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Lorenz M. Lüthi. "Beyond Betrayal: Beijing, Moscow, and the Paris Negotiations, 1971-1973." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11:1 (Winter 2009): 57-107. DOI: 10.1162/jcws.2009.11.1.57. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/jcws.2009.11.1.57> .

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/AR243.pdf>Review by **Li Wang and Zhao Xuegong, Nankai University**

In diplomatic history in general, it is frequently argued that smaller countries are commonly the victims of the power politics played by larger countries. This sort of historical "myth" has been widely accepted by scholars. However, Lorenz Lüthi reveals a totally different story in which Vietnam was not a "victim" at all during the Paris Peace Talks 1971- 1973. Instead Vietnam was the biggest winner partially due to its particular position between the two greatest communist powers -- China and the Soviet Union -- and partially as a result of the United States' desire for a quick withdrawal with honor and the return of its POWs.

In his well-structured and clearly argued article published in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Lüthi analyzes in detail the evolution of the Paris Peace Talks during 1971-1973, in which three great powers -- the United States, the Soviet Union and China -- were involved with their own client states. Based on multilingual sources, he extensively traces the international stage of the final two years of the Paris negotiations with a brief introduction of the 1968 talks between the United States and its ally South Vietnam (RVN), on the one side, and North Vietnam (DRV) and its southern communist ally (PRG), on the other. Due to the divergent goals of the two camps, the negotiations remained deadlocked during the period of 1968-1971.

Lüthi's analysis starts in early 1971, when Chinese deliveries of military hardware to its Vietnam ally rapidly increased, and ends on January 27 1973 when the Paris Peace Accords were formally signed. The author provides quite a balanced picture in which Hanoi, Beijing, Moscow and Washington made mutually exclusive decisions on strategy that ended up influencing events until early 1973. Based upon his well-informed analysis, Lüthi argues that it was the DRV's pursuit of its maximalist strategy of decisive victory that delayed the final peace until 1973. During this two-year period, Hanoi took a rigid,

excessively sensitive stance while it consistently demanded that Beijing furnish more military aid and diplomatic support. Lüthi also includes the concessions made by the Soviet Union in terms of competition with China for Vietnamese support.

The questions are why the two communist giants made such concessions to their junior allies and why Hanoi's demands appeared on occasions to be so unreasonable. The answers come from the analysis below. First, as both China and the Soviet Union were the greatest communist powers, they felt obliged to support a fraternal state like Vietnam. This was partially due to their ideological identity. Second, it was their common geopolitical task to undermine U.S. hegemony anywhere that a fight for national independence surged, especially with a communist Vietnam bordering China. Third, Hanoi cleverly took advantage of the rift between the two communist rivals as they bid against each other for Vietnamese goodwill. For these reasons, Lüthi suggests the regime in Hanoi appeared self-righteous, rigid and even unrealistic in negotiating with the United States and its ally South Vietnam.

Dr. Lüthi demonstrates his solid knowledge of history and political science in concluding that both China and the Soviet Union appeared responsible and realistic in helping Vietnam accomplish its goals and in dealing with the United States -- the greatest military power in the world. China behaved like a traditional European-type power in approaching the diplomatic issues. Both Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai were in agreement on the need to provide their junior ally with reliable military aid but they never ruled out a negotiated solution. At this point, Vietnam (DRV) in 1971-72 made several efforts to undermine the impending Sino-U.S. rapprochement. With a quick détente with China and the Soviet Union, the United States appeared to be pursuing a limited strategy of a U.S. withdrawal with honor and credible support of its ally. The prolonged peace negotiations, according to Lüthi, resulted from Vietnamese rigidity in their perceived goals, particularly their maximalist strategy which aimed at the dismantling of their rival in Saigon and a quick withdrawal of the United States from South Vietnam. This also showed Hanoi's obvious miscalculation of Washington politics, power, and will.

In sum, both Beijing and Moscow did nothing wrong to Hanoi during the peace negotiations in Paris. Instead it was the consequence of Vietnamese self-righteousness and self-ignorance that caused the delay of the Paris peace talks for two more years and cost additional human suffering and material damages. As Lüthi concludes, a peace deal might have been reached in the spring of 1971 if Hanoi had been flexible and reasonable. Lüthi's statement reconfirms the self-evident fact that it was not the alleged treason of China or hesitation by the Soviet Union but the misperception of Hanoi that caused so much misunderstanding and the myth of betrayal.

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