CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

There is no doubt that states across the world strategize their nation's defense policies under different ideas and vision. Despite its varieties, all policies have one goal in common; to protect its country and fellow countrymen while also appealing to its ideas. Under the IR discipline, defense is closely related to a state's foreign policy and is defined as a way for a state to deal with any external threats in order to protect itself and appeal towards its ideas. These policies are usually made based on events that have occurred or are currently occurring. Its constructions are also built upon different interpretations of which such policies could be deemed rational or irrational by scholars.

One of the issues that are closely linked to what is considered as an "external threat" in the IR world can be exemplified in territorial or border disputes, it commonly consists of a state attempting to seize hold of another state's territory. Such examples that would illustrate this specific comprehension was when Argentina claimed sovereignty over the islands in the Falklands. Through this action, Britain considered Argentina's claim as an external threat towards their sovereignty over the Falklands and acted aggressively to uphold Britain's sovereignty in the region by sending in the military. Other examples can be seen when the tensions in Cyprus were escalating in which both Greece and Turkey fought each other to solidify their own sovereignty in the area as both states perceive each other as an external threat towards their sovereignty. From these cases we can comprehend that the policies that these states have undertaken have the shared goal of protecting each of their own sovereignty, and

if we analyze it deeper we can find that these cases also share the same policy of utilizing the use of force as their way of securing their interest.

However, this method does not always apply to every territorial dispute in IR. Out of the many border disputes that are happening in the world, Vietnam's stance in the South China Sea dispute stood as a counter example. To be more in depth, the situation in the region puts Vietnam's sovereignty over their territories at stake because of the nine-dash line claim that China has imposed. But different from Cyprus and The Falklands, Vietnam's policy towards the matter at hand did not underline any sort of frontal aggressiveness through its Bốn Không policy, instead it highly emphasized on the notion of non-alignment.

For context, the South China Sea is a disputed territory that is being claimed by the coastal states of Southeast Asia and China. As the time progresses within the era, the states that are involved within this dispute are holding onto their claims even more than before. For many states nearing The South China Sea, the sea is the lifeline of their economy with an estimated of more than $5 trillion worth of international trade traveling through this route. Although the situation within this territory seemed to be economically growing after the cold war ended, the control of the authority over this part of the world is also a pressing matter that is steadily growing since the 90s (Bijendra De Gurung, 2018: 1-2). With China's constancy of their nine-dash line claim, other neighboring states such as Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei are weighing in to reject China's claim with the purpose of preserving their sovereign claim in the territory.

Despite this developing situation, Vietnam branded themselves as a country that does not frontally express themselves as a state that sided with another superpower as a means to exempt themself from possibilities of rising tensions. Unlike The Philippines who can be categorized as an ally for the Americans, seeing how close they both are diplomatically and historically, Vietnam realized that explicitly siding with

another country would only worsen the condition and hence employed the "Ba Không" strategy or "The Three-Nos"strategy in 1998 (the predecessor of the Bốn Không policy) as a means to handle the situation at hand. Inside the strategy, there are three points that are highlighted: No foreign troops on Vietnamese soil, No external balancing or siding with a state against another, and No military alliance with any states or pacts (Bijendra De Gurung, 2018: 12). With this strategy, Vietnam utilized all its diplomatic abilities to barter for possible compromises and establish an image that is unbiased within its policy.

As time progressed, Vietnam reaffirmed their principles in their defense paper multiple times. Such changes or developments towards the strategy was made in Vietnam's white defense paper in 2004, 2009, and its most recent one, 2014 (Pham, 2019). Although the policy experienced changes throughout the years, the nature of the policy itself stood still with its true nature, non-alignment.
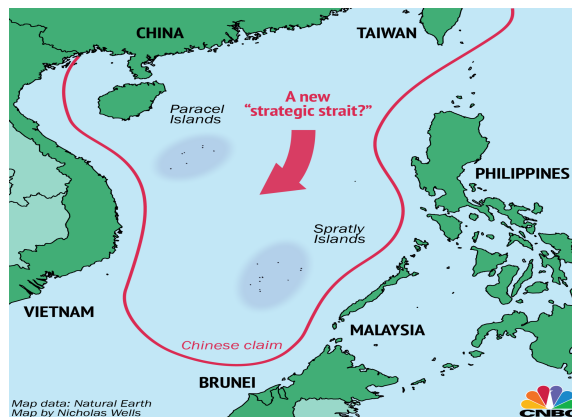

Figure 1.1 The map of The South China Sea and the states involved

Source: (CNBC, 2016)

In figure 1.1 we can see the many states that are involved within the dispute. The states that are being highlighted in this figure are considered to be the key players within the dispute are China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei, and The Philippines

(CNBC, 2016). However, out of all the states that are involved in the dispute, Vietnam's Four-Nos policy stood as a unique approach towards the matter itself. For an illustration, the South China Sea dispute placed Vietnam's sovereignty over their territories at a very high risk, but what makes Vietnam's Four-Nos policy unique is that the policy itself did not directly underline any aggressiveness, rather it emphasizes more towards the notion of nonalignment in hopes of de-escalation with the utilization of its diplomatic abilities.

As a comparison, in August of 2023 the government of The Philippines accused China of using excessive and dangerous force in the South China Sea (Jazeera, 2023), in June of 2021 Malaysia accused China of breaching its airspace sovereignty in the South China Sea region (BBC News, 2021), in June of 2023 Taiwan held military exercises in the disputed island of Taiping that is also being claimed by China and other states involved (TaiwanPlus News, 2023), and in April of 2021 Brunei signed a unitization agreement with Malaysia to develop an offshore field facility within the disputed territory (South China Morning Post, 2021). Vietnam on the other hand, is preparing for a possible visit from Xi Jinping to Hanoi (Vu et al., 2023). The conduct of this interaction between the two states ultimately gave out the image that although the dispute is still in effect, Vietnam estranged itself from any acts to escalate the conflict and withstood its faith in utilizing its diplomatic abilities to deal with any reacquaintance with China. This distinction puts Vietnam's policy in contest towards its utilization in the South China Sea dispute and served as a notable topic to analyze.

In its history, Vietnam's foreign policy has come a very long way since the 20th century, but its creation has a very close relation with the Ho Chi Minh thought. The Ho Chi Minh thought is a philosophy that is built by the incorporation of Leninism-Marxism with the Ho Chi Minh ideology (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2011). It has strong roots towards the notion of "independence" and "self-governance" from any outside interference while also expanding its relations with the world. In its core, The Ho Chi

Minh Thought promotes international cooperation while also combining its self-reliance and resilience (Tuan Linh, 2020: 325).

Throughout this philosophy it can also be pointed out that the Ho Chi Minh thought embraces creativity, flexibility, and friendship in Vietnam's diplomacy. For example, after the Japanese surrender at the end of the second world war Vietnam declared its independence and sought to gain international recognition in order to prevent the French from reclaiming Vietnam. In its war with the Americans, Vietnam established relations with Thailand, India, Myanmar, and Indonesia to create a world front against the enemy (Tuan Linh, 2020: 326). After the war, Vietnam utilized its foreign policy to help itself in building a full socialist country (Hiep & Tsvetov, 2018: 7-8).

Up until now, Vietnam's foreign policy has withstood its faith in The Ho Chi Minh Thought while also adapting with today's domestic and international situations since it has been codified as Vietnam's Communist Party's official ideology in 1991. Vietnam's entry into various international and regional institutions such as ASEAN, WTO and APEC are an example of Ho Chi Minh's vision in international cooperation. Its re-establishment of relations with its former enemies such as the United States and France are also a manifestation of Vietnam's friendship in The Ho Chi Minh Thought (Nguyen, 2012: 165). However, Vietnam is still subject to a challenge that possesses a threat towards its sovereignty, namely, the South China Sea dispute.

As popular as it is, the South China Sea dispute has been regarded by many scholars as one of the huge contributors towards the tensions and political instabilities in the Asian region. Vietnam's geographical situation gave out the fact that the South China Sea is basically what's connecting Vietnam to the ocean. Since Vietnam borders the Gulf of Thailand, The Gulf of Tonkin, and The Pacific Ocean, it would be self-explanatory to why Vietnam deemed this dispute as a direct threat towards their interests. Since its reunification in 1975, Vietnam has been consistent with its two main

objectives: defense of national security and development of its economy. These two objectives are heavily reliant on its policy towards the seas and are manifested through non-aligned natured policies such as: the advancement of peaceful settlement of maritime disputes and the policy of befriending all nations (Thao, 2021: 228).

Rather than to become assertive, Vietnam through its policy remains to stay in a tranquil state where it would eschew itself from such obvious aggressive acts unlike its neighbors. In 2016, the Indonesian Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries threatened to bring China to the international court for its conduct in the Natuna Sea. For a comparison, in 2019 Vietnam released its Defense White Paper that contains a policy called The Four-Nos policy. This policy contains four principles: not joining any military alliance; not siding with any country against another; not allowing foreign states to establish military bases in Vietnam's territory to counter another state; not using force or threatening to use force in international relations (Vietnamese National Defense Magazine, 2022).

Different from the three-Nos that was published in Vietnam's 2009 Defense White Paper, the four-Nos added a fourth principle in its policy that states, "no using force or threatening to use force in international relations." This newer policy based its purpose on the previous policy but with a broader perspective as a means to create a favorable international environment and conditions to serve the cause of Vietnam's construction and defense as a whole (Thao, 2021: 229). Although it is peacefully natured, it is also important to underline that Vietnam did mention that they would consider developing their military under the basis of "respecting each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial unity, and integrity" (Zeberlein, 2023: 24). This notion is included in their "One Depend" statement that was mentioned in the policy. By understanding the contents, we can infer that Vietnam has intentions to prevent the South China Sea dispute from negatively impacting its bilateral relationships in the region while also considering beefing up their military if such urgency would arise.

From the contents of the published paper, we can safely assume that Vietnam intends to position itself in a manner that it does not want to get mixed in with any ongoing conflicts in the world. Of course, this does not elude Vietnam from the dispute that is heavily interrupting its interest in its own region, specifically, the dispute in the South China Sea.

Despite its non-aligned nature and ambitions, the dispute in the South China Sea remains to be contested by this policy. With the entrance of American warships in the disputed waters on 21st of April 2020, the situation in the South China Sea proved to be in its nerve-wracking state for the developing countries in the region (Beech, 2020). It would also be incorrect to dismiss the correlation between the events occurring outside of the South China Sea with the topic of this analysis. For example, following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Vietnam has refrained from calling the invasion as an "invasion" at the UN resolution in condemning Russia's assault (Sang, 2022). This action implies that Vietnam values its relationship with Moscow while also trying to not side with any nations in the ongoing conflict in Eastern Europe even if it is not directly occurring within the region of The South China Sea.

From the various explanations and descriptions that have been given in previous paragraphs, we can understand how the situation is realistically like in The South China Sea for Vietnam. Seeing the impacts that are given from the ideational ideas within Vietnam's deeply embedded norm that is driven by The Ho Chi Minh Thought, this research would then try to explain the following question later mentioned by employing the concept of norm-based constructivism with the emphasis on The Ho Chi Minh Thought as a theory to approach the problem at hand.

1.2 Research Question

Through the many explanations that were given throughout the background, a problem has arisen. This problem comes in the form of a research question: *"How persistent is Vietnam in remaining non-aligned through its Bốn Không policy in the South China Sea?"*

1.3 Research Objective

The two objectives that this research intends to meet are: a general objective and specific objective, of which will be explained in the subchapter down below:

1.3.1 General Objective

This study intends to analyze Vietnam's stance in the South China Sea dispute through understanding the context of the situation in the region and the history that Vietnam has with the sea, while also utilizing Vietnam's policy, namely the *Bốn Không* or the Four-Nos policy, towards the matter at hand.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

a. Illustrate the use of a norm-based constructivism approach through the utilization of The Ho Chi Minh Thought in the substances of The Four-Nos Policy.

b. Examine how The Ho Chi Minh Thought affects the application of The Four-Nos Policy towards The South China Sea dispute.

1.4 Research Purpose

1.4.1 Theoretical Benefit

This research is conducted with the hopes that it would contribute to the development of the International Relations study, specifically towards the use of norms within the paradigm of constructivism as a framework for an analysis. By utilizing the contents of this research, scholars are expected to benefit from it by employing the concept of the framework to analyze the relation between ideational elements within the concept of a norm-based constructivism towards the creation of a state's foreign policy in the midst of a dispute.

1.4.2 Practical Benefit

As this research is focused on the substances of a state's policy, policymakers are expected to benefit from the research that are conducted within this study. Scholars that are focusing on similar topics can also benefit from this research as it contributes towards the understanding of state's behavior and the impacts that are given by ideational elements towards it.

1.5 Literature Review

This research will be utilizing several academic sources in order to bolster the progress of this study. The first academic source would be to use a previous research titled *Vietnam's Persistent Foreign Policy Dilemma: Caught between Self-Reliance and Proactive Integration* by Huong Le Thu. Thu's work utilized the constructivist concept of role identity where he used the Vietnamese Communist Party's principle of self-reliance to explain Vietnam's foreign policy. However, his work argued that it is not just the party's concept of self-reliance that drove Vietnam's foreign policy, but also the concept of "proactive international integration". His work has the goal to explain Vietnam's struggle in managing the two concepts and argues that it has created

an ideological dilemma (Le Thu, 2018: 124). Although it comprehensively explained Vietnam's foreign policy while also adding in the previous version of the Four-Nos (which is the Three-Nos) and its effects towards Vietnam, it lacked novelty since the work itself was published in 2018 where The Four-Nos are practically non-existent yet within Vietnam's foreign policy. However, Thu's study can help the progress of this thesis where his studies can be used as a previous analysis instrument.

The second academic source that will be used in this research is Nguyen Hong Thao's *Vietnam's South China Sea Policy* in *The Routledge Handbook of the South China Sea.* This chapter of the book focuses on Vietnam's strategy by collaborating its regional relations with its recent policies in the dispute through the adoption of regional norms, namely ASEAN and China's Declaration on the Conduct of Parties and its Code of Conduct. Through this chapter, Thao utilizes a constructivist concept of the norm theory and argues that Vietnam's membership in ASEAN is influential to the making of Vietnam's policy towards the dispute (Thao, 2021: 229). Although it clearly explained the impact of such norms and briefly explained the four-Nos policy, it has little attention towards the use of the Ho Chi Minh thought in the making of Vietnam's policy.

The third academic source that will be used is Huynh Tuan Linh's *Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Foreign and Its Implications for Vietnam's Foreign Policy Today.* This journal explains the use of the Ho Chi Minh thought in Vietnam's current foreign policy which utilizes a constructivist concept of strategic culture through Booth's attitudes and patterns of behavioral approach based on a leader's understanding of their past and argues that it is the Ho Chi Minh thought that helped Vietnam to maintain its independence and its relations with other countries in the world (Tuan Linh, 2020). Although it boldly underlines the involvement of the Ho Chi Minh thought towards the making of Vietnam's foreign policy today, it did not highlight the current situation in the South China Sea.

The fourth academic source that will be used is a journal titled "No One Can Force Vietnam to Choose Sides: Vietnam as a Self-Reliant Middle Power" by Phun Xuan Dung. This reading material examines how Vietnam positioned itself to the US and Chinese rivalry in political matters, particularly, in the South China Sea dispute. Dung utilizes the identity-based constructivism approach that emphasizes Vietnam's social identity towards the world as a non-aligned state and argues that Vietnam's room for strategic maneuverability is diminishing as it faces growing internal and external pressure for policy adjustments (Dung, 2022). This research perfectly underlined Vietnam's persistence as a non-aligned nation as a whole in the midst of a rivalry between two superpower states, however it is not concentrated towards the four-Nos policy.

The fifth reading material that will be utilized is Thuong and Oanh's "Vietnam in the Indo-Pacific Region: Perception, Position, and Perspectives. This research is using the Indo-Pacific region as a geopolitical concept that affects Vietnam's political position in the region. It emphasizes the region's implication towards Vietnam as a key strategic geographic area that gave direct impacts on Vietnam's national security, position, and role in the region (Thuong & Oanh, 2021). Although it excelled in explaining the region as a part of Vietnam's national interest, it played an insignificant role in highlighting Vietnam's policies towards the region, such as the four-Nos

From the numerous studies that were shown above, many thrived in highlighting Vietnam's foreign policy. However, as it had been explained in the previous paragraphs, many of the studies did not stress on the role of the Ho Chi Minh Thought within the Four-Nos policy, which is what this study intends to fulfill. Although Tuan Linh's work may have stressed on the role of the Ho Chi Minh thought within Vietnam's current foreign policy, it oversights Vietnam's dispute with China in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, other works that were mentioned in this study such as Thuong and Oanh's, Dung's, and Thao's mostly disregards the role of the Ho Chi

Minh thought, their studies ultimately focused on Vietnam's international political stance towards the dispute in the South China Sea where they analyzed how Vietnam conduct its interactions with various countries either within the South China Sea region and outside of it. Thu's work on the other hand particularly explained the history of the policy where it included the previous version of the Four-Nos, which is the Three-Nos. However, it lacked the recency that is needed to make it relatable with the current situation of Vietnam's South China Sea dispute. From this, we can conclude that the study that is being conducted within this research offers a new perspective on how Vietnam conducts its Four-Nos policy in the South China Sea region by utilizing the Ho Chi Minh thought as the theory.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Constructivism

An individual behavior cannot be estranged by the social structure around it (Mead, 1934). Mead's phrase clearly underlined the fact that the environment in which an individual is situated, plays a huge role in one's behavior. To that matter, Constructivism in International Relations views the world as being socially constructed. The scholars that adhere to this view, argue that the agents and the structures that can be found within this comprehension, are mutually influencing each other. In this matter, agents can be understood as the power for one to act while structures refer to the international system where material and ideational elements can be found (Theys, 2018: 1). The material elements that are being referred to within this notion can be understood as the things that we can see, whereas ideational elements can be understood as materials that are invisible to the human eye, such as thoughts, identities, norms, and cultures.

When Alexander Wendt explains about constructivism, he implied that material structures do not always present themselves as the obvious threat in the IR world,

instead he emphasized on the ideational structures that are found within it. This understanding was utilized into practice when he explained about the nuclear weapons that Britain and the North Koreans possessed (the material element) towards US reactions (the ideational element). In his illustration, he mentioned that although Britain has 500 nuclear weapons, The US feels more threatened towards the five nuclear weapons that the North Koreans procured (Wendt, 1995). Under constructivism, ideational elements play an important role towards the pattern of behavior in one's action. However, it does not mean that constructivism puts its thought solely on invisible matters, it also regards reality and visible matters. For example, a state might base its policies to appeal towards its own ideational elements but at the same time the state will also have to regard its current position and situation in the international realm. However, constructivists tend to believe that without any ideas, the reality and the matters that are visible to the world would be purposeless. Ideas that are held dearly upon this framework would then become norms where standards are established. These norms can also be called "social norms" as they do function in a society where interactions with one and another are held.

According to Farran, social norms are created through the process of socialization; this process happens as a society grows over time and becomes the "normality" inside of that social layer (Farran, 2021). Adding to this definition, it should also be understood that individuals or groups that became subjects towards specific norms tend to internalize them, and if seen not appropriate towards the norms that they had internalized, there would be a psychic cost in return (L. E. Mitchell, 1999: 197). These arguments illustrated how a certain habit becomes ingrained in a society that it would gradually become natural over time. It affects the culture of a society by dictating how the individuals and groups in it should behave accordingly, and if not appropriate with the "normality" that has priorly been established, then it would be viewed as a violation.

From that comprehension, it should also be understood that norms can be produced internally or externally, a norm that comes internally are made from domestic factors that are highly influenced by the aforementioned invisible elements that existed throughout a state's domestic environment. This meant that domestic norms are the norms that are made through the interaction of a state and its people, while external norms refer to the norms that are made through the interactions between states or international actors (Michalski & Pan, 2017: 71-96). Finnemore argues that these norms function regulatively and constitutively, regulatively means that it affects how states create such policies while constitutively means that it defines national interests (Finnemore, 1996).

Oftentimes, states tend to believe in the norms that came domestically than internationally. This can be explained by Amitav Acharya through her work, "Whose Ideas Matter: Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism". Acharya argued that states tend to dismiss international norms, because states are their own actors that have their own way of interpreting such norms (Acharya, 2011). This may be caused by a state's habit to get used to their own domestic norms, thus may render outside norms as a threat towards the implantation of the already accepted domestic norms. This shows just how influential a state's already deeply embedded thought and past historical events can be towards the norm that they would later establish. .

As we have understood from these explanations, we can fully grasp that nations build their policies with the influence of the environments around them. The ideas that are built by its culture and past finally became the norms that are accepted and became the guardian of the actor's actions. Through this explanation, the writer believed that The Four-Nos policy is closely related with Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh Thought of which the thought itself played a significant role in the establishment of the prior policy. The process of this approach can be viewed through figure 1.2
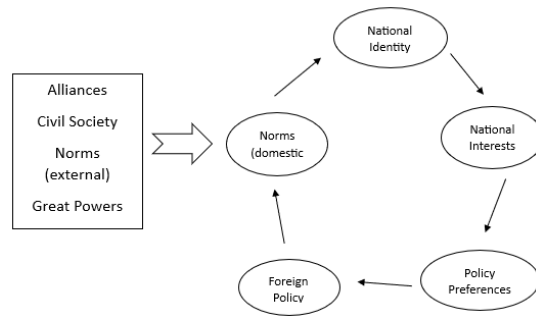
Figure 1.2 The influence of norms

Source: (Burford, 2016)

1.7 Concept Operationalization

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

1.7.1.1 Domestic Norm

Domestically, norms can simply be seen in many social interactions such as greeting one to another or waiting in line politely. These actions are accepted by many groups and individuals in various states around the world and have become a standard of how a proper gentleman shall act. From this, we can see that domestic norms can also transcend and be applied internationally. Recognizing the significance of this social phenomenon, the process also played a strong influence in establishing a state's policy. As we have mentioned before, Finnemore explained that norms can function in two ways, regulatively or constitutively. The prior meant that norms can act as a guardian in deciding how a policy should be established, while the latter meant that norms indicate a state's interest (Finnemore, 1996). While from Acharya, we can comprehend that states tend to look back on the domestic norms that they have built and accepted (Acharya, 2011). These domestic norms would later define the actions that they will take in the future if such matters arose. From this perspective, we can conclude that domestic norms played a massive role in establishing a state's policy.

1.7.1.2 Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is considered to be a tool of importance in the state's disposal to pursue its national interests (As, 2018). It is an instrument that a state uses to fulfill its goals and ambitions that are considered by the state as a part of their national interest. George Modelski defined the foreign policy as "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment" (Modelski, 1962). This ultimately meant that states will have to adjust its actions through foreign policy in order to adapt with the situations that are surrounding it as a means to safeguard their national interests while also asserting its power by influencing other states. The notion of influencing other states emphasizes on the state's interaction towards another. According to Joseph Frankel, "The foreign policy consists of decisions and actions that involve the relations between one state with others" (Frankel, 1963). Frankel's statement reinforces the fact that foreign policy, although involving the set of actions that are done within a state's borders, are intended towards forces existing outside of the state's borders (As, 2018). This also reinforced the fact that foreign policy is closely associated with a state's defense policy, since it would be defined as a method for states to deal with external threats.

1.7.1.3 Regional Security

In a general manner, regional security can be simply understood as the stability and security of a certain region. It describes the current nature that a region is experiencing. This became a concept that is promoted by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver in their work, "The Structure of International Security". In their work, Buzan and Weaver argued that national and global security are the two levels that extremely dominated the realm of world security (Buzan et al., 2003: 43). This ultimately established a suggestion for the need to view security at a regional level. Regional security consists of actors that geographically are near to each other, it emphasizes on

the stability of countries that are neighboring with each other (Buzan et al., 2003: 41). However, this does not mean that the concept of regional security disregards the events that are occurring globally. The security of a region as a whole can also be determined by the situations of the world.

1.7.2 Definition Operationalization

1.7.2.1 Domestic Norm

The concept of domestic norm that was aforementioned in this research, would refer to the utilization of the Ho Chi Minh thought as the main driving instrument for this analysis. From the understanding that norms can be applied regulatively and constitutively, this research would construe that it is the Ho Chi Minh thought that affected the creation of Vietnam's Four-Nos policy, thus implying the state's non-alignment within it.

This research will also utilize the aforementioned ideational elements within the thought in order to fully grasp the depth of how culture and history plays a great role in analyzing the ways that the thought is affecting the policy's application towards the South China Sea dispute. It would also attempt to explain the later result in Vietnam's behavior regarding the matter.

1.7.2.2 Foreign Policy

As it has been explained in the initial part of this research, the foreign policy that is stressed on in this analysis will be the Four-Nos policy. Although it is published in Vietnam's defense paper, the policy itself also dictates Vietnam's actions in the realm of international relations. The very obvious indicator that showed this policy is dictating Vietnam's foreign relations is the fact that the Four-Nos stood by four principles: no partaking in military alliances, no siding with one country against another, no foreign military bases in the Vietnamese territory or the use of Vietnam's

territory as a leverage to counteract other countries, and no using force or threats to use force in international relations. This clearly illustrated Vietnam's discrepancy with their past of having such an alliance with the Soviets in the 70s and showcased the policy's vision in dictating the future on how Vietnam should treat its relations with other states.

1.7.2.3 Regional Security

The concept of regional security that is referred to in this research would be Vietnam's security from threats in the South China Sea. As this research would like to conduct its analysis in a regional manner, it will focus towards the Four-Nos appliance in the dispute that is ongoing within the region, specifically in the South China Sea. However, this research does not intend to disregard the influence of global level threats where if found relevant, any events occurring outside of The South China Sea will be included.

To narrow down the actors of this research, the analysis would focus more on the neighboring countries that are within Vietnam's geographical position. In this scope, countries that will be involved in the research will be the ones that are greatly affected by the dispute but still have its own relevance with Vietnam's interest in its regional security. China is the state that will become the vital actor to be analyzed in this research, since it is their claims that threatens Vietnam's sovereignty the most. The United States, although a country that is far from the South China Sea, will also be included in this analysis since it already immersed itself deeply within the dispute. These two actors will be the main objects that this research would base its analysis on, since its role in the dispute is affiliated with Vietnam's Four-Nos.

1.8 Research Argument

With the ongoing situation in the South China Sea dispute that seems to look as if it has no end through the many escalations and de-escalations that are happening, this research focuses on how Vietnam positioned itself in the midst of the uncertainty. With

the utilization of the Ho Chi Minh thought as Vietnam's domestic norm in the establishment of The Four-Nos policy, this research would argue that it is Vietnam's rooted ideational elements that are contributing to Vietnam's non-aligned natured responses towards the dispute in the South China Sea. This research emphasizes that the policy reflected Vietnam's idea as a nation that avert themselves from having such an alignment with any states or pacts through the Ho Chi Minh thought, thus it drove the state to act as a nation that eschewed itself from the use of brutal force.

1.9 Research Methodology

Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques that are utilized for the activities of such analysis which generally consist of: identifying, selecting, processing, and examining information regarding a certain topic (H. Snyder, 2019). The process could also sometimes include conceptualization, generalization, theorization, and others with the purpose of outlining the assumptions and reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the research (Mas'ud, 1990: 2).

1.9.1 Research Type

The research that is being conducted in this work is classified as descriptive research. According to Creswell, descriptive research is described as the method of gathering information on a present existing condition (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The descriptive method of a research ultimately means that it attempts to describe a phenomenon, occurrence, or events that are happening in the present by gathering various information regarding the topic. Thus, enabling the researcher to precisely illustrate the varieties of the characteristics within this research while also giving accurate and factual explanation throughout its analysis.

1.9.2 Research Sites

Research sites can generally be regarded as the time and locations as to where and when the research is conducted. This research will be conducted immediately, assuming it passed the literature hearing. This research will also utilize the desk research method where information will be gathered through physical and electronic sources.

1.9.3 Research Subject

This research will narrowly focus on how the Four-Nos policy would apply in the South China Sea dispute. The researcher intends to explain the role of the Ho Chi Minh thought within the policy that gave impact towards its creation and explain the process of its utilization within the region's dispute.

1.9.4 Data Type

The type of the data that will be employed in this research is the qualitative data. It is not concerned with numerical representativity, but with the deepening of understanding a given problem. The purpose of this type of data is to present an in-depth and illustrative information as a means to grasp the various dimensions of the problem under analysis (Queirós et al., 2017: 370). This gave the benefit of having the ability to have an extensive understanding of the problem at hand.

1.9.5 Data Source

This research utilizes both primary and secondary data that will be gathered throughout various credible and factual sources. The data and information that are gathered will be as competent and accurate as possible. The primary data will be gathered through interviews with individuals that are deemed relevant to the research, it will also be gathered through first-hand sources throughout the internet. On the other

hand, secondary data will be collected from trusted reading materials such as credible journals, literatures, and articles.

1.9.6 Data Collection Technique

The technique of gathering information regarding the topic will be done by library research. By employing this certain technique, the study can be conducted without being physically present in the location of where the phenomenon is ongoing. This technique emphasizes collecting information through electronic and non-electronic devices. The benefits that are given by this kind of technique enable the researcher to effectively conduct its research timewise.

1.9.7 Data Analysis & Interpretation

The process of analyzing and interpreting in this research will utilize the method of qualitative descriptive. This method is used to interpret the meanings behind an information that is gathered with the purpose of giving a general description. It is often used in social sciences studies, and aimed to describe a certain phenomenon that is occurring within the world. It is particularly rich in analyzing data in a descriptive and interpretive depth (Elliot & Timulak, 2021: 2) The researcher will utilize the method to illustrate the use of the Ho Chi Minh thought within the policy that affects its appliance towards the South China Sea dispute.

1.9.8 Data Quality

The various information that are gathered through the many data that can be found within this research will be guaranteed for its credibility and accuracy. This research will gather its data by employing the reading materials that are subscribed and provided in UNDIP's students software system (SSO). Aside from the utilization of the facility that is accommodated by the campus, the researcher will also collect information from authentic news reports and articles that are relevant to the topic. In

the case of gathering primary data, the researcher will collect information through surveys and interviews in order to obtain authentic information first-hand.