

Article

Wartime Economy: The Resistance Market Model of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the First Indochina War (1946–1954)

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Abstract: Current study analyzes the formation, organization, and contributions of the resistance market system in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the period 1946 – 1954. Based on the exploitation of documents issued by the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of Vietnam, as well as primary archival materials from the National Archives Center III in Hanoi, the study argues that resistance markets were not merely spaces for commodity exchange but constituted a distinctive model of wartime economy. Through ensuring the circulation of goods, mobilizing social resources, stabilizing civilian livelihoods, and providing financial support for the resistance war, the market system played a crucial role in building a self-reliant and self-sufficient economy in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under wartime conditions.

Keywords: Resistance markets; wartime economy; Democratic Republic of Vietnam; First Indochina War

1. Introduction

Research on the Indochina War (1946–1954), particularly in the fields of military and political studies, has attracted significant scholarly attention (Trần and Nguyễn 1997; Nguyễn et al. 1999; Bodard and Đoàn 2004; Macdonald, Nguyễn and Nguyễn 2004; Đào 2004; Lê Văn 2007; Shawn 2021; Phan Đức and Trần 2024). In addition, the theme of wartime economy has increasingly attracted the interest of researchers. In addressing wartime economic issues, scholars have analyzed and explained the relationship between war and the economy, as well as the impact of war on economic systems (Pethick 1915; Barro and Lee 1994; Organski and Kugler 1977, 1980; Rasler and Thompson 1985; Collier 1999; Murdoch and Sandler 2002; Koubi 2005). Other scholars have examined wartime economy from the perspectives of finance and external assistance. Notable works include *History of the Vietnamese Economy (1945–2000), Volume 1: 1945–1954* (Đặng 2002); *China's Aid to Vietnam during the Anti-French Resistance War* (Nguyễn 2008); *Mobilizing Support and Assistance from China and the Soviet Union for Vietnam's Anti-French Resistance (1950–1954)* (Nguyễn 2013); Huff (2015), *Finance for War in Asia and Its Aftermath*; *China's Economic and Technical Aid to Vietnam during the Anti-French Resistance War* (Đặng 2015); Ruiz Estrada, Park and Kim (2016), *An Economic Model of the Wartime Economy: An Application to a Possible Sino-Japanese Conflict*; Trần (2016), *Mountain Markets in Sơn Hòa District, Phú Yên Province*; and Davydiuk and Shymanska (2024), *The Impact of External Financing during Wartime on the Economy of a Country in War*, etc.

It can be observed that, in studies on wartime economy, scholars generally argue that war has profound impacts on economic systems. This has opened up a particularly interesting and relatively new research direction: the adaptation and resilience of economies under wartime conditions. The model of resistance markets established by the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the First Indochina War (1946–1954) represents a particularly innovative case that has motivated this study.

Even in Vietnam, studies on markets during the First Indochina War (1945–1954) and the Second Indochina War (1954–1975) remain very limited. Existing studies on markets have primarily focused on economic and cultural dimensions, often approached through comparative perspectives between traditional markets (pre-Đổi Mới period, before 1986) and modern markets (post-1986). Representative works include: *Life of the Market* (Luong and Các 2001); *Rural Markets in the Process of Transformation* (Lê Thị Mai, 2004); *Rural Markets in Quảng Bình* (Đặng Kim Liên, 2011); *Vietnamese Rural Markets* (Trần 2015); *Market Life* (Nguyễn 2017); *Markets in the Southeast Region: A Perspective* (Lê 2019); *Traditional Markets in the Process of Urbanization in Hanoi* (Hoàng 2019); *Traditional Markets* (Hữu and Borton 2023); and *The Market System in*

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Thanh Hóa (Before and After 1945) (Nguyễn et al. 2024), among others. It can therefore be seen that no study has yet examined resistance markets as an institutional economic structure of a wartime economy.

In relation to the theme of “economic adaptation and resilience under wartime conditions,” this study seeks to address the following question: How did the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam maintain a wartime economy under conditions of military and economic blockade, and what role did resistance markets play in this process? The article approaches this issue from the perspective that resistance markets were not merely spaces for commodity exchange, but rather an institutional economic mechanism that functioned to sustain circulation, mobilize resources, and enhance the resilience of the wartime economy under conditions of war and economic blockade. These aspects constitute the key original contributions of this study.

2. Methods

This study employs a diverse range of sources, including both primary and secondary materials, in order to comprehensively reconstruct the model of resistance markets in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the First Indochina War (1946–1954). With regard to primary sources, in addition to official documents issued by the Communist Party and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the study draws on economic reports preserved at the National Archives Center. These constitute the principal and most important sources for this research. Secondary sources include domestic and international scholarly works on wartime economy, trade history, Vietnamese economic history, and theories of economic resilience. The combination of multiple types of sources from different origins enables cross-validation and triangulation of information, thereby enhancing the reliability of the research findings and providing a solid foundation for analyzing the contributions of resistance markets as a distinctive economic institution within the wartime economy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

This study employs a qualitative historical research approach to examine the resistance market model of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the First Indochina War (1946–1954). It combines historical analysis, institutional analysis, and economic history to investigate the formation, organization, and Contributions of resistance markets within the wartime economy. Historical analysis is used to reconstruct the evolution of resistance markets through primary and secondary sources. Institutional analysis examines the policies, administrative mechanisms, and organizational structures established by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to regulate market activities, mobilize resources, stabilize prices, and sustain production and distribution under wartime conditions. The economic history approach situates resistance markets within the broader context of wartime economic transformation, emphasizing their role in resource mobilization, civilian supply, local trade networks, and economic resilience. By synthesizing primary sources with existing historical scholarship, the study provides a comprehensive interpretation of how resistance markets functioned as both economic institutions and strategic instruments supporting the resistance against French colonial rule.

3. War and Economic Challenges of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)

In August 1945, when the revolutionary opportunity emerged, President Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh forces launched a general uprising to seize power from the Japanese fascist forces in Vietnam¹. Following the success of the August Revolution in 1945, on 2 September 1945 at Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi, President Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Declaration of Independence, thereby establishing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Shortly after the founding of the DRV, in the early morning of 23 September 1945, French colonial forces attacked Saigon (Đình Thu Cúc, 2013: 32), marking their official return to recolonize Vietnam. Subsequently, France gradually expanded the war across the entire country. On 19 December 1946, President Ho Chi Minh issued the “*Call for National Resistance*” marking the beginning of the Vietnamese resistance war against French colonialism.

The outbreak of war disrupted traditional commercial networks. In the early years of the resistance war, French colonial forces, taking advantage of their military superiority, continuously launched attacks, sweeps, and expanded their zones of occupation. They seized major cities, mining areas, rubber plantations, and fertile rice-producing regions in Southern Vietnam, while also controlling parts of the midland regions and several areas in Northern Vietnam, and imposing blockades on border regions, seaports, and maritime routes. The areas under French occupation were those with relatively developed agricultural and industrial economies. In contrast, the free zones under the control of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) were largely composed of upland regions with sparse populations, as well as parts of Central Southern Vietnam (Ministry of Internal Trade, file No. 17, National Archives Center III). The war thus fragmented the market into smaller, dispersed units, forming two opposing and interwoven commercial systems: one serving the Vietnamese resistance against French colonial forces, and the other supporting the French colonial war effort in Indochina. The market system in occupied areas was concentrated in major cities and towns located at key transportation hubs under French control. The free zone market system was administered by the DRV government. Meanwhile, markets in guerrilla-controlled areas functioned as contested spaces between French forces and the DRV authorities.

The French colonial authorities implemented a policy of economic blockade aimed at disrupting production in the free zones and undermining the economy of the DRV. Essential supplies were prohibited from entering resistance-controlled areas, while price manipulation and the influx of luxury goods were employed to weaken local production and reduce the competitiveness of domestically produced commodities. In addition, counterfeit currency was circulated within resistance territories to extract resources and destabilize the wartime economy (Ministry of Domestic Trade, File No. 17, National Archives Center III).

The challenge facing the Government of Vietnam was how to maintain and develop a wartime economy in order to ensure the livelihood of the population and serve the long-term resistance, while also breaking the French economic blockade. In this context, the Government of the DRV adopted a policy of maintaining and developing a commercial system appropriate to wartime

¹ Since 1858, Vietnam had been a colony of French colonial rule. On 9 March 1945, Japanese fascist forces staged a coup d'état against the French, taking exclusive control of Indochina and Vietnam

conditions. One important form that was organized and developed was resistance markets (*chợ kháng chiến*) in the free zones² and later in guerrilla-controlled areas³.

4. The Policy of Building a Wartime Economy and Establishing the Resistance Market System as an Economic Institution

Immediately after the establishment of the DRV, the young government of the DRV faced a wide range of severe challenges. Externally, national sovereignty was threatened by foreign intervention, including the presence of more than 200,000 troops of the Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang) forces in the North, while in the South, French colonial forces were seeking to re-establish their colonial domination over Vietnam. Economically, years of war and exploitative policies under French colonial rule and Japanese occupation had left the economy devastated: production was severely disrupted, and the national treasury was nearly empty.

In this context, the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of Vietnam advocated the development of an independent, self-reliant, and self-sufficient economy. They encouraged localities to promote agricultural production, small-scale handicrafts, and domestic trade, while reducing dependence on external sources of supply. “Each province must take care of its own economy, meaning it must establish an independent and self-sufficient economic system” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2000, Vol. 8: 4).

After the French colonial forces returned to invade Vietnam, the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of the DRV formulated the policy of “resistance and nation-building” on 25 November 1945. In the economic sphere, the DRV reaffirmed its commitment to building a self-reliant and self-strengthening economy. “Reopening factories abandoned by the Japanese, exploiting mines, allowing private capital to be invested in the business of these factories and mines, encouraging merchants and industrialists to establish cooperatives and joint-stock associations to participate in the reconstruction of the country” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2000, Vol. 8: 27–28). The encouragement of Vietnamese merchants to engage in business activities and to establish cooperatives and joint-stock associations was intended not only to mobilize capital, technology, and managerial experience from the population, but also to enable various economic sectors to actively participate in the recovery of production, the circulation of goods, and the development of commerce.

The Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of the DRV emphasized the construction of an economy serving the resistance war: “During the resistance period, the economy must be adapted to wartime conditions. Only those goods necessary for the front and for the people’s livelihoods should be produced. Such production must be directed by the Government. Regarding economic sectors, priority should be given to agriculture, handicrafts, and commerce, followed by industry (with attention to weapons production and extraction). Foreign trade must be strictly controlled” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2000, Vol. 8: 181). Under conditions of prolonged war, the DRV concentrated on producing essential goods directly serving the front and civilian life, while prioritizing the development of agriculture, handicrafts, and domestic trade. Domestic trade was encouraged, whereas foreign trade was strictly controlled to protect the wartime economy and reduce dependence on external sources. This policy contributed to fostering a spirit of self-reliance and self-strengthening, mobilizing internal resources, and gradually consolidating an independent national economy.

Regarding the development of domestic trade and the system of resistance markets, the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of the DRV advocated the expansion of domestic trade activities, with particular emphasis on the establishment of resistance markets. “With regard to domestic trade, implement the opening and dispersal of markets, and establish consumer cooperatives on the principle of capital contributions from both the Government and cooperative members” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001, Vol. 10: 161). The DRV promoted the opening and spatial dispersal of markets and the reorganization of commodity circulation networks. Local authorities were encouraged to establish new markets in both free zones and guerrilla-controlled areas. They were also required to promote economic self-reliance, expand local production, and organize systems of commodity exchange appropriate to the specific conditions of each region. This indicates that resistance markets played an important role and held a significant position in domestic trade and local economies.

In the 1951 financial report, the policy of developing a wartime economy was further reaffirmed: “Develop the economy during the resistance war, ensuring supply for the resistance.” It was also stated that: “With regard to domestic trade, we have taken advantage of the spontaneous supply efforts of the population to transport food and goods from surplus areas to deficit areas; we have ensured a large part of the supply for troops and government agencies, thereby contributing to stabilizing prices to a certain extent in the market. We have implemented a policy of purchasing paddy at fixed prices and collecting taxes in rice, which has helped maintain a relatively stable level of national revenue; we have also procured salt to supply troops and agencies and have prepared a certain stockpile of salt for the resistance” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001, Vol. 12: 311, 321). Alongside the development of the market system, the Government placed particular emphasis on expanding consumer cooperatives and resistance trade organizations. On 14 May 1951, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam issued Decree No. 22/SL, establishing the State Trade Bureau (*Sở Mậu dịch*).⁴

² “Free zones” refer to areas that were stably controlled by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and resistance forces, and that were not—or were only minimally—subject to direct control by French military forces. In this sense, the concept of “free zones” also encompasses resistance base areas, which were territories under relatively firm control of the DRV and resistance forces, where leadership institutions and armed forces were concentrated, and where economic development and the consolidation of rear-base support structures were actively undertaken.

³ “Guerrilla-controlled areas” refer to territories in which resistance forces had established local political bases and organized local armed units, enabling them to conduct guerrilla warfare and exercise partial control over the area. However, such control was not stable, as these areas were frequently subject to contestation and shifting control due to ongoing confrontation with French military forces.

⁴ The state trading system (*mậu dịch quốc doanh*) was established with the following functions:

- To supply the needs of the army and government agencies;
- To regulate the market and stabilize prices;
- To support the development of production and guide and assist merchants in serving the resistance and civilian livelihood;
- To conduct economic struggle against the enemy (Ministry of Domestic Trade, File No. 17, National Archives Center III).

Thus, after achieving independence in 1945, the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) gradually formulated an economic development strategy based on the principles of independence, autonomy, and self-reliance. Within this economic framework, they promoted the establishment of a system of resistance markets in both free zones and guerrilla-controlled areas. These markets encouraged production, mobilized local resources, and fostered self-sufficiency under wartime conditions, while also functioning as an “instrument” in the economic struggle against French colonial forces. This was not merely a short-term solution to the difficulties of a fragile wartime economy, but also a long-term strategic orientation, contributing to the material foundation of the resistance war against French colonialism and to the development of the economy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

5. Formation and Organization of Resistance Markets

From the policy orientations of the Party and the Government, as well as the practical requirements of daily life and the resistance war, the system of resistance markets gradually took shape and developed, becoming an important component of the commodity circulation network in both free zones and guerrilla-controlled areas.

Distribution network, The Government and local authorities encouraged the maintenance and reorganization of traditional markets in the form of resistance markets, while also establishing new markets. From 1947 onward, alongside the consolidation of resistance bases, the system of resistance markets expanded significantly. Resistance markets gradually emerged and developed across many regions, including Viet Bac, Inter-Zone III⁵, Inter-Zone IV⁶, and Southern Vietnam. A new market network linking Inter-Zone IV to Viet Bac was also established, including towns in Viet Bac; Buong Can, Dong Quan, Cong Than, Van Dinh, Dong Nam, Phat Diem, and Cau Yen in Inter-Zone III; and Cau Bo and Trang Market in Inter-Zone IV (Ministry of Industry and Trade, Files No. 161 and No. 184, National Archives Center III)... In all areas under revolutionary control, markets were formed and maintained, such as Bang Khau Market (Bac Kan), Dinh Hoa Market (Thai Nguyen), Phu Dinh Market and markets in the Tan Trao area (Tuyen Quang), as well as traditional rural markets in Viet Bac; Quynh Nhai Market (Son La), Phong Tho Market and Sinh Ho Market (Lai Chau), and rural markets in the Northwest; Rong Market (Nam Dinh), Vieng Market and rural markets in Inter-Zone III; Ben Market (Thanh Hoa), Vinh Market (Nghe An), and Dong Ha Market (Quang Tri), as well as rural markets in Inter-Zone IV; and An Khe Market (Gia Lai), Ba To Market (Quang Ngai), and mountainous markets in Quang Nam within Inter-Zone V⁷.

From the Battle of the Border in 1950 onward, the revolutionary government gained the strategic initiative on the battlefield, and commerce in the free zones and resistance bases expanded steadily. The 1950 Border Victory liberated the Sino–Vietnamese border area, linking Vietnam with socialist countries, particularly China, and thereby opening new channels for commercial development. The Hòa Bình Campaign broke the French “East–West corridor,” while also restoring transportation and communication between Viet Bac—the command center of the resistance—and other inter-zones within the free territory. Market networks expanded, and trade between Inter-Zone III, Inter-Zone IV, and Viet Bac became more accessible. In Inter-Zone V and Southern Vietnam, victories in the Central Highlands, Dong Thap, and Ca Mau similarly contributed to the expansion of markets in liberated areas. Resistance bases increasingly expanded and penetrated deep into French-controlled territories, creating a “interlaced” pattern of warfare (*cài rãng lược*), which in turn facilitated the circulation of goods under new conditions. As free zones expanded and transportation links between resistance bases were gradually restored, domestic trade became more dynamic. Consequently, resistance markets became more active than before, and gradually emerged within guerrilla-controlled areas.

Organization and Operation

In the free zones, resistance markets (including markets in free zones, markets in resistance bases, border-area markets, and inter-regional markets) were typically organized in flexible forms suited to wartime conditions. In Inter-Zone III, Inter-Zone IV, and Southern Vietnam, resistance markets were arranged in a decentralized and adaptive manner, corresponding to the specific conditions of each locality. Markets were often held at forest edges near border areas, riverbanks, village outskirts, or other locations favorable for communication and for ensuring safety against enemy raids. In some cases, markets operated at night, with shops located in underground shelters, or as mobile floating shops on canals and waterways in Southern Vietnam (Ministry of Industry and Trade, File No. 200, National Archives Center III). Market locations were also frequently changed to avoid enemy control and attacks. The most common form was periodic markets, held regularly in commune or inter-commune centers, or in locations convenient for trade. These markets served as places for the exchange of agricultural products, forest products, handicrafts, and essential goods for daily life. In addition, some localities established specialized markets or purchasing and distribution points managed by resistance authorities or cooperatives to ensure supplies for the army and the population. In major resistance bases such as Viet Bac, Inter-Zone III, Inter-Zone IV, and Southern Vietnam, the resistance market network was relatively well developed, forming key nodes of economic exchange between localities within the free zones.

In guerrilla-controlled areas and zones under mixed or intermittent enemy control, market organization was more mobile and flexible. To avoid French raids and military sweeps, many markets were dispersed into smaller-scale units, operated for short periods, or frequently relocated. In some areas, “mobile markets,” (Chợ lưu động) “hidden markets,” (Chợ bí mật) or local exchange points were established within villages and hamlets to reduce risks for the population. Direct exchange between producers and consumers was also encouraged to ensure the circulation of goods under wartime conditions. Markets in guerrilla areas additionally served as venues for disseminating the policies and directives of the resistance government.

Goods circulated in the markets

Before 1950, goods circulated in the markets mainly consisted of local agricultural products and basic necessities such as salt and rice. After 1950, the range of traded goods became more diverse, including not only agricultural products and essential goods

⁵ It comprised the following provinces: Hanoi, Ha Dong, Son Tay, Nam Dinh, Ha Nam, Ninh Binh, Hoa Binh, Thai Binh, Hung Yen, Kien An, and Hai Phong.

⁶ It comprised the following provinces: Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien

⁷ It comprised the following provinces: Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Kon Tum, and Gia Lai.

but also handicrafts, production tools, textiles, medicines, and commodities transported from lowland areas to the resistance bases. This period marked a stage in which resistance markets clearly demonstrated their role in promoting production, facilitating commodity circulation, and contributing to economic recovery in the free zones.

6. Contribution of Resistance Markets to the Wartime Economy of the DRV

Based on the policy of building a self-reliant and self-strengthening economy, the system of resistance markets was formed and developed across various free zones and guerrilla-controlled areas. Resistance markets functioned as an economic institution that helped maintain and enhance economic resilience under wartime conditions. They made important contributions to the wartime economy as well as to the broader struggle of the Vietnamese people.

Ensuring Civilian Livelihoods

First and foremost, resistance markets played an important role in ensuring the livelihoods of the population in the free zones. Under conditions of economic blockade and territorial fragmentation, commodity circulation faced severe difficulties, and the supply of food and essential goods was seriously constrained. Resistance markets became key places for the exchange and circulation of goods, helping to meet the essential needs of the population. They functioned as venues for trading rice, salt, textiles, medicines, agricultural tools, and other basic commodities required for daily life. People from different localities could exchange agricultural products, handicrafts, and self-produced goods to satisfy their consumption needs. Farmers had outlets for their agricultural produce; artisans were able to sell their products; and small traders and petty merchants continued their commercial activities to serve civilian life. Thanks to this market system, economic life in many resistance base areas remained relatively stable, helping to mitigate shortages and reduce hoarding and speculation.

Resistance markets also created conditions for the population to maintain and develop production while improving their incomes. In a context in which self-sufficient production remained dominant, exchange activities in the markets enabled people to sell agricultural products, handicrafts, and other self-produced goods in order to obtain necessary items that households could not produce themselves. This contributed to encouraging increased production, providing incentives for greater labor input, and at the same time improving living standards in both resistance base areas and free zones.

Resistance markets made a significant contribution to stabilizing the market and mitigating the adverse effects of war on civilian life. In the early years of the resistance war, living conditions were extremely difficult due to shortages of goods, supply not meeting demand, and rapidly rising prices. The prices of essential commodities such as rice, textiles, and salt increased sharply. Through the Government's domestic trade management policies and the participation of consumer cooperatives and state trading enterprises, many essential goods were distributed more rationally, helping to limit speculation, hoarding, and price inflation. This not only protected consumers' interests but also contributed to maintaining economic stability in resistance areas and strengthening public confidence in the revolutionary government. As a result of these efforts, price levels gradually stabilized. In the first six months of 1951, while money issuance increased by one unit, the price of rice rose by 2.8 times; in the second half of 1951, money issuance increased by one unit but rice prices rose by only 1.5 times; and in the second half of 1952, money issuance increased by one unit while rice prices rose by only 0.76 times. Thus, inflation was brought under control, and the volume of goods production increased. By 1953, essential goods were not only stabilized but in some cases their prices declined, particularly rice (Ministry of Industry and Trade, File No. 99, National Archives Center III).

Table 1. Comparison of Rice Prices in October 1953 and January 1953.

Inter-Zone Type of goods	Northern uplands of Viet Bac (Cao Bang)	Midland area of Viet Bac (Thai Nguyen)	Inter-Zone III (Ninh Binh)	Inter-Zone IV (Thanh Hoa)
Salt,	Increase 17%	Decrease 23%	Decrease 47,5%	Decrease 30%
Rice	Decrease 44%	Decrease 59%	Decrease 33%	Decrease 43%
Textiles	Decrease 26%	Decrease 20%	Decrease 30%	Decrease 24%

(Ministry of Industry and Trade, *The Situation of Industry and Trade in Vietnam during 8 Years of Resistance War*, File No. 99, and *Report on Trade Situation in 1953–1954*, File No. 176, National Archives Center III)

The table above shows that, except for rice in the Northern uplands of Viet Bac, prices of essential goods such as rice, salt, and textiles in most areas had declined by the end of 1953. Overall, by the end of 1953, the prices of basic necessities had decreased and gradually stabilized. As a result, the living conditions of the population became more stable.

In maintaining and developing the wartime economy of the Government of the DRV, resistance markets contributed to encouraging the development of local economies. In the free zones, the market system was organized in a flexible manner, corresponding to the practical conditions of each locality. Through market sessions, producers (including farmers, artisans, petty traders, and small merchants) had places to sell and exchange their products. Agricultural and forestry products, handicrafts, and essential goods were made available to consumers. With outlets for products and opportunities for trade, local economies were able to develop, thereby encouraging production activities among the population. This circulation of goods not only met the daily needs of the population but also maintained the functioning of the economy and helped overcome stagnation caused by war. It was through the operation of the resistance market system that the “lifeline” of commodity circulation in the national economy was maintained during the war.

Resistance markets are a vivid example of the self-reliance and self-strengthening capacity of the wartime economy. In the context of economic blockade and isolation, the Government of the DRV pursued a resistance economy based on the principle of self-reliance and self-strengthening. Resistance markets provided outlets for agricultural and handicraft products produced by the population, thereby encouraging increased production, the expansion of occupations, and the development of local economies. Local

populations intensified production activities, developed handicraft industries, and made use of available local resources to meet both daily needs and the requirements of the resistance war. Commodity exchange activities in these markets created incentives for production growth and gradually formed an economic network based on local resources and internal strengths. The maintenance of commercial activities under wartime conditions demonstrates that the resistance economy was not entirely dependent on external supply sources, but was capable of organizing, operating, and meeting most of its own needs. This constituted an important foundation for implementing the long-term resistance strategy based primarily on self-reliance.

Mobilizing Resources for the Resistance War

In addition to its role in ensuring civilian livelihoods, resistance markets made a significant contribution to logistical support for the battlefield. Through the network of resistance markets, various types of food, supplies, and essential goods were collected and transported to military units, frontline labor forces, and military bases. Rice, maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, salt, medicine, and handicraft products serving the army were all circulated through market sessions in the free zones and resistance base areas.

Many petty traders and small merchants directly participated in supporting the resistance by transporting goods across enemy-controlled areas to supply the troops. Numerous markets became transshipment points for material goods from the rear to the frontline, thereby contributing to the establishment of a widespread people-based logistics system. In conditions of severe shortages of transportation means and infrastructure, the operation of resistance markets helped ensure material supply for the nation's long and arduous resistance war. During the Border Campaign in 1950 and in the final years of the resistance war, as the free zones expanded, resistance markets increasingly played a clear role in serving the front. Goods from the lowlands and midland areas were transported to the resistance bases, while agricultural and handicraft products from these bases continued to circulate among different localities. Resistance markets thus became an important link connecting the rear with the battlefield, contributing to the material strength of the People's Army of Vietnam and supporting its major victories, culminating in the Dien Bien Phu Victory in 1954.

In addition to its economic functions, resistance markets also served as important sites for propaganda and for mobilizing the population to participate in the resistance war. Each market session was not only a place for commodity exchange but also a space for strengthening awareness of the economic struggle against French colonialism and for safeguarding the achievements of the revolution. Under wartime conditions, markets gathered large numbers of people and became community spaces for interaction and the dissemination of patriotic spirit. Many policies and directives of the Government of the DRV were communicated through these market gatherings. Revolutionary cadres often combined the dissemination of government policies with the mobilization of the population to participate in patriotic emulation movements, increase production, practice thrift, and contribute manpower and material resources to the resistance. Through the dense social interactions in market spaces, information about the battlefield situation and the combat achievements of the Vietnamese forces and population was also widely spread, thereby strengthening public confidence in the ultimate victory.

To counter the French colonial policy of economic blockade, resistance markets contributed to the establishment and maintenance of a commodity circulation system that was relatively independent from the economy controlled by the French colonial authorities. Throughout the war, the French prohibited the transportation of essential supplies into resistance areas, manipulated prices, flooded the market with luxury goods to "squeeze" production in the free zones, and circulated counterfeit currency in order to extract resources from resistance areas, along with other blockade measures aimed at weakening the resistance economy (Ministry of Industry and Trade, File No. 64, National Archives Center III). In the economic struggle against the French, the resistance government, on the one hand, implemented taxation policies, and on the other hand encouraged the population in free zones to import necessary goods for the resistance such as medical supplies, kerosene, and agricultural tools, while restricting non-essential imports and eliminating luxury goods. Goods exported from free zones to enemy-controlled areas mainly consisted of surplus rural products that were not essential to the resistance but were needed for urban workers, such as bamboo, rattan, leaves, cassava, sweet potatoes, and simple agricultural tools in some localities (Ministry of Domestic Trade, File No. 17, National Archives Center III). The Government of Vietnam established the system of resistance markets, encouraging the consumption of goods produced by the population while reducing dependence on supplies from enemy-controlled areas. Through the operation of resistance markets, domestically produced goods were prioritized for consumption, thereby reducing the influence of goods from French-controlled areas and gradually forming a market system for the wartime economy. Agricultural products, handicrafts, and consumer goods circulated widely within the resistance zones, creating a relatively independent market system separate from French-controlled areas. This helped safeguard the economic autonomy of the resistance zones while reducing the capacity of the French colonial authorities to influence economic life in the free areas.

The resistance markets constituted one of the key instruments for breaking the French colonial economic blockade. Through the organization of dispersed markets, mobile markets, and a flexible commodity exchange network in resistance base areas, the authorities and local population were able to maintain economic circulation even under conditions of intense warfare. Trading activities in these markets facilitated the formation of a relatively flexible exchange network linking mountainous regions, midland areas, and lowland deltas. Commodities from different localities were exchanged and complemented one another, thereby alleviating shortages and ensuring the essential needs of both civilians and resistance forces. The existence and expansion of the resistance market system significantly reduced the effectiveness of the French colonial policy of economic blockade, thereby contributing to the sustenance of the free zones. In this sense, resistance markets can be understood as one of the principal "instruments" of economic struggle against French colonial rule on the economic front.

7. Conclusion

Resistance markets constituted an important component of the wartime economy of the Government of the DRV during the period 1946–1954, reflecting the flexible and innovative adaptation of both the DRV authorities and the population under conditions of war. The system of resistance markets not only sustained the circulation of commodities but also evolved into a significant socio-economic institution, contributing to the functioning of the economy in a context of territorial fragmentation, blockade, and persistent military pressure. Beyond its traditional function as spaces for commodity exchange, resistance markets also played a role

in promoting production, encouraging the utilization of local resources, linking regional economies, and meeting the consumption needs of the population. Through activities of procurement, distribution, and the regulation of goods, the market system contributed to stabilizing the marketplace, improving living standards, and ensuring the supply of food, essential commodities, raw materials, and necessary supplies for government agencies, military units, and the resistance rear base. At the same time, resistance markets served as a channel for mobilizing economic resources from society in support of the resistance war, thereby creating a close linkage between economic development objectives and the national defense mission.

Resistance markets became one of the key factors contributing to the economic resilience of the DRV during the First Indochina War. Warfare typically leads to economic decline, depletion of resources, disruption of trade, and erosion of productive capacity. However, the DRV developed the resistance market system as a wartime economic institution aimed at maintaining commodity circulation, mobilizing social resources, and strengthening economic resilience under prolonged conflict conditions. The existence and expansion of resistance markets demonstrate the organizational capacity of the revolutionary state in managing economic life, while also reflecting the spirit of self-reliance and creativity of the Vietnamese people in extremely difficult circumstances. The resistance market system of the DRV contributed to mitigating economic degrowth and economic wear by sustaining commodity circulation, ensuring the supply of essential goods, mobilizing local resources, and reinforcing the resilience of the wartime economy. From an international research perspective, the case of Vietnam's resistance markets provides additional empirical evidence for studies on wartime economies, economic resilience, and the adaptive capacity of economic institutions under conditions of conflict. Vietnam's experience demonstrates that, in wartime settings, market institutions are not necessarily eliminated; rather, they can be reorganized into forms appropriate to new circumstances, thereby continuing to perform essential functions of resource allocation and sustaining socio-economic life. This case contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of markets in wartime economies, while also underscoring that the adaptability of economic institutions is a critical determinant of a country's resilience and sustainability under conditions of armed conflict.

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