²⁵ So, Brown sums the success of communism outside of Europe in the following way:

“Outside Europe, Communists were able to draw on the theme of national liberation and anti-colonialism to attract broader support than could be achieved by an appeal to Communist ideology alone...In Vietnam and Cuba, anti-imperialist sentiments and national pride were also of great importance both in the foundation of the regimes and for their persistence. These three Third World countries (Cuba, Vietnam, and China) all had indigenous revolutions, and while that has been no guarantee of survival, it can at least safely be said that indigenous revolution is a better predictor of Communist survival than non-indigenous founding of the regime.”²⁶

Brown does not attribute direct interference or influence of the Soviet Union in these countries to their eventual adoption of communism, but rather to the indigenous revolutions that brought communism to the governments of Vietnam and Cuba.

Before discussing literature that has focused on each nation specifically, perhaps the field of sociology can be of some assistance in determining the research question. Karl Marx was unique as a scholar as he was one of the first to correlate the relationship between humans and the material conditions they lived in.²⁷ He stated that there is natural conflict that exists between the winners and losers of a society in the quest for resources.²⁸ Marx stated that resources are distributed unevenly in any complex social system, and that the greater the inequality, the greater the level of conflict will be.²⁹ So, according to Marx, it would seem that it would be natural for the native populations of Vietnam and Cuba to seek power from the colonial western nations that

²⁴ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 337.

²⁵ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 293.

²⁶ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 586.

²⁷ John A. Hughes, Peter J. Martin, and W.W. Sharrock, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 18-19.

²⁸ John A. Hughes, Peter J. Martin, and W.W. Sharrock, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim*, 26-27.

²⁹ John A. Hughes, Peter J. Martin, and W.W. Sharrock, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim*, 44-49.

they felt had been oppressing them. Max Weber also explored this. He described power as the ability to get what one wants even when facing resistance by others.³⁰ The different strata that exist in society come from these differing groups abilities to “obtain things and to prevail over others.”³¹ While Marx would argue that social classes would naturally unite in order to improve their conditions, Weber would not have agreed completely. Weber stated that for this to happen, it would require “specific social and cultural traditions” which would force the recognition of the similar circumstances these groups lived in.³² In other words, it would take a powerful unifying force like nationalism to get the peoples of Vietnam and Cuba to revolt against the conditions they lived in.

Michael Mann takes the work of Marx and Weber further. Mann examines the human drive to acquire power in his book. He states that power is not a goal of most people. Rather, “it emerges in the course of need satisfaction.”³³ As a means to an end, Mann’s definition is based on the idea that humans are “restless, purposive, and rational, striving to increase their enjoyment of the good things of life and capable of choosing and pursuing appropriate means for doing so.”³⁴ Mann states that this human characteristic is the original source of power. However, the more complex human social relations become, the less likely it is that an individual can wield power as an individual. He or she must belong to an organization, whether formal or informal.³⁵ Mann’s definition of power is very simple, but it is similar as to what other theorists have come

³⁰ John A. Hughes, Peter J. Martin, and W.W. Sharrock, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim* 108.

³¹ John A. Hughes, Peter J. Martin, and W.W. Sharrock, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim*, 108.

³² John A. Hughes, Peter J. Martin, and W.W. Sharrock, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim*, 108.

³³ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 6.

³⁴ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* 4.

³⁵ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, 6-7.

up with. He states that “power is the ability to pursue and attain goals through mastery of one’s environment.”³⁶ The individual is unlikely to be able to obtain much power on his own.

Therefore, he must belong to the institutions and organizations that are created by men in order to further this quest for power. Mann argues that this is achieved through four basic sources of social power: ideological, economic, military, and political. These are the four forms chosen because organizations can be based on them. Organizations can use them because “they give collective organization and unity to the infinite variety of social existence...they are capable of generating collective action.”³⁷ Mann might argue that the revolutionary groups that came to power in Vietnam and Cuba possessed some political and military power but little economic power initially. They did, however, possess ideological power that stemmed from the nationalist and/or Communist movements that Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro each represented. In order to add to this ideological power and increase the political, economic, and military power of their regimes, each nation would have to ally itself in the bi-polar world created by the Cold War with one of the two super powers. Due to the presence of communism within the movements or due to the anti-Western nature of both revolutions, an alliance with the Soviet Union to solidify a hold on power would seem likely.

Of course, most important to this thesis’s purpose will be to examine the literature written about each of the revolutions in these nations. In his book *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution*, William Duiker examines how Ho Chi Minh led the revolutionary movement that took power in North Vietnam. He begins by explaining that the French colonial goals were obviously economic, and they were looking to exploit the natural resources of the region and create markets

³⁶ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, 6.

³⁷ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, 28.

for goods from France.³⁸ The French had set up its Asian territories into administrative districts and needed to train the indigenous peoples to occupy positions in this bureaucracy. This created an educated, bourgeois workforce who helped spread nationalist ideas to the populace and became the first major threat to the colonial regime.³⁹ This situation is described by Duiker is exactly the one explained by Benedict Anderson when writing about how nationalism spread in this part of the world. This will be examined in much more detail next chapter. However, Duiker does detail Ho Chi Minh's education in Moscow into communism and acknowledges that while Ho was a nationalist, it is undeniable that he was greatly influenced by his Communist teachings as well.⁴⁰

Bernard Fall touches on many of the same issues as Duiker in *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966*. Again, he highlights the importance of the administrative districts set up by France during colonization, continued by the Japanese during their occupation during World War II, and subsequently continued after France's re-occupation following the Japanese defeat. These districts created a bureaucratic force that was educated similarly and took this bond back to their villages after training.⁴¹ While Fall recognizes Ho Chi Minh's communist influence, he also points out that Ho was adamant in his discussions as a member of the Comintern in recognizing the anti-colonial struggles of nations on their path to communism.⁴²

In *An International History of the Vietnam War*, R.B. Smith has a strikingly different version of what transpired in Vietnam than Fall or Duiker do. Smith contends that Vietnamese

³⁸ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983) 28.

³⁹ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution*, 33-37.

⁴⁰ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution*, 37-39.

⁴¹ Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger (Publishers), 1966), 27.

⁴² Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966*, 116-117.

Communists used nationalism as a tool to obtain power. He states that the communists exploited the nationalist feelings of other Vietnamese groups who wanted independence from imperialism, but they would never submit to the “bourgeoisie nationalists.”⁴³ However, a significant amount of material written about Ho Chi Minh characterizes him as a bourgeoisie nationalist, so one wonders how Smith can be so different. He does not go into any real detail explaining this difference. He does give an interesting take on how communism worked around the world in the 1950s though. Smith says that, “Communist decision making in the 1950s was not so much a matter of many elements in a single system obeying instructions from one source as of Party leaders in many different areas of the world all sharing the same ultimate framework of analysis.”⁴⁴ Smith believes that it is unrealistic to analyze the nationalist movements of the Vietnamese, Chinese, or even the Russians as if the revolutions in these countries were purely nationalist parties pursuing national interests.⁴⁵ In other words, the movement toward communism cannot be separated from these nationalist movements.

Stanley Karnow takes an approach more similar to Duiker and Fall in *Vietnam: A History*. Karnow examines a major mistake made by the French imperialists that controlled Vietnam. They saw the Vietnamese as simply “bandits” without “any sentiment of patriotism.”⁴⁶ When nationalism rears its head in Vietnam, the French do not view it as a serious threat until it was able to build. He discusses two early Vietnamese nationalists, Phan Boi Chau and Pham

⁴³ R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume I Revolution Versus Containment*, (NY: St. Martins Press, 1983), 10-13.

⁴⁴ R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume I Revolution Versus Containment*, 12.

⁴⁵ R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume I Revolution Versus Containment*, 10-13.

⁴⁶ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 98.

Chu Trinh, neither of which were able to organize enough support for a revolution.⁴⁷ Karnow does explain the administrative units of Vietnam and how these created a generation of young, educated Vietnamese who worked in them. They were seen as inferior to their imperial French bosses, were not able to find jobs equal to their education, and were often addressed by French superiors as servants. These young, disgruntled Vietnamese would help form the core of the successful nationalist movement that Ho Chi Minh eventually led.⁴⁸ In Karnow's view, Ho Chi Minh was a devoted nationalist first and everything else second. Karnow explains how Ho, a communist, aligned himself with the Allies during World War II. He expected them to oust Japan from control in Vietnam, keep the French from resuming their colonial territories, and reward Vietnam with a nation of their own. While this strained Ho's relationship with the Soviet Union, Ho's only concern was for Vietnam and, therefore, worth this risk.⁴⁹ Karnow feels that the Vietminh was a nationalist organization built to fight the imperialists of France and Japan.⁵⁰ Finally, while Karnow never ignores Ho's communist connections, he feels that Ho Chi Minh was a pragmatist first who was solely concerned with Vietnam's independence, and that he would ally himself with the US if that would help Vietnam reach salvation.⁵¹

Cuba presents a more complicated study due to the fact that it was not overtly controlled by another power like Vietnam was with France and Japan at varying times. Marifeli Perez-Stable examines this in *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*. She discusses the corruption that was perpetuated by the regime of Fulgencio Batista. Batista allowed public works expenditures to be pilfered for commissions and profit margins, graft and

⁴⁷ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 110-113.

⁴⁸ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 121.

⁴⁹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 126.

⁵⁰ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 126-127.

⁵¹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 136.

misappropriation of funds were rampant, and all the while, the military allowed this corruption to take place.⁵² This is situation that forced the revolution of Fidel Castro to take place. As the revolution began, the July 26th Movement, which Fidel Castro organized and led, published scathing indictments of communism. Castro and the Movement declared communists to be less than trustworthy. Castro made it a point to proclaim humanism as the ideology of the revolution, not socialism or capitalism.⁵³ Castro claimed that the US was the enemy of the revolution, and because of its actions, Cubans did not have national dignity. These statements and the actions of the July 26th Movement helped unite the lower classes in Cuba against Batista and the United States as common enemies.⁵⁴ When Castro comes to power, Perez-Stable describes Castro's plan as "a political program of nationalist reform."⁵⁵ Perez-Stable contends that "while the interaction of domestic and foreign factors was complex, consolidating a nationalist revolution led Cuba to socialism, an alliance with the Soviet Union, and permanent hostility from the US."⁵⁶ Perez-Stable believes that Castro was not a communist and only turned to it as an answer to the aggression he felt from the United States after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion.

Nestor Carbonell was a Cuban native during the time of Castro's revolution. He was a lawyer and his family had been active in Cuban politics for generations. In his book *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba*, Carbonell takes a strikingly different approach to Castro than most authors who have written about Cuba. Carbonell claims that while Castro was at the University of Havana, communists at the university made a great impression on him. He

⁵² Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 54.

⁵³ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 71.

⁵⁴ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 76.

⁵⁵ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 53.

⁵⁶ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 81.

alleges that Castro had contacts with a Soviet secret apparatus know as the Bashirov net. G.W. Bashirov was a Soviet agent who lived outside of the Russian embassy in order to influence young Cubans by giving them stipends and meeting with them often to discuss politics. Carbonell claims that Castro was one of these students.⁵⁷ As the revolution was eventually successful, Castro passed his first wide-ranging socialist policy, the Agrarian Reform Law. When it came to fruition, wealthy ranchers and landowners were extremely concerned and opposed the law. Yet, Castro was a master at using nationalist ideas to cloud the minds of the masses, and his popularity did not wane except with those wealthy landowners.⁵⁸ Carbonell does not claim to have written an academic work, but he was in Cuba during the revolution itself, and, thus, he had an insider's perspective on these events. He believes that Castro was influenced and became communist far earlier than the Bay of Pigs which formally forced Castro into the arms of the Soviet Union.⁵⁹

In *The Cuban Insurrection*, Ramon Bonachea and Marta San Martin take a completely different approach than Carbonell. These authors, almost defiantly, make the stipulation very early on in this book that Cuban revolutionaries did not borrow a model from abroad in order to overthrow Batista's dictatorship. Bonachea and San Martin make the point that "the insurrection was an all-embracing process more powerful than the individual motivations of its leaders—although there were personal motivations, as in every other political struggle."⁶⁰ The authors also question any observers or researchers that tie the actions of the revolutionaries to

⁵⁷ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba* (New York: William and Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989), 33-35.

⁵⁸ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba*, 59-74.

⁵⁹ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba*, 33-36.

⁶⁰ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1974), 3.

communism or the works of Mao Tse-tung. In the authors' words, "it raises the questions of whether such observers, in pursuing their objective account of the events, have fallen prey to the prejudice that a small nation is unable to devise its own means of national liberation."⁶¹

Bonachea and San Martin firmly believe that the revolution was a nationalist movement for power. They describe the early communist reaction in Cuba to Castro's insurrection, and how they did not want to be affiliated with the revolutionaries.⁶² These authors describe Castro's movement in nationalist terms and do not believe that the Communist party or the Soviet Union had any hand in the revolution.

In *Guerrillas in Power*, K.S. Karol discusses the view that many Cubans had of the communist party. Karol explains that those who wanted to see the corrupt dictatorships that had constantly ruled Cuba overthrown also held the communist party in very low esteem. He details the history of the Cuban Communist Party, and how it collaborated with Batista in his first years of ruling Cuba. This was not an image that the Cuban communists could easily shake from the minds of those who opposed Batista. Karol also details how Castro was at odds with the communists from the beginning of the revolution until 1958. In fact, for most of the revolutionary period, the Communist Party opposed Castro's revolutionary movement.⁶³

Alan Luxenberg examines the revolution in Cuba in his article, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" Luxenberg details early US foreign policy toward Cuba from a policy memorandum from the Director of Middle American Affairs. The memo describes Fidel Castro as the moderate in the revolution against Batista and states that American policy

⁶¹ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1974), 3.

⁶² Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1974), 25.

⁶³ K.S. Karol, *Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution*, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1970), 19-20.

should focus on pushing him toward pro-US moderates that supported his revolution.⁶⁴

Luxenberg states that the US policy memorandum was accurate in describing Castro. Castro never took a serious interest in ideology because his only objective was to secure and keep power. Castro used anti-Americanism as a tool to achieve his objectives, but this also placed him in jeopardy of losing power because he had no one to back him up against the United States. This made him turn to the Soviet Union so that he had an ally to rely on. Luxenberg concludes that Castro's ties to the Soviet Union was a logical outgrowth of the hostility he showed to the United States, and that Eisenhower did not push Castro into Soviet arms because he went willingly.⁶⁵

In the article "Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution," Nelson Amaro takes a different look at Fidel Castro's revolution. He examines the conditions for different social classes before the revolution, the effect the revolution had on the different social classes of the country, and the individual stages that the revolution went through. Amaro describes the exploitation by the wealthy landowners, cattle ranchers, and farmers in the countryside and the industrial capitalists in the cities over the lower social classes. This was also accompanied by the economic domination of the United States because of American investments in Cuba and its reliance on them in its economic structure.⁶⁶ Amaro outlines how Castro's revolution was able to get strong allies of the exploiting classes to reverse their loyalties and join the revolution. "The middle classes became discouraged and even deserted Batista. The ideological entente of the 26th of July Movement had a broad base, and it allowed all the oppressed classes of the nation

⁶⁴ Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 17.

⁶⁵ Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz, 24-28.

⁶⁶ Nelson R. Amaro, "Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution," in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 17.

to join the political sphere. It even attracted some in the exploiting classes. Also important were social conditions such as mass media, which contributed to keeping revolutionary fervor alive.”⁶⁷

While Amaro never explicitly states that it was the nationalist ideals of the revolution that won over these classes, it is not hard to make that connection through his description of events.

Finally, Rafael Lecuona examines the similarities between Cuba and Nicaragua and the path toward communism in each nation. He cites two authors with different takes on Fidel Castro. Daniel James says there is no doubt that Castro was ideologically and fully committed to communism. Hugh Thomas disagrees with Daniels. He believes that Castro only labeled himself a Communist so that he could wield more power as the leader of the Cuban and Latin American Communist bloc.⁶⁸ Both authors are examining Castro after the revolution had already taken power in Cuba. Lecuona details how the Castro government set up indoctrination schools throughout the country by the end of 1960 which were run by communists with Marxist-Leninism as the main subject. However, Lecuona contends that this was due to the relationship that the Castro revolution had adopted toward the United States. “The anti-United States bias of the Cuban revolutionary elite, then, led the latter to accept what they, more likely than not, regarded as in the best interest of Cuba, namely the incorporation of the island into the Soviet bloc.”⁶⁹ So, rather than Castro being an ideological communist, the move toward communism was a practical decision to solidify power.

It seems that most of the material written about Vietnam and Cuba attaches at least some importance to the fact that the movements of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro were nationalist in

⁶⁷ Nelson R. Amaro, “Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz, 49.

⁶⁸ Rafael A. Lecuona, “Cuba and Nicaragua: the Path to Communism,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 91-92.

⁶⁹ Rafael A. Lecuona, “Cuba and Nicaragua: the Path to Communism,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz, 97.

origin and in how they developed. There is very little material detailing the Soviet Union as having a presence in these countries which led them precisely to communism as a form of government. The research done on these countries suggests that the formation of a national consciousness and the desire for independence of a nation once this forms was crucial in the paths that the revolutions of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro took. The ideology of communism may have helped shape the governments once the revolutions had been successful but seems to play very little role in the actual independence of these nations. The next three chapters will seek to examine this role that nationalism seemingly played in these two nations becoming communist and try to answer just how prominent of a force that it was in Vietnam and Cuba.

CHAPTER 3: NATIONALISM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNISM

As the last quarter of the last millennium dawned, a powerful entity in human existence called nationalism came to life. It formed incredibly strong bonds among the members of a nation, and it gave legitimacy for the state to exist. The research question in this thesis seeks to ascertain whether or not nationalism was a significant force in Vietnam and Cuba becoming communist. To answer this, nationalism will need to be defined, and it must be explained as to how it could be the vehicle through which Vietnam and Cuba became communist.

In his book *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, Walker Connor gives a useful, commonly accepted definition of a nation. The nation is a “human grouping whose members share an intuitive sense of kindredness or sameness, predicated upon a myth of common descent.”⁷⁰ This group of people is united by a common culture, a common political identity, a common historical legacy, generally, a common language, sometimes a common religion (although this is not a necessary element), and in many cases, a common ethnicity.

However, this is too narrow of a definition to constrain nationalism by. Nationalism is more than a simple ideology which can be chosen by individuals. Instead, nationalism is a principle on which human life is based. It is different from other types of identity foundations in that it “derives from the fact that nationalism locates the source of individual identity within a “people,” which is seen as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of

⁷⁰ Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), xiv.

collective solidarity.”⁷¹ Nationalism deals with community—what people share or are thought to share. In fact, while lines of status, class, locality, and ethnicity may help define a nation, they only superficially divide the nation as it is a homogeneous group whose perceived size dwarfs any concrete community.⁷² There is what Benedict Anderson refers to as “a deep, horizontal comradeship” that emerges. This horizontal comradeship supersedes the “actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail” in the nation.⁷³ Anderson explains that it is this connection which has held people bonded together tightly enough that they would choose to die for this imagined community that is their nation.⁷⁴

When a group of people realizes their connections with others like them, a dominant consciousness is formed that begins to define them. The awakening of this national consciousness serves as a powerful unifying force for the people of a nation. Benedict Anderson explains this in *Imagined Communities*. Communities are imagined because even though most members of a nation will never know their fellow members, they are able to feel the connection that bonds them as part of the nation. The nation is imagined as being limited but sovereign. There are borders to it, it is self-governing, and outside of its borders lays other independent nations. The nation is imagined as a community of people whose bonds run so deep that these bonds are powerful enough to convince a nation’s members to die for it.⁷⁵

Rogers Brubaker tackles these ideas as well. He states that nationalism is “not a ‘force’ to be measured as resurgent or receding.” It is a “set of idioms, practices, and possibilities that are continuously available or ‘endemic’ in modern cultural and political life. ‘Nation’ is so

⁷¹ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (London, England: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3-4.

⁷² Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, 3.

⁷³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

⁷⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

⁷⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

central, and protean, a category of modern political and cultural thought, discourse, and practice that it is hard indeed to imagine a world without nationalism.”⁷⁶ Nationalism then is a core part of human life that defines the desires and ideologies of national groups.

So, then it becomes important to examine how nationalism is able to disseminate throughout a nation. Nationalism needs to be viewed as a modern phenomenon, and as such, its ability to unite a community has modern roots.⁷⁷ Ernest Gellner states that nationalism is the answer to the need of modern states for cultural homogeneity. As economic and scientific changes have continued since the 17th century, the culture that humans operate in has been transformed. People now have no stable structure in which to explain their lives. Instead, they live in “professional bureaucracies” to which they have no great connection. They must learn to make their culture into the one of the political, educational, and economic bureaucracies that surrounds them. Humans have a need to belong to a stable community.⁷⁸ Nationalism would then be the outcome of this need.

But, what importance then does history, tradition, culture, and folklore play in nationalism? These “memories, values, myths, and symbols” form a basic component of nationalism.⁷⁹ Anthony Smith argues that it is these shared memories that help form the goals for the nation. This past with its myths and symbols is shared through the unique vernacular of the region. This approach would explain why the people of a nation would respond to the movement of nationalism. Not merely for any benefits received, or by being motivated by the

⁷⁶ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.

⁷⁷ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 170.

⁷⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 33.

⁷⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 40.

intelligentsia, but instead, because their culture is becoming the centerpiece of the nation.⁸⁰ Benedict Anderson declares history, tradition, culture, and folklore a part of an imagined community mentioned earlier which has been made possible in part through the creation of a print-language. This print-language laid the groundwork by creating communication that was available to all. It created a uniform, accepted language that became the norm. This print-language was able to create imagined communities by linking different local vernaculars together.⁸¹ Through this common vernacular, Eric Hobsbawm explains that a nation creates its traditions and invents itself. A nation In order to effectively do this, an education system is needed to turn the people into proper citizens of the nation and to invent the traditions and history. Following this, public ceremonies were created to rally the people behind the nation, and public monuments were erected to further the nationalization of its people.⁸² So, in order for a person to take part fully in a national community, the minimum requirement would be literacy. One could reach full levels of citizenship by reading in the vernacular of the intelligentsia of a nation. The educational system of a nation must be able to produce citizens of these levels. So, then, “effective citizenship depends on literacy and education in the one favored language.”⁸³

Yet, these explanations work for a nation that has its independence. How would nationalism spread in a place that is controlled by a Western, colonial power? The answer lies on how these imperial powers governed their colonies. From the middle of the 19th century and on into the 20th, European empires stretched across the globe. The sheer size of these colonial empires and the varied types of peoples ruled by them brought an enormous burden on the ability

⁸⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 40-41.

⁸¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 94-95.

⁸² Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 77-78.

⁸³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 60.

to govern these colonies. It was not possible to expect nationals of the Western powers to be able to meet the vast demands of governance of these areas. Therefore, these powers set up large administrative units that would be able to train an indigenous work force that could handle the governing demands of the empire.⁸⁴ Yet, these administrative units are what led to nationalism spreading among the conquered subjects of the colonies.

There were three main reasons why these administrative units made colonized people aware of their national unity. The first is that the development of new transportation technology, particularly railways and steamships, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries allowed many more people to travel than had ever previously. Benedict Anderson discusses how in previous centuries, those people that could afford to undertake pilgrimages understood that they had some connection with the many, varied people they saw undertaking the same journeys. As technology made travelling more possible in the colonial administrative units, it became more common for people to realize the shared culture, traditions, and vernacular that existed in their nation.⁸⁵

The second reason administrative units in Western colonies allowed for the awakening of a national consciousness came from the problem of governing the vast colonial territory that existed across the globe. In order to facilitate governing, colonial powers had to find an efficient means to communicate policies and laws to their subjects. “The colonial state...needed armies of clerks, who to be useful had to be bilingual, capable of mediating linguistically between the metropolitan nation and colonized peoples.”⁸⁶ These “armies of clerks” would come from the colonized peoples of the administrative units in each Western power’s empire. As the

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 113-115.

⁸⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 115.

⁸⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 115.

bureaucratic state became more and more specialized in its functions (medical officers, engineers, agricultural policymakers, schoolteachers, police officers, and so on), the number of members of the indigenous population would swell into these positions. Thus, more and more members of a nation would be in more contact with each other as they went to metropolitan areas for training. Nationalism would start to awaken through these mini-pilgrimages as these clerks saw the similarities they had with other members of their national community.

The third reason that administrative units helped nationalism develop and spread in colonial territories is the creation and distribution of modern-style education throughout the colonies. The colonial state attempted some education of its colonial subjects, but this was also accomplished through private religious and secular organizations. On some level, this education was to train clerks for the bureaucratic duties necessary to run the administrative unit. However, there was also the moral movement to “civilize” the peoples of these colonial regions. Education had come to be seen as one of the most crucial components of creating a successful modern populace.⁸⁷

Once these administrative units were being staffed by these “armies of clerks” who were more easily able to travel and be educated, nationalism was able to take root. This education created an intelligentsia-class of colonized subjects who were able to mount nationalist movements eventually. Much of the power of the intelligentsia came from the fact that they were trained to be bilingual in order to function efficiently in the administrative units. However, this bilingualism allowed them access to Western culture and thought. It allowed them access to the ideas of nationalism and the power of it for a people.⁸⁸ Anthony Barnett said it best when he

⁸⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 116.

⁸⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 116.

explained that this introduction to Western culture and ideas through bilingualism “allowed the intellectuals to say to their fellow-speakers [of the indigenous vernaculars] that ‘we’ can be like ‘them.’”⁸⁹

The intelligentsia of the colonial regions was also marked by a particular characteristic. They were very young and with their age, came a complex set of political beliefs that they developed during their educational years. The fact that the intelligentsia was young is important because their youth “signified dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will.”⁹⁰ They were also invariably the first in their family to receive a Western education and to be bilingual. This automatically separated them from the generation before them, and created the scenario whereby these nationalist movements would be cultivated by this young intelligentsia.⁹¹

So, in order for a nationalist movement to fully develop, the intelligentsia and a lower working class are both necessary for it to be effective. The working force, or proletariat, must feel the need to buy into the nation. As the children of the working force became this educated army for the bureaucracy and brought these new ideas back home, the intelligentsia is able to spread their values to the working class. As traditional social structures decline, this provides the impetus needed to buy into the nationalist movement started by the intelligentsia. In turn, a national identity is now formed with the culture of the nation as its basis.⁹²

Now that this national identity is formed, nationalism will lead to the creation of the nationalist myth for a nation. This is the idea that all ethnic groups or nations believe they would be better off if they were able to govern themselves within a set geographic area, or homeland.

⁸⁹ Anthony Barnett, “Inter-Communist Conflicts and Vietnam,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, (11:4, October—December 1979), 2-9.

⁹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 118-119.

⁹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 119.

⁹² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 65-66.

This concept comes from the preexisting cultural norms like a common race, language, place of origin, and religion that help make a nation. This imagined community that is created by the awakening of national consciousness then reaches for their nationalist myth.⁹³ From this, the next natural progression is to move to create a nation-state. This nationalist myth is one of the most powerful elements of nationalism. It lends different nations to strive for, either through political means or outright rebellions, the goal of a nation-state of their own.⁹⁴

So, when nationalist consciousness awakens and the nationalist myth perpetuates itself throughout society, certain intolerable conditions can no longer be accepted. There is one violation of the nationalist principle that is worse than any other. If the rulers of a particular political entity belong to a different nation than the majority of the ruled, then an intolerable situation is created. Gellner describes nationalism as "...the feeling of anger aroused by violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind."⁹⁵ This would also hold true if the rulers are supported and remain in power (or are perceived that way) because of another nation.⁹⁶ This situation is intolerable because the rulers are not seen as legitimate. Either they are not part of the nation in any way (a controlling foreign power) or they are seen as puppets of the controlling power and, therefore, removed from the nationalist movement.

These illegitimate ruling powers cannot be accepted by the nationalist consciousness of a nation which in turn creates and strengthens the national myth. The fight for independence by nations during the 1900s often came as a result of throwing off the shackles by the imperial

⁹³ Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). 4.

⁹⁴ Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, 4.

⁹⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

⁹⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

powers of the West, who were capitalist and democratic. So, was it natural for these nationalist movements to turn toward a form of governing that was directly opposed to that of their former imperial masters? If so, does this mean that after 1945, they would be more likely to become communist? In order to obtain more power in the economic, military, and political arenas that was lacking, it would seem logical for them to choose an ideology that would ally them with the USSR rather than the one major remaining Western power, the United States. This alliance would entrench the national movement's power because the Soviet Union would not want a fellow communist nation to possibly fall back into the hands of the United States during the Cold War.

Yet, perhaps the research question itself opens the door to other questions. The most pressing of these being—is there a connection between nationalism and communism that makes one likely to produce the other? In other words, is there a sort of symbiotic relationship between nationalism and communism that made Vietnam and Cuba more likely to become communist, as opposed to liberal, democratic, and capitalist, because they were the products of a nationalist revolution?

In order to answer these questions, one will have to examine what the “founding fathers” of communism felt about nationalism. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are the theorists given credit for developing the tenets of communism while Vladimir Lenin was the first leader of a country to attempt to implement those tenets. Communism is a political ideology that espouses a classless society whereby property is owned by the community rather than individuals. It promised to end the problems created by society being divided into the rich, middle class, and poor. Everyone would enjoy equal economic and social status. These men believed that communism would be spread by violent revolution led by the worker-class, or proletariat, around

the world. This seemed to be reality as the Lenin-lead Bolsheviks emerged victorious during the Russian Revolution.⁹⁷ Communism and nationalism were not considered philosophically compatible by Marx, Engels, or Lenin. Nationalism assumes that “the most fundamental divisions of humankind are the many vertical cleavages that divide people into national groups.”⁹⁸ This is the idea of horizontal comradeship that was mentioned earlier in this chapter. In contrast, communism “rests upon the conviction that the most fundamental human divisions are horizontal class distinctions that cut across national groupings.”⁹⁹ In other words, the grouping of a nation, regardless of social class, would inspire the most loyalty according to a nationalist. A communist would believe that the working classes of two different nations would have more in common than the bourgeois and the proletariat from the same nation.¹⁰⁰ The communist theorists of the early 20th century believed that it was the connections between the proletariat of nations that would bring about revolution and allow communism to thrive. However, this connection would prove to be far weaker than the powerful bonds that nationalism creates.

Marx, Engels, and Lenin also assumed other propositions about nationalism that showed how they underestimated its hold on people. They believed the nation and nationalist ideology was a by-product of capitalism. Since capitalism was doomed due to the eventual revolt of the workers and ascension of communism as the true governmental ideology, nationalism would therefore also disappear. Communists also thought that nationalism was a belief forced on the

⁹⁷ Encarta, “Communism.” *encarta.msn.com*, Accessed December 8, 2007, <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/refpages/RefArticle.aspx?refid=761572241>.

⁹⁸ Walker Conner, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 5.

⁹⁹ Walker Conner, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Walker Conner, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, 5.

worker class by the upper classes to keep the proletariat from realizing its own class status and interests. Similarly, it would only be a matter of time before the proletariat awoke to the inherent unfairness of capitalism and threw off the nationalist loyalties that came with it. This would occur because economic interests of people are far stronger than nationalist interests. However, Walker Conner has noted that Marx, Engels, and Lenin stated that nationalism could be supported when the movement was the best alternative to lead to reform, but that a communist must always remain above nationalist loyalties and stay focused on the importance of the international movement.¹⁰¹

Communist theorists like Marx, Engel, and Lenin believed that World War I signaled the end of the imperial era for the capitalist West. Eventually, the West would lose control of their colonial empires. This would leave a huge dearth of cheap labor that had been being exploited and create a loss of outlets for goods. To offset the loss of their colonial empires, the West would be required to begin a more intense exploitation of its own workers. This would, in turn, lead the proletariat in the capitalist nations of the West to realize their importance as a class and demand reform.¹⁰² Once the capitalist powers did not allow for this reform, nationalism would become irrelevant. Marx, Engels, and Lenin believed that the arbitrary loyalty to nation would disappear into anger as the proletariat awakened to the “alienation and subjugation” forced upon them by the bourgeois who controlled the means of governing and production.¹⁰³ The workers would rise up against the bourgeois who had exploited them, revolution would occur, and communism would become the dominant governing ideology.

¹⁰¹ Walker Conner, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 10-14.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰³ J.L. Talmon, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution: The Origins of the Ideological Polarization in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 22.

In order to solve the issues brought about by nationalism, Marx and Engels would have had to call for an end to the nation-state system itself. This was not a topic that interested either man because arguing for it would detract from the higher goal of a global socialist revolution. They neither espoused total assimilation of peoples nor were they against it. They did not clamor for an end to distinct cultures nor support the continued divisions based on this.¹⁰⁴ Lenin tried to handle the issue of nationalism by allowing for the idea of self-determination for individual states. He believed the communist party should never be tainted by nationalism, but if self-determination helped bring about socialist revolution, the communist party could decide to support certain movements in countries for independence. Lenin was sure that these movements would be guided by communist strategies rather than national ones.¹⁰⁵

Marx, Engels, and Lenin were wrong in their belief in the incompatibility of nationalism and communism. This can be attributed to the fact that they assumed that a horizontal socialist revolution across national boundaries would be why communism would spread across the globe. Communism called for a global uniting of the working class which would throw off the inequities of capitalism. In fact, the West believed as well that the Soviet Union was trying to bring this about. Yet, could it be that it was the reverse of this belief that allowed communism to spread? Was nationalism the powerful force that was behind the revolutions in Vietnam and Cuba and the formation of their new governments? Perhaps, it was not the proletariat class that called for reform, but instead, it was the nationalist bonds that caused people to rise up and claim their nation for themselves.

¹⁰⁴ J.L. Talmon, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution: The Origins of the Ideological Polarization in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 38-39.

¹⁰⁵ Walker Conner, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, 35-36.

Even in the great communist power, the Soviet Union, nationalism played a commanding role. While the Soviet government did not attempt to define all citizens and areas across the state in the same nationalist terms, it did do this on a sub-state level. Noted Cambridge scholar Rogers Brubaker claimed that "...no other state has gone so far in sponsoring, codifying, institutionalizing, even inventing nationhood and nationality on the sub-state level, while at the same time doing nothing to institutionalize them on the level of the state as a whole."¹⁰⁶ People in the USSR were classified by ethnic origins which were labeled on public documents like passports. The Soviet government understood the bond that nationalism provided and supported it on a sub-state level while distancing them from it on a state and international level. The break-up of the USSR illustrates this point as individual states formed based on the nationalist ideals kept alive by the former Soviet Union.

So, there is some connection between nationalism and communism. Yet, one must answer as to whether it was the horizontal social class revolution by the proletariat that communists believed would occur that spread their ideology, or was it that communism was spread by the national groups that were successful in achieving independence. It was stated earlier that the gravest violation of the nationalist principle is created when a ruling political entity is of a different nation than the majority of those being ruled. Similarly, if those ruling are perceived to be controlled and continue to hold power due to the support of a different nation, the intolerable situation still exists. Nationalist movements seek to rid themselves of this foreign control and establish their own nation. The fight for independence by nations during the 1900s often came as a result of throwing off the shackles by the imperial powers of the West, who were capitalist and democratic. It would then seem to be natural for these nationalist movements to

¹⁰⁶ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in New Europe*, 29.

turn toward a form of governing that was directly opposed to that of their former imperial masters. This would lead these movements to become communist. Communism would also provide for a totalitarian system that would allow the nationalist movements to continue to build on the national consciousness that had been awakened. This would be harder to continue in a democracy where elections would allow for differing ideas to filter into the consciousness. Did communism become the governing ideology of choice in Vietnam and Cuba because their nationalist independence movements were successful, was it chosen because of a revolt of the workers encouraged by the Soviet Union, or was it a combination of these items in which nationalism played some important role? The next two chapters will attempt to provide insight to these questions.

CHAPTER 4: VIETNAM

In order to examine the significance that nationalism had in Vietnam on the country's path toward communism, there are three factors that this chapter will consider. The first factor is an examination of the conditions that existed in the nation before and as the revolution occurred. Was Vietnam ripe for nationalism to take hold? The second factor must examine the beliefs of the revolutionary leader because, in both Vietnam and Cuba, the revolutions were dominated by their leadership. So, can it be shown whether or not the leader of the revolutionary movement was a nationalist first as opposed to being communist or having other motives that influenced the actions of the revolutionaries? Finally, did communism find itself as an unlikely partner with nationalism that enabled the nationalist revolutionary movements to succeed? This chapter will analyze the conditions that existed in Vietnam that may have helped nationalism take hold and play a significant role in Vietnam's turn toward communism, it will examine Ho Chi Minh and attempt to discern to what degree he was a nationalist, it will look at the influence of the Soviet Union in this country, and it will examine the relationship between nationalism and communism in Vietnam.

As detailed in the last chapter, Benedict Anderson discusses the growth of a bureaucratic system established by Western nations in Asia that helped promote the growth of nationalism. This bureaucratic system was developed to enable the imperial powers to more easily govern their colonies. The indigenous work forces of these colonies would be educated and trained to serve in the administrative units in the bureaucracy. This created a young, educated class who

traveled for their education and work, saw the roots of nationalism take hold within them, and then they were able to spread it in their home country.¹⁰⁷

In Vietnam, the French divided Indochina into five separate districts—two of which were Tonkin (North Vietnam) and Annam (Central Vietnam).¹⁰⁸ The bureaucratic system established by the French was so entrenched in these colonies that the districts continued to function even after the French were gone. The Japanese did not change them during their occupation before and during World War II. After the war as the French tried to re-assert their control, the districts continued to operate.¹⁰⁹ The stability of the bureaucracy that the French installed in Vietnam enabled nationalism to take root and spread throughout the country.

The French themselves played an unknowing role in helping nationalism gain a foothold among the Vietnamese people. The French goals in Indochina were undoubtedly economic in nature. They were looking to create a market for goods from the home country and to exploit the natural resources of the region. They also placed considerable emphasis on their moral responsibility as an imperial power. They felt the “white man’s burden.” This was a common excuse of Western colonial powers in the late 19th century used to justify their exploitation of Third World countries.¹¹⁰ This led France to try and give the Vietnamese a “better” life by westernizing them through education and attempted cultural changes.

These goals of the French led to the education of the indigenous peoples who would form the backbone of the bureaucratic districts set up to govern the colonies. Many of these new bureaucratic, professional, and commercial classes in Vietnam embraced Western culture by

¹⁰⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 113-119.

¹⁰⁸ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger (Publishers), 1966), 27.

¹¹⁰ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution*, 28-29.

studying in France. When they came home, they faced the confiscation of their books and newspapers, they could not find jobs equal to the education they had received, and French officials addressed them as servants and inferiors. Because of this education that the French had allowed, it marked them as possible subversives.¹¹¹ Yet, it was this new urban bourgeoisie class, "...the functionaries of the bureaucracy, schoolteachers, journalists, and students," that became the leaders of the nationalist movement in Vietnam.¹¹²

The French imperialists believed the Vietnamese were "merely bandits without any sentiment of patriotism."¹¹³ This becomes one of the great mistakes made by the West in dealing with Third World countries. The West did not realize the power that nationalism had in uniting peoples and did not recognize it in the colonies that they controlled. Phan Boi Chau led an early nationalist movement that attempted to unite the Vietnamese. He was able to connect with other Asian militants who agreed with his writings, but his movement lacked broad peasant support and he was not very successful in mobilizing insurgent sympathies. Pham Chu Trinh set up a school that taught nationalist ideals. He was under the illusion that the Enlightenment principles that France believed in would eventually come to Vietnam. He was viewed as a subversive by the French and was eventually arrested in a round-up of nationalists and exiled from the country.¹¹⁴ It seems then that nationalism was gaining a foothold in the consciousness of the Vietnamese. Ho Chi Minh taps into this national consciousness through the rhetoric he used throughout his adult life which culminated in a successful revolution. Yet, Ho Chi Minh was a communist, so was nationalism merely a tool to obtain the goal of a communist government or was it the integral factor in obtaining the independence of Vietnam?

¹¹¹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 115.

¹¹² William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution*, 33-37.

¹¹³ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 98.

¹¹⁴ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 110-113.

In an article written in *Time* magazine in September of 1969 shortly after Ho Chi Minh's death, it seemed obvious to the author that Ho was indeed a nationalist. The author describes how Ho's life was dedicated to creating a unified Vietnam which was free from foreign control.¹¹⁵ This is the nationalist principle that had been violated referred to by Gellner in which Ho was trying to overturn. In fact, fellow communists were distinctly aware of Ho's nationalist sentiment. "Ruth Fischer, a leading German party member who knew Ho in the 1920s, wrote: 'It was Ho's nationalism which impressed us European Communists, born and bred in a rather gray kind of abstract internationalism.' To classic nationalistic sentiments, Asians added an indigenous ingredient —barely contained outrage at the fact that the European colonizers almost inevitably humiliated the peoples they sought to rule."¹¹⁶ Again, another example of how Ho was infuriated by the violation of Gellner's principle. This article details how Ho was raised as one of the first generation of nationalists to appear in Asia, and that this would define his life as he raised his nationalist revolutionary movement in China with young, exiled Vietnamese.¹¹⁷ So, even during the height of the Cold War, this writer saw Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist.

Yet, it is necessary to examine Ho Chi Minh's life and thoughts in greater detail to have a true idea of his motives and desires. Ho came from a bourgeois background and was educated early on at the prestigious National Academy in Vietnam. When he reached young adulthood, he boarded a steamer as a cook's helper and saw the world. He ended up in Paris where he continued his educational pursuits. It was here that Ho became exposed and greatly influenced by the teachings of Lenin. He writes later in life while discussing the work of Lenin, "...what

¹¹⁵"World: The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh," www.time.com, September 12, 1969, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901394-1,00.html#ixzz10mWtrMyE> .

¹¹⁶ "World: The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh," www.time.com, September 12, 1969, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901394-1,00.html#ixzz10mWtrMyE> .

¹¹⁷ "World: The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh," www.time.com, September 12, 1969, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901394-1,00.html#ixzz10mWtrMyE> .

emotion, enthusiasm, clear-sightedness, and confidence it instilled in me.”¹¹⁸ Eventually, he became known in Communist circles around Paris, he joined the Comintern , and was summoned to Moscow to receive training as a Comintern agent.¹¹⁹ There is little doubt that Ho Chi Minh considered himself a communist, was inspired by the teachings of Lenin and Marx, and would implement communist beliefs when he came to power in Vietnam.

However, despite the fact that Ho was a communist, there is ample evidence to suggest that he was a nationalist first. Ho freely admitted that “it was patriotism and not communism that originally inspired me.”¹²⁰ Ho puts Vietnamese independence at the forefront of his goals. In 1924 as a member of the Fifth Comintern Congress, he brings up an important point. He wishes to ensure that the established Communists of the world do not forget the importance of the anti-colonial struggle that is taking place in Third World countries.¹²¹ In fact, the control of Vietnam by the imperialist West dominates most of Ho Chi Minh’s thinking before his successful revolution. As a nationalist, Ho cannot accept the control of his nation by the French or any foreign power.

Throughout Ho Chi Minh’s writings, speeches, and letters, Ho continually complains about the conditions that his people are being forced to live in because of the colonial control of the French. He often talks of what the “people” need and not of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie as one might expect of a communist. For example, in Ho’s “Twelve Recommendations,” he states “the nation has its root in the people.”¹²² In this letter written to the resistance forces of Vietnam, Ho implores the resistance to help spread nationalist principles

¹¹⁸ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 337.

¹¹⁹ William J. Duiker, *Vietnam: A Nation in Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983) 37-39.

¹²⁰ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 122.

¹²¹ Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger (Publishers), 1966), 116-117.

¹²² Ho Chi Minh, “Twelve Recommendations,” *Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh Vol. 3* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, April 5, 1948), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh>.

through the encouragement of a “national script,” by helping people in their daily work, and winning over the people by respecting the local customs.¹²³ By instructing his revolutionaries to act “correct, diligent, and disciplined,” help the locals with their work and learn the customs of each region, and tell simple stories that help the revolution, Ho is building the nationalist sentiment among the population of Vietnam.¹²⁴ Nowhere does he encourage the teaching of communist ideology, but instead relies on the more primal forces that nationalism brings out in people. Throughout Ho’s missives, it is the freeing of the people from the colonial West that is the common theme. He does not discuss political ideology except to condemn democracy as “gift” given by the West.

Ho Chi Minh even approached the US for help in bringing independence to Vietnam, but he never received indications that the United States was interested. After World War I, in 1919, Ho writes to President Wilson. He requests US help in bringing constitutional government, democratic freedoms, and other reforms to the Vietnamese. He states that “all subject peoples are filled with hope by the prospect that an era of right and justice is opening to them.”¹²⁵ In 1945, Ho writes a letter to President Truman where he again requests the help of the United States in obtaining independence from the French. Ho argued that the security and freedom that Vietnam needed could only come with the support of the United States “as guardians and champions of World Justice.”¹²⁶ Stanley Karnow argues that this shows that Ho was a pragmatist who was solely concerned with the independence and salvation of Vietnam. Because Ho was a veteran communist, the US was disinclined to support him because of the policy of

¹²³ Ho Chi Minh, “Twelve Recommendations,” *Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh Vol. 3*, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh>.

¹²⁴ Ho Chi Minh, “Twelve Recommendations,” *Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh Vol. 3*, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh>.

¹²⁵ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 121.

¹²⁶ Ho Chi Minh, “Letter to President Truman,” www.rationalrevolution.net, accessed June, 2010, http://rationalrevolution.net/war/collection_of_letters_by_ho_chi_.htm.

containment and their support of France.¹²⁷ The lack of a response from the United States meant that Ho Chi Minh would not have the support of the most powerful nation in the West, and therefore, would have to look to other avenues for Vietnam's independence. He acknowledges this in one of his writings. In "The Path Which Led me to Leninism," Ho states that communism and socialism were the paths to lead his people to freedom, but this is because they are in opposition to the colonial West and democracy which has failed the Vietnamese.¹²⁸ While Ho Chi Minh was clearly a believer in communism, most of his life was dedicated to achieving independence for Vietnam.

He cultivated the image of himself as "Uncle Ho" whose sole passion was a devotion to his national family. At the onset of World War II, Ho aligns himself with the Allies. He believed that they would beat the Japanese, oust the French, and reward the Vietnamese with their independence. This strained his allegiance to the Soviet Union and the communist movement itself, but Ho Chi Minh was solely dedicated to the freeing of his nation.¹²⁹ It was during this time that Ho formed a new organization called the Vietminh. It was an organization dedicated to appealing to nationalist sentiment.¹³⁰ Perhaps, it is during this period that Ho's true passion and nature is revealed. If he was willing to negatively affect his relationship with the Soviet Union for Vietnam's independence, then it seems to show that Ho Chi Minh's nationalist feelings were more of a priority than the fact that he believed in communism.

If Ho Chi Minh was willing to strain any connection that Vietnam may have had with the Soviet Union by reaching out to the Allies during World War II, then what actual influence did

¹²⁷ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 136.

¹²⁸ Ho Chi Minh, "The Path Which Led me to Leninism," *Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh Vol. 4*, (Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2003), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh>.

¹²⁹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 126.

¹³⁰ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 126-127.

the Soviet Union have in Vietnam? The research on this topic shows that there was very little active involvement by the Soviet Union in Vietnam during the revolution. While it is true that Ho had received training in Moscow and from communists in France, this seems to be the extent to which Soviets were involved. This is not terribly surprising, however. Communism can take many forms and often is molded to the needs of the nation that chooses it as its governing ideology.

So, does the fact that Ho Chi Minh was a communist, as well as a nationalist, have any bearing on the direction that Vietnam's independence took? Throughout Asia, it seems that communism's success was due to its identification of with anti-colonialism and national liberation.¹³¹ This anti-colonialism was one part of the national consciousness that had been awakened in Vietnam, so there was an undeniable connection between nationalism, and the anti-colonial aspect of it, and communism. In fact, this hostility to colonialism went hand-in-hand with hostility toward capitalism. Archie Brown describes this by stating that "the capitalist system they first encountered was one which seemed to radical intellectuals to involve extreme exploitation of the local population by foreign business."¹³² So, even though communism and nationalism are seemingly not ideologically compatible, many young intellectuals in Asian countries during the first half of the twentieth century saw national independence and the removal of the exploitive capitalist system linked with a turn to a socialist or communist system. Ho Chi Minh was one of a number of Vietnamese nationalist radicals that believed this.¹³³

Communism also helped provide a vehicle for success for the nationalist movements in Asia. Marx and Lenin taught that it was an inevitability that capitalism would eventually fall and

¹³¹ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2009), 127.

¹³² Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 337.

¹³³ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 337.

that communism would prove triumphant. This allowed nationalist leaders who were socialist or communist to believe that their struggle was just, that history was on their side, and that they would eventually prevail.¹³⁴ Secondly, the fact that Vietnam was a poor nation helped communism take root. Wealthy, advanced societies can resist communist takeovers because institutions and mechanisms are in place, such as the rule of law and property rights, which allow for wealth to be created and keep dictatorships from grabbing a foothold. Poor countries do not have these institutions, and, therefore, are far more vulnerable to a communist takeover.¹³⁵ Finally, revolutionaries, like Ho Chi Minh, could use the tenets of communism to solidify the support of their nationalist movements. Nations like Vietnam had a very unequal economic structure that left the majority of the population, who were peasants, living in poverty. Invariably, the first action of a communist government in these societies was land redistribution. The support for these policies by the peasant population helped stabilize the achievement of power that a successful revolutionary movement had obtained.¹³⁶

The majority of the scholars, reporters, and government officials who have researched and studied Vietnam have concluded that Ho Chi Minh led a nationalist movement which was able to come to power in Vietnam. While Ho Chi Minh did have connections with Moscow, especially during his formative years in France, his writings and speeches were mostly concerned with justice for his people and independence for his country. The Vietnamese communists never forgot their nationalism. R.B. Smith describes it as “Communist decision making in the 1950s was not so much a matter of many elements in a single system obeying instructions from one source as of Party leaders in many different areas of the world all sharing the same ultimate

¹³⁴ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 337.

¹³⁵ Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 118.

¹³⁶ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 338.

framework of analysis.”¹³⁷ Yet, Smith also warns that it is “unrealistic to analyze Communist politics as if ‘the Russians’ or ‘the Chinese’ or ‘the Vietnamese’ were purely national parties pursuing only national interests.”¹³⁸ In other words, one should not separate the actions of a nationalist leader of a revolutionary force with his communist ideology and the measures that came about because of it. Due to the nature of this topic, there is no empirical evidence that can prove or disprove Smith’s contention.

Yet, as a unifying force, nationalism has a much more powerful hold on a populace than a governing ideology or economic system like democracy and capitalism or communism. Lieutenant John Kerry, now a United States Senator, addressed this in his testimony in front of a Congressional committee upon returning from Vietnam. He stated that the conflict between the Vietnamese was “an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded in our image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from. We found most people didn’t even know the difference between communism and democracy.”¹³⁹ If Senator Kerry is right (and his statements are agreed with by many others), then it was nationalism that unified the population of Vietnam over the threat of, rewards from, or acceptance of communism or democracy.

¹³⁷ R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume I Revolution Versus Containment*, (NY: St. Martins Press, 1983), 10-13.

¹³⁸ R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume I Revolution Versus Containment*, 10-13.

¹³⁹ Bolt, Ernest, ed., “Vietnam War Veteran John Kerry’s Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 22, 1971,” Facultystaff.richmond.edu, accessed June, 2010, <https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~ebolt/history398/JohnKerryTestimony.html>.

CHAPTER 5: CUBA

Cuba presents an interesting counter to the situation that existed in Vietnam. Vietnam was the prototypical example of a nation that fit the nationalist model described by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner. Vietnam was controlled by a Western colonial power and a bureaucracy was established which provided a vehicle for nationalism to spread. These factors helped the revolutionary movement to be successful. The revolution was also led by an avowed communist. While there are similarities between Cuba and Vietnam, Cuba does not fit into the model created by Anderson quite as easily. Cuba was an independent nation, although there was great influence from the United States. Cuba had a standing government and had been free of overt colonial control for over fifty years. Fidel Castro, the revolutionary who eventually came to power, did not claim to be communist until after his government was established. So, when a nation is being controlled by one of its own, can nationalism have the same effect as if a foreign power is in charge? This chapter will examine the situation that existed in Cuba that allowed a nationalist, revolutionary movement to come to power, and it will analyze Fidel Castro's beliefs and motives in regards to nationalism and communism.

In 1952, Fulgencio Batista organized a takeover of the Cuban government through a military coup. The Batista regime became one that reeked of corruption. Batista abolished the democratic constitution that he had once trumpeted during his earlier time in office.¹⁴⁰ Public works expenditures totaled more than one billion pesos yet less than fifty percent actually went to covering costs. Most of this went to commissions and profit margins. Batista supporters were

¹⁴⁰ Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 139.

granted generous loans from new development banks while nonpartisans were turned away. The sugar industry was filled with graft and the misconduct of government officials. Batista supporters were rewarded and opponents punished. The military regime that Batista controlled watched and allowed this to take place.¹⁴¹ Batista turned the majority of Cubans into “cynics sickened by an atmosphere of graft and cronyism.”¹⁴² This corruption that was prevalent throughout Batista’s government becomes one of the issues that helps awaken the Cuban national consciousness.

The economy was dominated by the exploiting social groups of the nation. The large landowners and major farmers and cattle breeders controlled the countryside, and industrial capitalists ran the cities. There was some racial domination of whites over blacks and mestizos, and these minority groups were unlikely to ever attain a position of authority. The middle classes were made up of farmers and small landowners in rural areas while professionals, small entrepreneurs, and merchants lived in urban settings.¹⁴³ So, while Cuba was an island of immense discontent because of the economic and social situations that existed and the unhappiness with the corrupt regime of Fulgencio Batista, what awoke the national consciousness of the Cuban people so that they would support a national revolution?

Cuba’s connection to the United States, and the support given the Batista regime, led to the awakening of the Cuban national consciousness. The economy of Cuba was dominated by the United States. This was due to massive investments by US businesses and the large degree

¹⁴¹ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 54.

¹⁴² Gregory Tozian, *Fidel’s Cuba: A Revolution in Pictures* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press & Beyond Words Publishing, 1998), 46.

¹⁴³ Nelson R. Amaro, “Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 39.

by which they determined Cuba's economic structure.¹⁴⁴ Batista had allowed the United States to control Cuban banking and for US companies "to own a large percentage of the sugar mills, tobacco companies, railroads, and utilities."¹⁴⁵ The American mob flourished in Cuba by controlling gambling, prostitution, and pornography on the island. This was occurring while Cubans suffered from increasing unemployment, a recession, and a president who seemed unconcerned.¹⁴⁶ Sheldon Liss, a biographer of Fidel Castro, described it as, "A large sector of the nation's lower and middle classes possessed a strong sense of nationalism, predicated on anger with US imperialism and the rampant corruption that it caused in Cuba's body politic."¹⁴⁷ In fact, Batista's reputation had already been established when he came to power. In 1952, when Batista took over Cuba and violated the constitution, Castro himself called Batista a "faithful dog of imperialism and an ally of great Cuban and foreign interests."¹⁴⁸ It was this connection with the United States that Batista had, combined with the US-dominated Cuban economy, and the massive corruption in Batista's regime that led Cubans to feel that the nationalist principle referenced by Gellner was being violated. It was the idea that Cubans did not control their own nation, and that Batista was illegitimate because he was seen as a puppet of the United States. This was the setting in Cuba that sparked the revolutionary movement of Fidel Castro.

On July 26, 1953, Castro began his armed insurrection. He led an attack against the Moncada Barracks. Despite the fiasco that the attack was, Castro's group earned their moniker of the 26th of July Movement and attracted the attention of the Cuban populace. Castro was

¹⁴⁴ Nelson R. Amaro, "Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution," in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 39.

¹⁴⁵ Gregory Tozian, *Fidel's Cuba: A Revolution in Pictures*, 46.

¹⁴⁶ Gregory Tozian, *Fidel's Cuba: A Revolution in Pictures*, 46.

¹⁴⁷ Sheldon B. Liss, *Fidel! Castro's Political and Social Thought* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 63.

¹⁴⁸ Sheldon B. Liss, *Fidel! Castro's Political and Social Thought*, 15.

captured and put on trial. During his trial, Castro's nationalism started to show. He outlined his political program that would be based on nationalist reform, and the actions of his revolutionary force start to capture the imagination of Cuba.¹⁴⁹

During this time in prison, Castro watched with great interest the US-sponsored overthrow of Guatemala's government. Castro became convinced because of CIA involvement in Guatemala that the United States would not permit nationalist reforms to occur in countries that the US was heavily involved in. Castro believed that the United States would look to destroy any movement in one of these countries by claiming that they were Soviet-inspired. Sheldon Liss contends that this is the time when Castro realizes "that a reform movement similar to that of Guatemala could not succeed in Cuba and that radical restructuring of the Cuban system and the seizure of control from foreign capitalists and their native partners were the only answer to the nation's myriad problems."¹⁵⁰ This then surely added to the likelihood of the United States trying to help Batista stop any revolution and would firmly entrench them in Castro's mind as the real threat against the revolution.

Eventually, Castro is exiled and lands in Mexico. Here he begins to regroup his forces. Plans are made to return to Cuba, but upon doing so, Castro and his men are met by the Cuban air force. Castro's men are scattered and eventually regroup in the Sierra Maestra mountain range. It is here that Castro and the 26th of July Movement start to build popular support for the eventual takeover of the Batista government.

While in the Sierra Maestras, Castro's group begins a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Cuban army, starts distributing propaganda across Cuba, and maybe most

¹⁴⁹ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 53.

¹⁵⁰ Sheldon B. Liss, *Fidel! Castro's Political and Social Thought*, 19.

importantly, embarks on a determined effort to treat the peasantry as well as possible. It is during this time of exile that his image improves drastically. He becomes the benefactor of the peasants.¹⁵¹ Castro himself states, “For the first time, the army will not use its weapons against the people,” and his brother Raul continues, “The Rebel Army is a political army whose purpose is to defend the interests of the people.”¹⁵² As Castro’s revolutionary force continued to openly confront the Cuban army and as new recruits steadily joined the guerrillas, his mystique grew. In the words of one commentator, Castro became to most Cuban people “a young, idealistic revolutionary trying to destroy the tradition and might of the army.”¹⁵³

During this time in the Sierra Maestra range, the nationalist feeling of the revolutionary forces starts to be revealed. The Sierra Maestra and 26th of July Movement called for political sovereignty, economic independence, and a national culture for Cuba. Specifically, the political thinking of the group was “democratic, nationalist, and for social justice.”¹⁵⁴ Following the failed attack at the Moncada Barracks, Castro wanted to defend his group from claims that they were nothing but terrorists. He turns to esteemed members of the Cuban intelligentsia and forms an alliance with the Directorio Revolucionario. The DR advocated “revolutionary insurrection” with direct and sharp action against the tyrant Batista. It looked toward the creation of a revolutionary state that would be instrumental in reconstructing Cuban society. The DR’s manifesto called for the same political freedom, social justice, and economic independence that the 26th of July Movement advocated. Average citizens, workers, and students were called to unite their efforts for “the sake of the oppressed, underprivileged, and the martyrs of the

¹⁵¹ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1974), 101-102.

¹⁵² Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 69.

¹⁵³ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 102.

¹⁵⁴ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 157-158.

Fatherland.”¹⁵⁵ A speech by Joe Westbrook, one of Castro’s supporters, that was given at Havana University in October, 1956, espoused the nationalist ideals of the revolution. He said, “I am on the side of that revolution invoked by serious-minded, stable, self-assured Cubans. We have come to pledge ourselves to the attainment of a Cuba with schools in the countryside so the peasant too may share in the free competition for justice; where everyone’s rights are respected as our own; where truth is upheld without resorting to gangster-like hysteria; where the economy does not rest on a single product; a progressive Cuba, free of irrational tantrums, where private property becomes the social function of society; where blacks, mulattoes and whites become more Cuban-like than white, mulattoes, or blacks.”¹⁵⁶

As the revolution proceeded from its beginnings in 1953 until its success in 1959, it continued to highlight nationalist ideals in order to win the support of the Cuban people. Nelson Amaro described it as such, “A series of events made the military victory possible. Yet this was not the decisive aspect of the Cuban Revolution. The victory was due more to social and psychological conditions, which were such that once-strong allies of the exploiting class reversed their loyalties as the revolutionary struggle reached its climax. The middle classes became discouraged and deserted Batista. The ideological entente of the 26th of July Movement had a broad base, and it allowed all the oppressed classes of the nation to join the political sphere. It even attracted some in the exploiting classes.”¹⁵⁷ The rhetoric coming from the revolutionaries was not a decidedly Marxist-Leninist approach as much as it was an appeal to the national consciousness of Cuba.

¹⁵⁵ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 56.

¹⁵⁶ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 72.

¹⁵⁷ Nelson R. Amaro, “Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 49.

Yet, nationalism in Cuba was not spread by an army of bureaucratic clerks as it was in Vietnam. Cuba was a decidedly more modern country with a higher literacy rate and more technology available to the masses. Castro made use of these advantages. He was very successful in spreading his nationalist message by setting up a radio station in the Sierra Maestras. Eventually, television would become his preferred medium.¹⁵⁸ As the revolution finally emerges victorious in January, 1959, Castro had been able to widely disseminate its message to the Cuban people and, therefore, had gained the support of a vast majority of the population. The magazine *Bohemia* conducted a survey that showed that 90% of Cubans supported the revolution.¹⁵⁹

Fulgencio Batista was a Cuban dictator who allowed corruption to run rampant in his nation, favored his friends and supporters over all others, and due to the way he came to power, was not seen as legitimate. By itself, this would not seem to be enough to awaken a true nationalist movement. As stated earlier, it was the overwhelming presence of the United States in Cuba, especially economically, that provided the final component in awakening Cuba's national consciousness. During his time in the Sierra Maestra while fighting against Batista, Castro stated, "When this war is over, I shall begin a longer and greater war: the war I'll wage against them [the Americans]. I realize that this is my true destiny."¹⁶⁰ Later, Castro would claim that the United States was an enemy of the revolution and Cubans did not have national dignity. While the US was never the prime justification for their struggle, this rhetoric helped

¹⁵⁸ Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 40.

¹⁵⁹ Nelson R. Amaro, "Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution," in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 51.

¹⁶⁰ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba* (New York: William and Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989), 95.

infuse the social classes of Cuba with new power and unity toward a common adversary.¹⁶¹

Again, this presence of the United States, and its support for Batista, fulfilled the violation of the nationalist principle described by Ernest Gellner.

However, this thesis seeks to ascertain the influence that nationalism had on Cuba in its turn toward communism. What role then did the communists play in Castro's revolution? Early on, the communists played no role. With the failed attack of the Moncada Barracks, the Communist Party in Cuba sought to distance themselves from Castro. They called Castro a "bourgeois putsch" and that his insurrection was nothing but "petit bourgeois adventurism."¹⁶² They proclaimed their path to a conciliatory approach and would not condone the actions of youthful revolutionaries. The communists believed that it would not be a necessary or prudent course for their party to be affiliated with a group that had "seemingly embraced a philosophy of violence."¹⁶³ Batista tried to implicate that the communists were involved in the Moncada incident but only the most fervent anti-communist fanatics would believe this.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the communists were dismissive of Castro's guerrilla tactics until the revolutionaries were about to assume power.

It is not surprising that Castro's revolution did not have much desire to reach out to the communists anyway. Many in Cuba who sought revolution to overthrow the corrupt government in Cuba held the Communist Party in low esteem. The Cuban communists had sidled up to Batista and collaborated with him, particularly during his early years of rule. K.S. Karol says it best, "Ironically, Castro was at odds with the Communists for a much longer time than was

¹⁶¹ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 76.

¹⁶² Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 25.

¹⁶³ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 25.

¹⁶⁴ Ramon L. Bonachea & Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection 1952-1959*, 25.

Batista. Indeed, from the beginning right up until mid-1958, the Communist Party heartily opposed Castro's movement."¹⁶⁵ The 26th of July Movement published "scathing indictments" of communist history and declared that the past of the Communist Party made them untrustworthy.¹⁶⁶

The United States seemed to realize that there was not much, if any, attachment of the Communist Party to Castro's revolution. A policy memorandum from the Director of Middle American Affairs divided Cuba into three main political groups. The more leftist and more radical wing of the 26th of July Movement was led by Che Guevara and Fidel's brother, Raul Castro. This is the wing that was most likely to advocate socialist and communist ideology. The 26th of July Movement's moderate wing was led by Fidel Castro himself. The final political group with some standing left in Cuba was an older group of pro-US moderates. The Director's memorandum called for a strengthening of this third group, and a plan to encourage Fidel Castro "to make common cause" with them.¹⁶⁷ Following the revolution's success, The Central Intelligence Agency concluded that "Fidel Castro and his government are not demonstrably under the domination or control of the international Communist movement...[and] will not soon come under such demonstrable domination or control."¹⁶⁸ The CIA felt it unlikely that any foreign entity would be able to convince Castro to accept actual direction. During the revolutionary period, Earl E.T. Smith, the US ambassador in Havana, believed that "Cuba was torn in a struggle between a Rightist, corrupt dictator who was friendly to the US and a would-be

¹⁶⁵ K.S. Karol, *Guerrillas in Power* (Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1970), 19-20.

¹⁶⁶ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 71.

¹⁶⁷ Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 17.

¹⁶⁸ Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 27.

Leftist dictator, who could be a communist.”¹⁶⁹ This was the closest that a US official with authority in the Cuban situation ever came to claiming that Castro was a communist during his revolutionary period.

Even if there was no visible connection with the Communist Party during Castro’s revolutionary period, eventually Cuba moves toward that ideology and an eventual alliance with the Soviet Union. When he comes to power in January, 1959, Fidel Castro had not publically stated nor did he have any easily seen attachments to the Soviet Union or Communism in general. However, two short years later in December, 1961, Castro declares himself to be a Marxist-Leninist. Castro had surrounded himself with many who had strong communist ideas, and he had tied democratic processes like elections to the corruption of past regimes. With the connection of democracy and capitalism to the United States, it was likely that he would opt for a style of governing that would counter the ways of the past. Even from this point, it was still a gradual process for him to accept all of the tenets of communism.¹⁷⁰

This gradual move to communism can be seen in the early reforms of the Castro government. These reforms seemed to favor the lower classes more than any time in Cuban history. Castro publically states that “...workers are not responsible for our desperate straits. Only our immoral governments and the wealthy who opted for unproductive investments are.”¹⁷¹ The largest and most ambition of Castro’s early reforms was the Agrarian Reform Law. Much like Ho Chi Minh, Castro sought to keep support of the peasants by giving a more equal distribution of land. This may have hurt any nationalist feeling that large landowners or wealthy

¹⁶⁹ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba* (New York: William and Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989), 53.

¹⁷⁰ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2009), 293-295.

¹⁷¹ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 67.

cattle ranchers would have had for the revolution since this agrarian reform would be counter to their continued wealth. While the Agrarian Reform Law is socialist in nature and looks like a communist policy enacted by the Castro regime, it also met the ideals of the revolution from a nationalist perspective. Castro had tied the prosperity that most of the very wealthy in Cuba had experienced to the involvement of the United States in the Cuban economy and the corruptness of the Batista regime. This law was as much of a product of the promises of nationalism as it was a communist-based policy.

Castro was successful in using propaganda to spread his nationalist message. By using radio and television, Castro had done a “masterful job of using nationalism to ‘cloud’ the minds of the masses,” so most of Cuba supported these early policies.¹⁷² By the end of 1960, Castro’s revolutionary government had set up schools in all Cuban provinces that taught Marxist-Leninism as a main subject. Due to the anti-United States bias of the Cuban revolutionary elite and the successful methods of spreading this to the Cuban masses, these reforms were accepted as being in the best interest of Cuba.¹⁷³ These schools also became a crucial tool in the continued spread of the nationalist feeling that the revolution had created among Cubans.

So, what roll then did the Soviet Union have during Castro’s revolution? The research on this topic is lacking. There is not any concrete evidence to connect Castro to the Soviets at all until he came to power. Because Castro was not supported by the Cuban Communist Party during the revolution, the Soviet Union did not pay much attention to the revolution until its success. This is when the Soviets would establish diplomatic contact with Castro. While Castro’s government was clearly adopting socialist policies, it was not until the events of April

¹⁷² Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba*, 59-74.

¹⁷³ Rafael A. Lecuona, “Cuba and Nicaragua: The Path to Communism,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK), Transaction Publishers, 1989), 94.

17, 1961 that pushed Castro into a formal alliance with the Soviet Union. On this day, an invasion force of exiled Cubans landed at the Bay of Pigs hoping to overthrow the new Cuban regime. The invasion was quickly defeated by the Cuban army thanks to a lack of air support from the United States and very little popular support in Cuba itself for the invaders. Marifeli Perez-Stable accounts for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion by explaining Cuba “had experienced a social revolution with profound historical roots and extraordinary popular support.”¹⁷⁴

Still, the invasion force that had ties to the United States firmly established in Castro’s mind the fact that in order to maintain his government, a complete shift to communism and an alliance with the Soviet Union would be necessary. This was an evolution in the thinking of Castro. He was gradually moving toward communism, and the Bay of Pigs invasion completed the process by which Castro had to turn to the “only available long-term example of non-capitalist, post-revolutionary governance that was offered by the Soviet Union and other communist states.”¹⁷⁵ The anti-US bias of the revolutionary elite in Cuba was also heightened by the Bay of Pigs, and it forced them to accept that incorporation into the Soviet bloc would be in the best interest of the country.¹⁷⁶ It would not be fair to say that the actions of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations pushed Castro into the arms of the Soviets but instead, he went willingly. However, the actions of the United States probably did quicken the pace at which Castro fully embraced communism rather than have any change in Cuba’s ultimate direction.¹⁷⁷ The Bay of Pigs, coupled with the subsequent Cuban Missile Crisis, completed the process of

¹⁷⁴ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2009), 293.

¹⁷⁶ Rafael A. Lecuona, “Cuba and Nicaragua: The Path to Communism,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 97.

¹⁷⁷ Alan H. Luxenberg, “Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 24.

Cuba's move toward communism and "placed Cuba firmly in the Soviet Bloc."¹⁷⁸ Still, even with this, Cuba's communist government was its own, and Castro prided himself on "his nation's independence from all foreign states."¹⁷⁹

Yet, perhaps the character of Fidel Castro himself needs to be examined further. If he was a communist who was influenced by the Soviet Union, then it would be difficult to claim that nationalism had a significant effect in bringing communism to Cuba. It may have been the tool that Castro used to unite the Cuban masses, but its significance would be strikingly less than if Castro was a nationalist first and had no affiliation with the Communist Party as has been stated earlier this chapter.

In an interview in May, 1958, Castro discussed the role he played in riots that happened in Columbia ten years earlier. During this interview, Castro claimed, "I have never been, nor am I now a Communist."¹⁸⁰ This statement seems to describe what most scholars believe about Castro. He did display left-wing sympathies, but he was not a communist to begin with.¹⁸¹ He used anti-Americanism as a tool to get power, but this placed him in jeopardy without someone to back him up against the US. This led to his reliance on the Soviet Union and his "ties to the Soviets were a logical outgrowth of his hostility to the United States."¹⁸²

In fact, Castro was a great admirer of Jose Marti. Marti was a hero of the independence wars and one of the most revered thinkers in Latin American history. Marti spoke often and warned against the ambitions of the United States in Cuba and the Caribbean. Another

¹⁷⁸ Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 140.

¹⁷⁹ Sheldon B. Liss, *Fidel! Castro's Political and Social Thought*, 64.

¹⁸⁰ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba*, 36.

¹⁸¹ Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 139.

¹⁸² Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 28.

biographer of Castro, Tad Szulc, states that “Marti has as much of a presence in Cuba as Marx does. In his speeches, Castro reminds his audiences that the Cuban sense of history and nationalism was as crucial as Marxism in giving birth to the great revolution.”¹⁸³ The specter of the United States as the true control in Cuba had been around for many years, and Fidel Castro was able to tap into this latent national consciousness in Cuba during his revolution.

However, many others differ with this characterization of Fidel Castro. Nestor Carbonell was member of the Cuban intelligentsia during Batista’s years in control and Castro’s revolution. He believes that Castro was secretly connected to the Soviet Union from the time he was attending the University of Havana. The Soviets had a covert apparatus that operated outside of the Soviet embassy called the Bashirov net. G.W. Bashirov was a Soviet agent that gave financial support and held meetings with young Cubans. Carbonell claims that Castro was one of these Cuban students and that Castro had connections with the Soviet Union from his time as a student all of the way through the revolution.¹⁸⁴ However, Carbonell freely admits that he was writing as a Cuban national who lived through the revolution before leaving in exile and did not purport to have a monopoly on the facts. Rafael Lecuona cites two other authors with similar views on Castro. Daniel James believes that Castro was completely committed to the communist cause, ideologically and otherwise. Hugh Thomas makes the concession that Castro was not a true communist, but that he proclaimed himself as such in order to make “a bold bid for admission into the Communist bloc as leader of both the Cuban and the Latin American communist movement.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 21-22.

¹⁸⁴ Nestor T. Carbonell, *And the Russians Stayed: The Sovietization of Cuba*, 33-35.

¹⁸⁵ Rafael A. Lecuona, “Cuba and Nicaragua: The Path to Communism,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 91-92.

While these viewpoints of Fidel Castro cannot be discounted, there is far more evidence that shows that it was nationalism that drove him and the revolutionary movement. In multiple speeches and statements between 1959 and 1960, Castro makes a nationalist argument in describing the success of the revolution. Castro states that, “The first thing our revolution did was to unite the nation in a great national people.”¹⁸⁶ Later, Castro declared that “The Cuban people...have achieved a source of national independence that they never had before. They enjoy a personal dignity that has always been denied them. For the first time, Cubans are masters of their own country.”¹⁸⁷ In a speech delivered in Havana in January of 1959, Castro describes the unity, instead of divisions that existed in the Cuban people, and this is why they were able to their battle for liberty. He goes on to talk about the people winning the battle over the horrors that they suffered under previous regimes, and that the “nation” desired peace with freedom, justice, and law.¹⁸⁸

In another speech almost a year later in March of 1960, Castro explains the revolution in purely nationalistic terms. The main nationalist portion is as follows:

...so that the entire nation can rally in a spirit of combat and heroism! Who would have dreamed that someday military men and workers would no longer be enemies, that someday the military and the workers and students and peasants and people would no longer be enemies; who would have dreamed that someday intellectuals would march arm in arm with the laborers; who would have dreamed that someday the men of labor and the men of war would march together, as they marched today! In the old days, they marched separately, they were enemies, and the fatherland was full of dissimilar interests and dissimilar groups and dissimilar institutions; and today the fatherland has one single feeling, the fatherland is one single force, the fatherland is

¹⁸⁶ Nelson R. Amaro, “Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution,” in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 51-52.

¹⁸⁷ Sheldon B. Liss, *Fidel! Castro’s Political and Social Thought*, 63-64.

¹⁸⁸ Fidel Castro, “Fidel Castro Speech Delivered in Ciudad Libertad,” *lanic.utexas.edu*, accessed June, 2010, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/1959/>

one single group; today they do not fight each other, the peasants and the soldiers or the students and police or the people and armed forces do not die, fighting each other; today the same spirit and the same aspirations spring from the people and the military and they all have the same cause; in the past they fought each other but today they fight side by side; in the past they marched on different roads, today they march together, today they fight together, the workers and the soldiers; today, they die together, helping each other, giving their lives for each other so as to save other lives, as inseparable brothers.¹⁸⁹

In numerous speeches from 1959 through 1960, Castro attacks the Batista regime and the support that the United States gave it. Castro claims in a speech before the United Nations that Cuba had dealt with the colonial imperialism of Spain to only have that switched to the United States after its victory in the Spanish-American War. He then goes into detail explaining that Batista held power only because of arms and training provided by the US government.¹⁹⁰ This is where Castro makes the case that Cuba, as a nation, was in an intolerable situation because of the violation of the nationalist principle stated by Gellner which is that a nation cannot support a ruler who is not legitimate because their power is derived from the support of another nation. Batista was perceived by Cubans as having power because he was an ally of and supported by the United States. Therefore, he was not a legitimate representative of the Cuban nation. Also, in this speech, Castro admits before the UN General Assembly that the new Cuban government had not had a chance to establish diplomatic or trade relations, nor had it been in contact with Soviet leader Khrushchev in any way even though the US press and world news organizations were calling the new government a “red” one.¹⁹¹ So, even though the Cuban government eventually became a completely communist regime, it seems that it took a nationalist revolution guided by nationalist principles to enable this to happen.

¹⁸⁹ Fidel Castro, “Speech on the Revolution Will Not Stop,” *lanic.utexas.edu*, accessed June, 2010, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/1960/>

¹⁹⁰ Fidel Castro, “Dr. Fidel Castro Denounces Imperialism and Colonialism at UN General Assembly,” *lanic.utexas.edu*, accessed June, 2010, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600926.html>.

¹⁹¹ Fidel Castro, “Dr. Fidel Castro Denounces Imperialism and Colonialism at UN General Assembly,” *lanic.utexas.edu*, accessed June, 2010, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600926.html>.

The research that has been done on the Cuban revolution seems to indicate that Fidel Castro led a nationalist revolution to overthrow Fulgencio Batista. Whether or not he had Soviet connections or believed in a Communist ideology, he was a nationalist first and understood the power that nationalism had in uniting the people of Cuba behind his revolution. Many observers of Cuba throughout the Cold War would agree that Castro served the purposes of the Soviet Union well, but very few would suggest that he ever took orders from Moscow.¹⁹² Marfeli Perez-Stable sums up Cuba's revolution and its turn to communism best with the following:

Over the next 3 decades, the Cuban government would grapple with consequences of victory. Confronting the challenges of governance was now the question. National affirmation against the US would be the overriding consideration, and, therefore, survival would subsume all other concerns. For the sake of la patria, ironhanded unity behind Fidel Castro would be enforced...Formal democracy—the processes on contestation and rotation—had decidedly limited vistas. The new politics allowed the state to direct the national economy and partially relieve the sense of insufficiency that had permeated the old Cuba...While the interaction of domestic and foreign factors was complex, consolidating a nationalist revolution led Cuba to socialism, an alliance with the Soviet Union, and permanent hostility from the US.¹⁹³

Louis Perez, Jr. a Cuban historian, describes Castro's movement as "...a guerrilla war of national liberation aspiring to the transformation of society...[it] contained elements of anti-imperialism, political radicalism, agrarian reform, racial equality, and social justice."¹⁹⁴ Due to the presence of the United States in Cuba, whether in fact or perceived, Castro's movement seemed to be able to awaken a dormant national consciousness in the Cuban people, and, thus, if true, it brought communism to Cuba as its governing ideology.

¹⁹² Alan H. Luxenberg, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro into the Arms of the Soviets?" in *Cuban Communism: Seventh Edition*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, 27.

¹⁹³ Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 81.

¹⁹⁴ Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, 28-29.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to ascertain what role nationalism had in the adoption of communism in Vietnam and Cuba. The vast majority of the research on these two nations indicates that nationalism was a significant component in the revolutions of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro. Nationalism was a significant force in bringing communism to Vietnam and Cuba, and the implications of this still have merit in today's post-Cold War world.

Nationalism has an ability to unite a people that a political philosophy does not have. It is a feeling of unity inherent to the people of a nation that connects them in a horizontal comradeship that crosses over class lines or inequalities. It is nationalism that is pervasive through Ho Chi Minh's and Fidel Castro's rhetoric, propaganda, and actions toward their nations' peoples during their revolutionary periods. Communism seems to have been successful in taking hold in Cuba and Vietnam because of nationalism. The respected Oxford scholar, Archie Brown, explains, "Outside Europe, communists were able to draw on the theme of national liberation and anti-colonialism to attract broader support than could be achieved by an appeal to communist ideology alone...In Vietnam and Cuba, anti-imperialist sentiments and national pride were also of great importance both in the foundation of the regimes and for their persistence. These...Third World countries (Cuba, Vietnam) all had indigenous revolutions, and while that has been no guarantee of survival, it can at least safely be said that indigenous revolution is a better predictor of communist survival than non-indigenous founding of the regime."¹⁹⁵ It seems that these countries, through their nationalist revolutionary movements,

¹⁹⁵ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2009), 586.

adopted communism as a governing ideology, not because of a unified revolt by the working class or because of direct Soviet involvement, but instead, because it allowed their respective nationalist movements the best opportunity to maintain their newly found power.

Still, it would be unwise to completely rule out other factors that helped the Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions succeed. It is clearly documented that Ho and Castro both were influenced by communist beliefs at least somewhat long before they obtained power. The Marxist-Leninist ideology that both men were educated in clearly affected how each saw the world. Ho Chi Minh was a declared communist and had experience with the Soviet Union as a trained member of the Comintern. Fidel Castro's two closest advisors, his brother Raul and Che Guevara, were both greatly influenced by Marxist-Leninist beliefs. It would also be unwise to completely discount Soviet influence. As the United States attempted to interfere in countries around the globe that it felt was moving toward communism, it would be prudent to assume the USSR was doing a similar thing by trying to encourage communism in the Third World.

Even if these alternative explanations have some merit, it is difficult to look at the evidence and not conclude that nationalism was an important force that allowed these revolutionary movements to come to power. While both Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro may have believed in communist ideology on some level and may have had connections with the Soviet Union (although there is very little evidence to suggest the latter during the revolutions themselves), it was not these leftist political beliefs that pushed their revolutions. Similarly, communism itself is a complex governing ideology, and the communist governments of Vietnam and Cuba adopted it in a way that fit for their countries. The United States seemingly did not realize this as it looked at all communism as Soviet-inspired communism.

If anything, the leftist beliefs that Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro had gave them a pathway to solidify power if their revolutions were successful in overthrowing the controlling regimes of their nations. Communism was counter to the beliefs of the Western powers that had long dominated their countries. It provided a totalitarian framework to maintain power once they were able to claim it. Democracy did not offer the same. Democracy was attached to the Western powers that had violated the nationalist principle described by Gellner. France, and then the United States, in Vietnam and the United States in Cuba were democratic powers that had ruled or propped up illegitimate rulers in these countries. Democracy was attached to the imperialist West and had Ho Chi Minh or Fidel Castro sought to install a democratic government and, therefore, have the support of the West, it might have appeared that they were no better than the people that they had replaced. Democracy had another major drawback. It allowed for alternative viewpoints that may have gone against the national consciousness that had been awakened in these nations. It could have provided for the opportunity that the revolutionaries could potentially lose power once elections would be scheduled. Communism allowed for this horizontal comradeship that had been created and developed in Vietnam and Cuba through nationalism to be managed more efficiently than a democratic government would allow.

Yet, there is a great problem that still lingers when discussing the importance that nationalism had. It cannot be statistically proven. The historical record that exists from both nations does not include polls taken of the citizenry that highlights their strong nationalist beliefs. Even if these existed, it would be difficult to verify the validity of how they were conducted or whether they were coercive at all in nature. Much of the evidence that can be used is the words of two men who wanted power. Once they obtained it, each put in place a government that would ensure their maintenance of power for as long as they lived. Perhaps this

is why nationalism was overlooked by foreign policy makers for such an extended period of time. Nationalism is not some tangible, concrete entity that is easily seen or measured. Yet, through the works of academics like Benedict Anderson, Rogers Brubaker, Ernest Gellner, and others, Vietnam and Cuba fit the profile of countries that had a national consciousness awoken, a revolution because of this consciousness, and chose a form of government based on the nationalist revolution that had come to power.

So, if the revolutions of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro were nationalist in nature, what were and are the implications of this? In a speech before becoming President, John F. Kennedy said that the US "...had underestimated the force of nationalism...we gave our support to regimes instead of to people," and that the US had assumed that those governments who "...were friendly to us and hostile to the Communists were therefore good governments."¹⁹⁶ Robert J. McMahon delivers a scathing criticism of the Eisenhower Administration in an article he wrote for *Political Science Quarterly*. In it, he said:

The Eisenhower administration grievously misunderstood and underestimated the most significant historical development of the mid-twentieth century—the force of Third World nationalism...The Eisenhower administration insisted on viewing the Third World through the invariably distorting lens of a Cold War geopolitical strategy that saw the Kremlin as the principal indicator of global unrest. As a result, it often would end up simplifying complicated local and regional developments, confusing nationalism with communism, aligning the United States with inherently unstable and unrepresentative regimes, and wedding American interests to the status quo in areas undergoing fundamental social, political, and economic upheaval. Rather than promoting long term stability in the Third World, the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration contributed to its instability...In this critical area, then, the Eisenhower record appears one of persistent failure.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power, Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Clinton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 145-146.

¹⁹⁷ Robert J. McMahon, "Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists," *Political Science Quarterly* (Vol. 101, No. 3, 1986), 457.

In the book, *In Retrospect: the Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara admits that US policymakers failed to account for the power of nationalism to make people fight and die for their country.¹⁹⁸ McNamara does not say that these people fought and died for their right to govern themselves with their ideology of choice, but fought and died because of nationalism. Kennedy, McMahon, and McNamara's statements help illustrate the blind spot that the United States had in regarding nationalism during the Cold War. If US policy makers realized that Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro were nationalists first and were prepared to act according to that knowledge, then they are legitimate questions that could be asked about the path the Cold War took. For example, if US policy makers understood that Castro's revolution was nationalist, then did the Bay of Pigs need to happen and would the Cuban Missile Crisis have occurred? If the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations would have taken Ho Chi Minh's pleas for Vietnamese independence as if they were from a nationalist rather than a communist, would the US have eventually become embroiled in an untenable war that caused the loss of 58,000 American soldiers?

Obviously, these questions present scenarios that are far more complex than just a nationalist versus communist question, and the ability of hindsight makes them easier to answer. More importantly, nationalism was one of the major defining forces in the world over the last two hundred years, yet its effect seems to be overlooked by leaders in government, policy makers, political scientists, and academics time and time again. In the last decade, US policy makers failed to take into account the lack of a national identity structure in Afghanistan and how difficult it is to build a nation without this existing. In Iraq, the United States was

¹⁹⁸ Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: the Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 369.

successful in removing Saddam Hussein from power but did not account for the country splintering along Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish lines due to the lack of a national consciousness uniting these groups. It is crucial that foreign policy makers start recognizing the strength of nationalism. Perhaps, the United States' most important goal in dealing with the independence movements that have been successful during the "Arab Spring" in Libya, Egypt, and other parts of the Middle East is helping these nations create a national identity structure rather than falling into sectarian violence and civil war.

Nationalism is a feeling that unites and defines a people and that it does not lend itself to measurement should not detract from its importance. The research strongly suggests that it was as important as any ideology or interference from a foreign power in leading the revolutions of Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro to success. With that, it becomes a significant factor in leading Vietnam and Cuba towards communism.

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