

Viet Nam and the making of market-Leninism

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Abstract *Authoritarian states* are states in which dominant parties discourage or disallow organized political competition. By such a definition, Viet Nam under the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) has been consistently authoritarian. But an authoritarianism of what sort? The CPV's rule in the north (since the 1940s) and on a country-wide basis (since 1975) has been punctuated by major wars, the rise and demise of state-socialist institutions, hostile international blockades, protracted economic malaise and, most recently, the development of a market-Leninist regime in which markets and trade have propelled growth and improved living standards within the framework of democratic centralism. An historical sketch of authoritarianism under the CPV can shed light on significant changes in the forms and substance of authoritarianism in Viet Nam.

Keywords

In Viet Nam, political power is concentrated in one political party, the Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV), which has ruled the north of Viet Nam since the 1940s and 1950s and the whole of Viet Nam since 1975. Established in 1930 in Hong Kong as the Indochina Communist Party,¹ the CPV rose to power on the crest of a broad-based struggle for national self-determination and social justice, a social movement which the party itself was instrumental in building and directing. Though anti-colonialism predated the CPV, it was the CPV that gained leadership of Viet Nam's anti-colonial struggle and was subsequently able to forge that leadership position into a durable political monopoly. Today, as it approaches its eightieth year of existence, the CPV shows no signs of relinquishing power and faces no organized opposition. By standard definitions, Viet Nam under the CPV has and continues to display an authoritarian political regime. But what does this label

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'authoritarian' really tell us about the nature of Viet Nam's polity, past and present?

This article examines the development and transformation of authoritarianism in Viet Nam under the CPV. The analysis is organized in three sections. In the first section, I develop an overview of authoritarianism in Viet Nam under *state-socialism*, i.e. the period that coincided with the development and erosion of a Soviet-inspired centrally-planned and collectivized economy. This period ran roughly until the end of the 1980s, when CPV leaders committed to a set of market reforms known as *Đổi Mới*, or 'renewal'. In the second section I argue that Viet Nam's market transition involved a critical transformation in the nature of the CPV's authoritarian rule. Specifically, I contend that after 1986, and especially after 1989, Viet Nam embarked on a transition to what is best described as *market-Leninism* (London 2003, 2004).²

In market-Leninist regimes, communist parties pursue their political imperatives through market institutions and market-based strategies of accumulation while maintaining Leninist principles and strategies of political organization. I explain the historical development of market-Leninism in Viet Nam and illustrate its political logic. In recent years Viet Nam's polity has seen significant changes and is, in my view, more open and democratic than the world's other major instance of market-Leninism, China. Moreover, and despite many undemocratic aspects, Viet Nam's political regime has been more substantively progressive than China's, devoting proportionately more attention to the aspirations and interests of the general population. Nonetheless, Viet Nam politics remain essentially authoritarian and in the final section I seek to further clarify the nature of this authoritarianism through brief examinations of Viet Nam's elections, press, and emasculated civil society.

I conclude that, beyond the concentration of political power, the descriptor *authoritarian* tells us little about the substance of Viet Nam's or indeed any country's politics. While certain types of polity may well be associated with certain forms of economy, the term authoritarian says a lot less than it is given credit for. Distinguishing the character of authoritarian regimes requires a focus not only on the formal organization of politics or even the politics of regime maintenance. It also must involve an analysis of the content and outcomes of state policies. When we do so, we are better able to discern continuity and change in the forms and substance of authoritarianism. We are able to see that Viet Nam is, at present, a good deal more democratic than cynical interpretations would have it, but more authoritarian than those who mistake party rhetoric for reality.

The evolution of Vietnamese authoritarianism under the CPV

Political regimes are products of social cooperation and competition. Authoritarian regimes are established by individuals or parties intent on

seizing, consolidating, exercising, and maintaining state power at nearly any cost. The means by which parties achieve authoritarian power vary as do the modalities of their rule, the character and outcomes of their policies, and the strategies they deploy to expand power. Within any polity – and authoritarian regimes are no different – the daily business of government involves an internal politics of its own. In what follows, I examine the CPV's seizure and consolidation of power, which was inextricably linked to the twin challenges of war fighting and building state-socialism. To clarify the nature of authoritarianism under state-socialism, I review the ideal typical features of politics under state-socialist regimes. I then demonstrate how Viet Nam's unique conditions and experiences shaped the character of authoritarianism under the CPV during the state-socialist period.

The rise of the CPV and the consolidation of its rule

The CPV's development during the 1930s and 1940s occurred as an alliance of Party activists, peasants and other diverse elements mobilized under the banner of national self-determination and emancipation. During this period, CPV leaders sought to foment anti-colonial resistance, but also to organize and control that resistance. The CPV was by no means the only political force in early twentieth-century Viet Nam, nor was it alone in its quest for national independence and social justice.³ The emergence of the CPV as Viet Nam's dominant political party stemmed from its special qualities and attributes. The Party was adept at forging broad and durable cross-class alliances, across and within rural and urban areas. Early on, it was careful not to alienate groups whose support would be valuable in the short term, such as the petit bourgeois. It was able to neutralize and ultimately eliminate all domestic political competition. The party possessed superior logistical abilities and used these to achieve internal Party discipline, maintain secrecy in its operations and leadership,⁴ and guide the development of a powerful army that began as a platoon of just 34 members.⁵ Finally, the party possessed a tight-knit, at-times factionalized, but essentially stable coterie of Party elite.

It was this combination of attributes that enabled the CPV to coordinate the seizure of power in Ha Noi, in 1945, in the wake of Japanese surrender.⁶ More importantly, it was the organizational and operational attributes of the Party that permitted it to lead and sustain a three decade quest for sovereign leadership of an independent and unified socialist republic. In a position to recognize Viet Nam's independence, the US ignored Hồ Chí Minh's declaration of Viet Nam's independence, deciding instead that post-war France could regain its stature, prestige, and 'confidence' if its colonial dominion were restored.⁷ The CPV's subsequent defeat of (US-financed) French efforts to regain the north of Viet Nam demonstrated the party's growing organizational and military capabilities. The 1954 Geneva Conference, which followed France's defeat at Điện Biên Phủ finally established

conditions for the formation of an independent state, but only north of the seventeenth parallel. Owing largely to US but also Chinese pressure, the CPV accepted the partition of Viet Nam into two states. What emerged from 1954 was the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRV).

State formation entails the selection and establishment of a range of formal institutions governing various aspects of social life. The selection of institutions reflects the interests of ruling parties. As a revolutionary socialist party infused with Marxist–Leninist ideology, the CPV in the 1950s commenced to establish a bureaucratic-authoritarian state founded on the political principles of ‘democratic centralism’ and the economic policies of Soviet-inspired state-socialism. The formal institutions the CPV sought to impose in the 1950s and 1960s were premised on the elimination of political opposition and the subordination of all social activity to the interests of the Party.⁸ Implementing state-socialism involved the elimination of private property and the collectivization of productive means under state ownership. The CPV oversaw the development of new administrative agencies, fiscal policies and social welfare arrangements.

From its inception, the CPV claimed to represent the democratic aspirations of the Vietnamese. But, from its beginning, the CPV was a Leninist political organization. Moreover, it had struggled and won power in a hostile geopolitical context. While the Party continued to mobilize support under the banners of national self-determination and social justice, the political means and institutions the Party employed were firmly authoritarian. After 1975, the CPV would extend this institutional template to the southern half of the country. Understanding what sort of authoritarianism this was requires an appreciation of the ideal typical features of state-socialist polities and the special attributes of state-socialism in the Vietnamese context.

The political institutions of state-socialism

In state-socialist regimes, political power is concentrated in the hands of the state and, more specifically, the Communist Party. In such regimes, communist parties use their monopoly of power and specific strategies and principles of political organization to maintain and apply political and economic power. Janos Kornai’s (Kornai 1992) analysis of the ideal typical features of ‘socialist’ systems helps distinguish the core political features of Vietnamese state-socialism.

All instances of state-socialism involved the development of an authoritarian state fashioned in accordance with Lenin’s basic vision of a vanguard party. State-socialist states resemble other modern states with respect to their formal institutions, with one critical difference: the state is interpenetrated with the sprawling political apparatus of the communist party, which encompasses the whole of the state and whose top–down instructions must be carried out (Kornai 1992: 33). The party’s branches and cells penetrate

all territorial units of society, every functional branch of government, and all institutional spheres, and beyond the formal bounds of state administration, into neighbourhood units, economic units, schools and hospitals. In this way the communist party – and its vast apparatus – attempts to dominate, govern and regulate all aspects of social life. This basic Leninist structure of politics is still in place in today's Viet Nam.

In state-socialist states, political opposition is rarely tolerated. Unscheduled secondary associations of any kind are illegal, while the 'space' of secondary associations – i.e., that between state, market, and the family – is filled by party-controlled mass organizations, such as the woman's union, peasants' union and communist youth league, as well as professional associations, such as teachers' unions and writers' unions. The media is under the direct ownership and control of the state, all media organizations are effectively governed by party members, ensuring unity of purpose, at least in formal terms.

The political bases of 'socialist system' are bound together by a number of cohesive forces, including the party's self-legitimizing ideology and the associated determination of the party to retain power, the activities and functioning of state organs and strata of power-elite (all party members), as well as various means of coercion. Kornai (1992: 35) notes three major ways in which this occurs. First, positions within state organizations are dictated by the political committee of a given organization, which the party cell controls. Second, all major affairs of state are decided by the party *before* the organization of the state reaches its decision, while the major decisions of the government are decided in advance by the party. Third, as indicated, the party is directly in touch with the operation of the state at all levels and in all branches. Because virtually all high level state officials are party members, there is no need for constitutional provisions concerning the authority of the party.

In principle, all party bodies, cells and secretaries at every level are directly or indirectly elected by other party delegates, and all elected bodies within the party may adopt resolutions. As Kornai (1992) notes, this is the democratic aspect of *democratic centralism*, the form of political representation common to most state-socialist societies. The centralism arises from the fact that decisions of a higher-level party organization are always binding on a lower party bodies and every party member. In addition to the party and state, representative assemblies are constituted at every administrative level of government, but these consist largely and usually entirely of party members, who rubber-stamp state decisions that are guided by the party line.

The party enjoys a practical monopoly over ideology, which is disseminated by the organs of party, state and mass organizations, and through educational, cultural and other activities. This ideology draws selectively on the works of Marx and Lenin (and sometimes Stalin and Mao) as well as the ideas and aspirations of indigenous leaders and movements. As Kornai

(1992: 50) puts it, 'the adherents of the official ideology are imbued in the Messianic belief that socialism is destined to save mankind'. Much – though certainly not all – of this ideology rests on widely-accepted critiques of capitalism, including the anarchy, wastefulness and inefficiencies of market economies, the exploitive nature of capitalist relations of production, the tendency for capitalism to undermine or limit democracy, and promote individual and private needs and preferences over collective needs, preferences, and the public good.

Under state-socialism, there is no illusion that the party occupies a position of dictatorship.⁹ The party justifies this dictatorship through its claims to be the vanguard party of the proletariat and to have a superior understanding of societal needs. Peasants and all other working people are assumed to be allied with and supportive of the party. In many instances, the party is comprised and led not by workers but politicians and bureaucrats. There is, in other words, an official ideology if not a reality of class coalitional politics between workers and peasants under the leadership of the party. As Kornai (1992: 56) puts it, '[t]he possessors of power have appointed themselves as the manifest expression of the people's interests and the repository of a permanent public good.' This is, then, a highly paternalistic system: 'The bureaucracy stands *in loco parentis*: all other strata, groups, or individuals in society are children, wards whose minds must be made up for them by their adult guardians' (ibid.).¹⁰ Real or imagined, the class coalition that exists under state-socialism is a core element of its ideology, which produces interesting tensions and contradictions in all actually-existing state-socialist regimes.

State-socialist states used a diverse arsenal of methods to win popular support for its decisions and policies, including political rallies, the media and educational campaigns with no toleration of any organized opposition, and even severe penalties for muffled or passive resistance, including imprisonment, torture and execution. These forms of retribution occurred in Viet Nam, on a smaller scale than in China or the Soviet Union no doubt, though in proportion to Viet Nam's size no less significant.

The political institutions of Vietnamese state-socialism

The development of political institutions always occurs in interdependent relation with other major social processes. In the 1950s and 1960s, the CPV's primary interests included the military defeat of its enemies and the promotion of economic development on the basis of state-socialism.

War was critical to the CPV's development and, with it, the development of Viet Nam's political institutions. The CPV was founded in the context of anti-colonial struggle and developed in a political context in which the options were survival or death. The party cut its teeth on the logistical challenges of war-time mobilization, the scale and scope of which required immense party discipline. The strategies the CPV deployed in

wartime sometimes led to a questioning but never an outright challenge to the Party's rule.¹¹ Factional infighting cropped up between moderates (e.g., Hồ Chí Minh and Phạm Văn Đồng) and more radical elements, but the principle of collective and consensus-based leadership survived.¹²

Sophie Quinn-Judge (2004) has argued that elite relationships within the CPV's upper echelon during the war years were more of a durable coalition than unceasing unity. Leninist ideology promoted a sense of historical mission, which in turn tightly bound the CPV leadership and the leadership to its rank and file. But the image of a monolithic Party devoid of factionalism is discredited by the evidence. Even during the height of the war with the US, in 1967 and 1968, the Party's cohesiveness appeared underwritten by fear. What the Party did achieve was a façade of unity and an ability to find workable solutions to internal tensions during times of crisis. Indeed, the virtual canonization of Hồ Chí Minh in Viet Nam is in many ways a form of praise of his ability to facilitate consensus among competing party strains and his willingness to abide by Party decisions, including those he himself ardently disagreed with.

The development of state-socialism was the second major Party goal. As in the Soviet Union and China, this involved the collectivization of production means under state ownership and management, as well as the subordination of all economic production and distribution to the 'rationality' of central planners. This strategy was designed to achieve rapid industrialization. By promoting a dual economy where agriculture would feed industry, the strategy was designed to avoid the perceived traps of dependent capitalist development. In so doing, the state sought to boost production in all spheres by capturing economies of scale, accumulate surplus savings from agriculture, and use these savings to invest in heavy industry and infrastructure, to lower the wage and food bills of state officials and urban workers, and to finance the provision of social services, such as public health and education.

In times of war, this system proved useful for the purposes of mass mobilization and to reinforce the political authority of the CPV. In wartime northern Viet Nam, the CPV did indeed gain broad popular support as it was viewed as the champion of national self-determination and a more just social order. Although the collectivization of agriculture showed promising results in the early stages, the full implementation of the Vietnamese state-socialist development strategy, however, was retarded and distorted by policy-mistakes and ever-pressing military and strategic demands. The poor performance of state-socialist economic institutions combined with systemic flaws of central planning and a prevailing poverty of resources undermined the aims of state-socialism.

The state-socialist economic policies the CPV sought to implement demonstrated the scope and limits of its power. The land reforms of 1953–56 were emblematic. The end of the campaign involved thousands of farmers being falsely labelled as landlords and subjected to confiscation of their

land, party purges and executions (Moise 1983). The scale of violence associated with land reforms in northern Viet Nam remains the subject of historical controversy (see Porter 1993). The party recognized its errors in 1956, and a campaign to correct these errors lasted into 1958. Whatever the precise figure might be, it appears beyond dispute that the process of land redistribution left deep scars on large portions of the northern population and the Party itself.

Yet, in other ways, and despite systemic economic inefficiencies of state-socialism, land reforms and cooperative agriculture brought economic security to rural households, particularly poorer households who had no history of land ownership. This does not mean collectivized agriculture was always cooperative or that the land reforms in the north or the south were runaway successes. In the north, collectivized agriculture stabilized food production, but subsequent efforts to expand the size and transform authority relations within the cooperatives met with various forms of unorganized resistance, which proved (perhaps in combination with war-time needs) sufficient to result in changes in state agricultural policies (see Kerkvliet 2005).

Over the long haul, both agricultural and industrial policies failed to produce economic growth or social equality. Decades of war were massively destructive and inevitably contributed to Viet Nam's poverty, and the political and economic blockade imposed on Viet Nam for 15 years by China and the United States only made matters worse. But poorly integrated and poorly performing state-socialist economic institutions were, in and of themselves, a even greater contributor to Viet Nam's continued poverty in the 1980s (see Beresford 1989a, 1989b, 1997; Fforde 1999; Fforde and deVylder 1996).

With respect to social inequality, the state-socialist regime promoted it. Though inspired by principles of egalitarianism, state-socialism exploited the countryside in favour of industry. Peasants were compelled to sell produce at a fraction of black market-fetching prices, depressing livelihoods and productive incentives. Social status and political power were defined by one's relations to the means of distribution and, hence, the Party and state. The functioning of the Viet Nam's political and economic institutions ensured party members and state managers privileged access to scarce resources while excluding those with class or political backgrounds (Tri 1990).

The development of market-Leninism

The withering of Vietnamese state-socialist economic institutions left only one viable route from state-socialism: an embrace of market institutions and a process of structural adjustment that would result in a still large but leaner central state, doing fewer things, and hopefully better. But from the beginning until today, these market institutions were to be subordinated to Leninist principles and therefore subject to the dictatorial guidance of the Party. This reality does not negate the fact that, as under central plans as in markets, the internal politics of Leninist regimes is orderly. On the

contrary, the particular path of development that Viet Nam has experienced under market-Leninism has been shaped by the tensions and contradictions within the state itself. An examination of the historical antecedents of market-Leninism is followed by an historical narrative of developments under successive periods of Party leadership, demarcated by Party congresses and leadership changes. Admittedly, such an approach is painting with a very broad brush and is excessively focused on elite politics. My aim is not a Kremlinology of Viet Nam's politics, but an analysis of key developments and processes and how they shaped continuity and change in Vietnamese authoritarianism after the 1980s.

Historical antecedents: politics and the crisis of state-socialism

From 1969 to 1986, Party General Secretary Lê Duẩn remained the commanding figure in Vietnamese politics, ruling alongside other Party elders who had been with the Party since its origins. Lê will remain a remarkable figure in Viet Nam's history in that he presided not only over the unification of the country, but also the crisis of state-socialism.

The period from 1975 to 1985 saw the CPV successfully extend the same administrative grid it used to govern the north of Viet Nam to the southern reaches of the country. But the Party did so hastily (in 1977–78) and in a way that undermined economic performance and perpetuated animosity among some segments of the southern population – particularly those with ties to the former southern regime. Remarkably, after 1975 in the south, Vietnamese with 'suspect' class backgrounds or affiliations were routinely subject to political, economic, and social exclusion and were denied equal treatment. These redistributive measures were botched in a way that undermined the Party's legitimacy (Hai 1991).

Viet Nam's 1978 invasion of Cambodia successfully toppled the Pol Pot regime, if at great human cost. The invasion of Cambodia was followed by Chinese attacks across Viet Nam's northern frontier that claimed tens of thousands of lives and wrought considerable physical damage as well as a subsequent US-Sino embargo that effectively isolated Viet Nam until the early 1990s.¹³

But three watershed developments in the mid-1980s provided the sparks for change. The first was the gradual and then more rapid erosion of state-socialist economic institutions and hence, the base of Viet Nam's planned economy. The second was the death (in July 1986) of Lê Duẩn, whose leadership was decidedly ineffective in its last stages. The third event was the creeping reform and then spectacular collapse or dismantlement of state-socialist economies and communist states across Eastern Europe. All of these developments combined with the economic and political embargo Viet Nam faced during this period added to the pressures for reform.

The crisis of Vietnamese state-socialism not only entailed broad failures in economic performance, it gave rise to an increasingly vocal reform

constituency within the structures of state power. Long-time party figures such as Lê Đức Thọ, Trường Chinh and Phạm Văn Đồng were increasingly seen as part of the problem, rather than the solution. Ameliorative market reforms, such as the 'three plan system' that freed state enterprises from plan constraints and household production contracts were seen to be inadequate. A currency crisis in 1985 sparked hyper inflation and a sense of urgency that deeper, systemic reforms were necessary. After Lê Duẩn's passing, Trường Chinh was briefly installed as Party Secretary, before the more liberal Nguyễn Văn Linh was elected at the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986.

The most famous sign of reform occurred at the Sixth Party Congress when Viet Nam's leaders formally committed to a process of renewal. As Adam Fforde and Stefan deVylder (1996: 143) have written, three political currents appeared to motivate the reform measures that emerged from the Congress. These currents included:

- strong pressures from technocrats and pro-market reformists for a 'final solution' to the DRV model, based upon the political collapse of hard reform socialism after the 1985 (currency) debacle;
- support from rising commercial interests within the state sector, to which reform meant even better access to economic benefits; and
- support from southern liberals who wished to see a return to the pre-1975 system.

Additionally, developments in the international arena no doubt contributed to the political mood. The emergence of Michael Gorbachev in 1985 triggered reform-minded initiatives across the state-socialist world.

The most important outcomes of the Sixth Party Congress were mainly economic reforms. The political relevance of these reforms is worth stating as they helped shape the development of a new set of economic institutions and incentive structures with feedback effects on future political process. Briefly, these included the continued liberalization of household agriculture through the expansion of production contracts and the eventual (1988) adoption of quasi-ownership rights; the liberalization of the state enterprise sector, which allowed state enterprises to venture into different kinds of economic activities and establish effective monopolies and oligopolies prior to the emergence of a domestic 'private' sector; and, the issuance of a foreign investment law that signalled the leadership's intent to inject foreign (and foreign capitalist) resources into the economy. Perhaps most fundamentally, the economic reforms initiated in the aftermath of the Congress amounted to a decision to dismantle core institutions of central planning, including subsidies, production targets and dual pricing.

Viet Nam's state at the end of the 1980s was an ineffective state. Throughout the 1980s, the CPV devoted its energies to suppressing insubordinate behaviour within the state, though it was unable to achieve neither this nor

its basic economic objectives (Fforde and deVylder 1996: 269). Viet Nam's intervention in Cambodia proved costly in human and fiscal terms. As the state-socialist economic institutions eroded so, too, did the coherence of the planned economy. Direct economic producers avoided state control by maximizing economic opportunities at the expense of the planned economy. Instead, a powerful constituency emerged within the shell of the planned economy. Shirking, corruption and theft of state assets pervaded. State revenues shrunk precipitously, even as subsidies increased. Vietnamese state-socialism ended in an acute fiscal crisis.

The combined costs of wars and their aftermath, poor economic performance, and international isolation left Viet Nam at the end of the 1980s as one of the poorest countries in Asia. The country was deeply impoverished, chronic and acute malnutrition were pervasive, and the country's social welfare infrastructures barely functioned, as the fiscal foundations on which they depended rapidly withered (London 2003).

The Sixth Party Congress and the rise and demise of Nguyễn Văn Linh

In the late 1980s the Vietnamese state was substantially weakened and the time for political change was ripe. The sense that Viet Nam was experiencing an acute failure of leadership had intensified. The central state's fiscal capacities were in decline and its ability to coordinate economic activities had substantially weakened. The economy was in shambles and the country's international isolation deepened as Soviet aid dried up.

The political opportunity structure at the Party's peak had loosened along with the planned economy. As Lê Duẩn's illness worsened, the somewhat chaotic search for a replacement gravitated first toward old-guard figures, and then away. Prior to the Sixth Party Congress, Lê Đức Thọ is said to have proposed that three elderly leaders – himself, Phạm Văn Đồng and Trường Chinh – step aside (Heng 1999; Marr 2003). The end of 1986 saw the rise of the southern reformer and former National Liberation Front leader Nguyễn Văn Linh. Linh's period as Party Secretary and marked a critical – if short-lived – shift in the country's political mood and the disposition of top Party leadership. The period leading up to Linh's election saw an unprecedented flurry of journalistic attacks on old-guard and old-guard protégés.

Linh's intent was clear: out with the old. In one characteristic statement, and without naming names, he signalled the need to oppose 'the outdated, oppose obstinacy, oppose dogmatic aping, oppose impulsive bureaucratism, oppose depravity, oppose outdated and obsolete habits'. In pushing forward reforms, Linh spoke of 'an arduous revolutionary struggle to take place in every field and in every one of our people'.¹⁴ Linh's efforts at economic reform reflected his political base: provincial (especially southern) political and economic elites clamouring for an end to suffocating and ineffective

central planning and for the green-light to expand market-based activities. Under Linh's leadership, the Party pushed forward with measures that aimed at the liberalization of agriculture and (state's) industry.

The political climate in Viet Nam during this period eased considerably, if uneasily. A 1988 Tết amnesty saw the release (by official accounts) of all but 159 of the estimated 6,000–7,000 political prisoners from the former Republic of Viet Nam (RVN) regime. But outside the Party, space for political activities remained minimal. There was no substantial relaxation of control over the press; travel and interaction with foreigners were closely monitored and generally discouraged; and the possibility of establishing independent organizations remained near zero (Fforde and de-Vylder 1996: 85–6). One area of relaxed control was the press, substantial elements of which were sympathetic to Linh's agenda and actively seeking broader readership in the face of declining state subsidies. Between 1987 and 1989, the Party modestly relaxed its controls on the press. Newspapers published surveys stating, for example, that 26 per cent of 4,600 Party Members had violated the Party's own economic regulations; exposes on Party officials in Cao Bằng, Thanh Hóa, and other provinces led to expulsions from the Party. The army newspaper reported on state officials' purported misappropriation of state land and other assets (Thayer 1992).

Another significant political development during Linh's leadership took place in the development of an autonomous social organization with political ambitions. This was the 'Club of Former Resistance Fighters', a collection of prominent southern war veterans whose legitimacy Party elders could not easily dismiss. The Club began as a self-help organization in May 1986, but after the Sixth Party Congress the group voiced increasingly overt political aims. This was an unauthorized civil society group, perhaps even a nascent political party. Its speeches and newsletters took aim on official incompetence, the failure of government in integrating north and south, and so on. Its activities were closely watched and the Club was finally suppressed. The organization's printing plates were confiscated and its members warned to cease and desist (Marr 2003).

Although the early years of Linh's reforms suggested political liberalization might ensue, his actual achievements were almost entirely limited to the economic sphere. In 1989 the Party's Central Committee cracked down hard on 'bourgeois liberalism' and dismissed Trần ĐỘ, an advocate of press freedom. Despite his focus on economic reforms, Linh himself lost power and resigned in 1991. The official reason was ill-health, but well before he stepped down as Party-secretary, Linh's power was being sapped by a resurgent coalition of conservatives, alarmed by Linh's thirst for reform, which threatened the ideologies and entrenched interests of old-guard elites. Developments in 1989 in the international arena also occasioned a profound questioning of the desired scope and pace of the reform program.

Conservative backlash, conservative reforms, and a new breed of technocrats

The election in 1991 of Linh's replacement as Party Secretary, Đỗ Mười, coincided with a reshuffling of the politburo and replacement of 7 of the 12 politburo members. This was a remarkable turnover, as up until 1991 only 30 individuals had ever served on the Politburo (Thayer 1992: 110).

Đỗ Mười himself was figure with a long history in the Party and state-bureaucracy, including the chaotic state seizures of private businesses in the south in 1977–78. He had served as prime minister from 1981 to 1988, and would act as Party general secretary until 1997, aged 80. Under his leadership, Viet Nam continued on a gradual path of economic reform, though the glimmers of political liberalization characteristic of the Linh years were staunch. What was perhaps most notable about Đỗ Mười's stewardship was not himself at all, but the concomitant rise to the politburo of a new species of Party leader: market-savvy but avowedly Leninist technocrats ready to subject certain elements of Vietnamese authoritarianism to the logics of a state-dominated market economy.

The two key leadership figures in this mould were Võ Văn Kiệt – who served as acting prime minister from 1988 to 1991 and prime minister from 1991 to 1998 – and Phan Văn Khải, who served as prime minister from 1998 to 2006. These were more prescient and component leaders who were able to steer economic growth from recovery to rapid growth. The CPV during this period promoted the development of a 'multi-sector commodity economy under a market mechanism following a socialist line'. The central state recovered its fiscal powers by means of its control over expanding foreign trade. The growing scale of foreign aid and investment not only provided the government new resources (and slush funds), it affected the content and processes of policy making. Between 1991 and 1995, state enterprises accounted for more than half of the government's revenue sources, while contributions from the non-state sector, which accounted for 60 per cent of gross domestic product, came in at 15 per cent (Ngo 1997).

Rapid economic growth, increasing state investments, and a growing domestic market broadly benefited state-owned businesses, while state policies – and especially practices – effectively stunted the development of a truly autonomous private sector. Instead what occurred was the development of a business class *within* the state. The classic market-transition scenario developed through which political capital transformed into economic capital. By 1995, Hồ Chí Minh City's top 100 companies were nearly all state owned enterprises, many of which had commercialized their operations during the early period of *đổi mới*, and were now active across a range of fields, from real estate to trade, and from retail to banking (Gainsborough 2002: 700).

In the meantime, Viet Nam's government embarked on the first of a series of administrative reforms. A key early product of these reform efforts

was the 1996 Law on State Budget, which gave provinces greater discretion over local expenditure and, more importantly, established a system of residual claimants whereby provinces, once they had met their centrally-negotiated revenues commitments, could retain a large portion of the surplus. This institutional arrangement resulted not only in perverse incentives that accentuated regional inequalities,¹⁴ but created a strong patron–client relationship between reform-minded national party leaders and provincial political leaders.

The mid-1990s saw rapid economic changes, but no substantial relaxation of authoritarian politics. But two notable political incidents punctuated the political landscape. The first occurred in 1995, when the decorated General Trần Độ drafted a letter to Đỗ Mười urgently calling for basic reforms of the CPV and its role. Trần was no ordinary dissident. He had joined the Party in 1940, escaped from French captivity, and went on to lead the military and Party, including an extended post at the Ministry of Culture. He was a member of the Party Central Committee and the National Assembly. But in 1995, Trần Độ argued that the time had come for the CPV to choose between two roles or two paths: a ruling party or a leading party. The path of the ruling party, Trần asserted, was the path of totalitarianism. Whereas the path of leadership would require a state operating according to the rule of law, a state ‘by the people, for the people, and of the people’ as stipulated in Article 112 of the 1992 Constitution. This, Trần concluded, could only be achieved through real electoral reforms. The CPV leadership was not persuaded. It did not respond to this or Trần’s subsequent writings, in which he advocated a society based on citizenship, a regulated market economy, the rule of law, and full democracy. In 1999, Trần was expelled from the CPV after 59 years of membership.¹⁵ He passed away in August of 2002.

A second incident occurred in the Red River delta province of Thái Bình, where irate residents seized the Provincial People’s Committee headquarters, demanding an end to blatant corruption and other abuses of power. When the central government finally intervened, several provincial leaders were relieved of their duties, but bad blood simmered in the province for many years. Although it did not receive substantial press coverage, word of the ‘disturbance’ in Thái Bình province spread across the country. The conflagration was emblematic of the seamier aspects of local politics: rouge state operatives imposing illegal demands for private gain at the expense of a beleaguered rural populace.

Conservatism stumbles: the rise and crash landing of Lê Khả Phiêu

In December 1997, at the Fourth Plenum of the CPV’s Eighth Party Congress, Lê Khả Phiêu was elected CPV general secretary. Lê’s career was in the military and it was a career that spanned the French, US, and Cambodian wars. In 1992, Lê was elevated to head the Viet Nam People’s Army Political Department, making him the nation’s top army official. In

1994, Lê was elevated to the (now defunct) Politburo Standing Committee, a five-member panel responsible at the time for the daily governance of the country. The timing of Lê's ascent coincided with yet another conservative backlash with the Party's top ranks, as an internal Party document penned by Võ Văn Kiệt that called for more aggressive economic reforms and greater democracy was leaked, circulated among unauthorized Party officials, and even surfaced and sparked debate among exiled dissidents in France (Quinn-Judge 2004: 37).

Rather than emphasizing economic reform, Phiêu's main (and only, as some cynics would say) platform was a two year program of 'criticism and self-criticism' that he reckoned was necessary to steer the Party and (therefore) the country on the right track. Unfortunately for Lê Khả Phiêu, his management of other spheres of state activity was evaluated as lacking. When the Asian Financial Crisis sent shock waves across Viet Nam's fledgling economy, investors, international financial institutions, and even Party elite grew wary. But Lê remained largely preoccupied with 'criticism and self-criticism'. Dissatisfaction with Lê's performance sparked dissatisfaction among reformers within the Party. In the run-up to the Ninth Party Congress, Lê recruited allies from the internal security system to monitor the activities and communications of rival Party elite. When the plot was uncovered and exposed, Lê's fate was sealed. Though not expelled from the Politburo, Lê was forced to resign, not before winning a compromise that ended the practice of Senior Party Advisor (cố vấn), which Lê rightly perceived as a check on his power. With the emphasis on internal party reform, it is perhaps not surprising that Lê's short rule did not occasion further political liberalization.

'We're all Uncle Hồ's children'

Since 2001, Vietnam's politics have changed qualitatively. In the aftermath of the Lê Khả Phiêu affair, the CPV has undertaken notable reforms of its pinnacle institutions. The Party has instituted reforms of the politburo and the Central Committee of the Party has even successfully vetoed some Politburo decisions. The elite-within-the-elite standing committee of the Politburo was abolished. In the run-up to the recent Tenth Party Congress (in 2006), several Party reports, including the Political Report, were circulated semi-publicly, and even among a select number of foreigners.

But perhaps the most striking changes have actually occurred in Viet Nam's government, where a new cohort of younger (southern) leaders have emerged to change the content and tone of political discourse. In particular, Nguyễn Tấn Dũng's election as prime minister has resulted in a streamlining of government and a more forceful policy style and the promotion of a younger, better-educated, more market-savvy generation of leaders. Bureaucratic institutions are slow to change, however, and serious questions remain as to whether leadership can overcome the entrenched practices,

perverse incentive structures, and competition that pervades through much of the state apparatus.

Indeed, while 'political stability' has its virtues, Viet Nam's 'pluralistic' brand of marketized authoritarianism has its costs. Economic and other policies are decidedly haphazardly; actors within different parts of the state apparatus routinely privilege self-maximization over soundness in decision making and principles of transparency and equity; and through soft loans and other means, state agencies continue to seek and secure large monopoly rents. Indeed, it appears the party remains intent on limiting the development of an autonomous bourgeoisie, and is succeeding rather effectively in nurturing the development of a corporate national bourgeoisie within and on the borders of the Party state. There is, of course, a logic to it all: the broad (however disorganized) distribution of resources, rents and opportunities across different parts of the state apparatus bolsters the political legitimacy of the state within the sphere of bureaucratic politics. It also creates new problems. Examples include the state's (apparently) failed efforts to draw the military out of its extensive commercial ventures (Thayer 2009), and the recent move to decentralize the management of public services provision (London 2008). Here the focus is on the perverse aspects of market-authoritarianism; elsewhere I discuss some of its progressive aspects.¹⁶

Institutions and rituals of market-Leninism

A remarkable feature of recent Vietnamese authoritarianism has been its gradual opening of new channels of political expression, albeit within the hard limits of democratic centralism. In this section I explore three fields of political activity – elections and 'democracy', press liberalization, and civil society and the question of autonomous political organization. Developments in these fields are illustrative of the character and limits of market-Leninism.

Elections and democracy by decree

In 1998 Viet Nam's government issued its first Decree on Grassroots Democracy (DGD). The decree was interesting for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the language of the decree conformed to the CPV's long-held self image as defender and promoter of democracy, albeit within the rubric of democratic centralism. On the other hand, the DGD was different. Most remarkably, the DGD's content evidenced Viet Nam's measured embrace of the rhetoric of 'good governance'. Here was a Decree issued by a Leninist state that nonetheless placed heavy emphasis on participation, transparency and accountability. However, the DGD was also replete with 'implementation measures' such as mandatory local meetings, public posting of budget data.¹⁷

In the mid-1990s, Viet Nam's state launched several rounds of administrative reform. Since the government promulgated the Decree on Grassroots Democracy (Decree 79/2003/NĐ-CP), the process of administrative reform has – according to Party and state sources – been more 'comprehensive and sweeping'. The emphasis of 'grassroots democracy' is part of a broader effort to modernize and promote more effective state administration. Indeed, Party documents on grassroots democracy employ rhetoric that is uncannily similar to the prescriptive analyses of 'good governance' issued by the World Bank. But just as the Bank employs the rhetoric of 'good governance' to promote market solutions so, too, is there reason to question the motives of 'grassroots democracy' in Viet Nam. It is especially the case when one observes its actual practice. In some localities, the 'implementation' of democracy has a decidedly formalist and even ritualistic character. Accountability mechanisms are announced but rarely exercised, owing to the real sense of foreboding the average Vietnamese feel in their encounters with state power (Hũ'u Vinh Nguyễn 2007; Viet Nam Net 2006).

On the other hand, the state remains active in promoting the notion of 'grassroots democracy' and has even promulgated new laws aimed to address deficiencies of the 2003 decree. On 21 April 2007, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly introduced an updated directive concerning 'grassroots democracy'. The new legislation is more detailed in its specifications of the responsibilities of local authorities and makes state cadres directly responsible for violations of the law. On the other hand, the new law is relatively silent on who should supervise the implementation of democracy and the vertical reporting mechanisms that accountability would require remain sparse and under-specified (Phạm 2006).

Another manifestation of the emerging emphasis on 'democracy' has been sustained efforts to reinforce the 'representative democracy'. A key aspect of these efforts has been the elevation (real or symbolic) of the National Assembly (NA) in the nation's political affairs. Historically – and structurally, still – the NA has been a rubber-stamp body charged with approving party decisions and providing appropriate legislation to the government for implementation. Viet Nam's constitution stipulates that NA is the supreme institution of state power empowered to regulate the organization and activities of the state agencies. Foreign observers of Viet Nam's politics have consistently emphasized the importance of the NA's increasingly high profile role. Analyses of Vietnamese politics typically cite the 'growing power' of the NA, noting, for example, the increasing intensity and publicity of NA's questioning of government officials. Another example is the large and often naïve coverage of Viet Nam's elections that appear in the foreign press, with participation rates of an incredible 99 percent.

As Gerhard Will (2007) has summarized, as many as 875 candidates contested and ran for 500 seats in the NA. 'The elected parliamentarians were younger and better qualified, more parliamentarians were full-time

parliamentarians and their working-conditions were to be improved'. However, Will (2007: 14) continues:

Looking closely at the results of these elections we are getting a less optimistic picture. It seems obvious that the control of the NA by the CPV has increased rather than decreased. Only one self-nominated candidate became a member of the parliament (compared to 3 members in 1997). The percentage of non-Party-parliamentarians was reduced from 14.6% (1997) to 8.5% in 2007. 72% of the parliamentarians were elected for the first time and therefore had no experience of the work ahead of them.

Press populism

Viet Nam today has roughly 600 newspapers and journals, some 60 television stations, and roughly 1,200 recognized journalists. All media in Viet Nam is state-owned and state managed, and the state's control extends (if incompletely) even into the blogosphere. But while the state (and Party) retains a monopoly on the press, Viet Nam's print and electronic media are providing much more varied and often critical coverage on a diverse array of matters. In fact, the press has achieved degrees of freedom in comparison to the 1970s and 1980s. Even as the media remains a mouthpiece of the state and Party (Lao Động 2008), the very existence of open debates about the 'proper' role of the press reflects the increasing willingness of some in the press to challenged entrenched power.

One of the notable developments in press liberalization concerns the coverage of corruption and scandals. Today, press coverage of such events is decidedly more liberal than in the past and journalists can more comfortably report on such cases, unless such cases extend into the upper ranks of the Party and state. In recent years, newspapers have played a particularly important role in the 'movement' against corruption and 'negativism'. This in some respects reflects the Party's approval, as the press remains an instrument of the state used to 'grasp' and 'combat' instability and negative phenomena in the localities (Hũu Vinh Nguyễn 2007). Perhaps the most striking example of the press's increasing brashness was their coverage of the infamous PMU-18 corruption case, which resulted in the sacking and long-term imprisonment of project management unit director Bùi Tiến Dũng after it was discovered that he bet (and lost) more than US\$1.8 million of official development assistance funds on foreign football matches.

According to many observers (including myself), the print media in Viet Nam is much freer than in China. This especially appears to be the case with respect to the internet, where criticism (even of state agencies) is transmitted swiftly and relatively (though as we will see below, by no means entirely)

free of the draconian arrangements observed in China. There is also vigorous debate in the Vietnamese blogosphere and a surprising degree of substantive exchange among journalists, readers, and state officials (Ngọc 2005; Hũ'u Vinh Nguyễn 2007). It is also the case that Vietnamese enjoy unfettered access to foreign news sources, including BBC, CNN and RFI. Such freedoms do not exist in China.

On the other hand, the scope of press freedoms should not be exaggerated. There remain robust mechanisms for state media control. Moreover, there are limits. The Law on Print Media establishes that the state-owned and managed press is the voice of the Vietnamese people. The law establishes the responsibilities and limits of media activities and maintains that the primary role of the media is to disseminate information (Hũ'u Vinh Nguyễn 2007). Corruption is pervasive, but even the increasingly liberal press can only talk about small-time cases. In May 2008, two prominent newspaper journalists, Nguyễn Văn Hải (of *Tuổi trẻ*) and Nguyễn Việt Chiến (of *Thanh Niên*) and were arrested on charges of having propagated false accounts concerning the aforementioned PMU-18 scandal. In October of 2008, Nguyễn Văn Hải pleaded guilty and was given a two year non-custodial sentence of 're-education', with lenience in sentencing being given in exchange for his 'cooperation' with the investigation. Nguyễn Việt Chiến was sentenced to two years in jail (Reuters 2008).

Civil society and political parties

In Viet Nam, understandings of the concept 'civil society' remain decidedly murky. This is in large part due to the practical difficulty, if not impossibility, of truly autonomous social organizations. Decades of war and post-war neo-Stalinism decimated the social spaces in which autonomous social organizations could occur. Correspondingly, tiny numbers of Vietnamese have participated in civil society organizations (Tiến and Lê 2007). The presence of the state in Vietnamese society is so overwhelming that civil society has yet to truly develop, wishes and imaginations of foreign observers notwithstanding. Some foreign observers treat wildcat strikes and sidewalk society as examples of civil society. In my own view, truly independent civil society organizations do not exist in Viet Nam, though other forms of quasi-autonomous organization are certainly thriving.

Although laws on associations have been passed, the legal bases for civil society activities are still lacking (Quốc 2007; Văn 2006). On the other hand, the Party's leadership has become gradually more open to the idea of quasi-independent social mobilization (Văn 2006), although the 'quasi' deserves emphasis here as the term 'social organizations' speaks to government-approved organization, all of which are directly or indirectly subordinated to the Party's agenda. Approved social organizations are allowed to do things like establishing charitable activities, fighting corruption

(within limits) and advancing the cause of national development (Quốc 2007; Tiến and Lê 2007).

An interesting feature of 'social organizations' in Viet Nam is that their acceptance and even promotion by the Party and state has coincided with the development of the market economy. The attractiveness of the idea of 'social organizations' dovetails with the Party's line on 'socialization' which, opposite to the western meaning of term, means that 'all society should contribute to the tasks of national development', but without any conflicts with state leadership. 'Socialization' in Viet Nam is in fact a policy-line promoted by the Party to fill the gap left by the state after it abandoned universalist social policy principles. Interestingly, the World Bank has established a 'civil society fund' in Viet Nam, albeit with a tiny projected endowment in 2008 of 560 million VND, or roughly US\$30,000 (World Bank 2008).

If we replace the term 'civil society organizations' with 'social organizations', rates of participation are impressive. 'Social organizations' include Party- and state-run mass organizations (such as the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, the official labour union, the official Women's Union, the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth League, and the Peasants' Association). By this count, according to the government, roughly some 60 million (out of a population of 85 million) Vietnamese participate in social organizations. Official statistics indicate that Viet Nam as of 2007 had some 530 non-governmental organizations and that such organizations have 150 representative offices across the country (Thanh Tuân Nguyễn 2007).

At the other end of the spectrum, an unorganized social organization is frowned upon, particularly when it takes on a political character. In recent years, Vietnamese citizens have grown increasingly confident in expressing political views without state authorization. By the mid to late 1990s, individuals and groups lodging complaints to the central government descended on central government agencies with increasing frequency. Complaints typically involve illegal practices by provincial- and district-level officials that are insoluble at those levels of governance. The most common cause concerns allegedly illegal instances of land acquisition. Unlike Singapore or China, a visitor to Viet Nam (and Hồ Chí Minh City in particular) may well happen upon an open street protest. While the scale and frequency of these events should not be exaggerated, the very fact that they are allowed to occur indicates the nature of authoritarianism in Viet Nam has its nuances.

Nor should the political liberties people can express themselves be exaggerated. When Viet Nam hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) talks in 2006, hundreds of citizens organized a group titled 'Bloc 8406', and signed public petitions calling for democracy and human rights. After APEC, which was widely viewed as a 'coming out party' for Viet Nam, authorities commenced to round up a number of signatories, sentencing several of them along with their lawyers to lengthy prison sentences.

A particularly intriguing series of incidents began in 2008, when China announced that it was establishing an administrative district on the disputed Paracel and Spratly Islands. When a spontaneous protest occurred outside the Chinese embassy in Ha Noi, polices observed but did not intervene. When the controversy dragged out, authorities warned university officials to make sure students were prevented from participating. The run-up to the arrival of the Olympic torch in Viet Nam saw police round up a number of outspoken critics of China's actions, including a blogger by the name of Nguyễn Văn Hải (no relation to the re-educated journalist), whose blog name 'điều cây refers to the portable bamboo 'plough' pipe that is a fixture of everyday life in much of the country. Hải established an informal grouping 'Club of Free Journalists'. On 9 October 2008, a court in Hồ Chí Minh City sentenced điều cây to two and a half years in prison.

Conclusion

Measured in terms of the longevity of its rule and its resilience in the face of adversity, the CPV is an extraordinarily successful political party. It spear-headed resistance against French and Japanese colonialism in the 1930s and 1940s and seized power upon Japan's surrender to declare Viet Nam's independence in 1945. Its initial independence bid denied, the Party during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s orchestrated improbable victories in major anti-colonial, civil and international wars. At the same time, the CPV oversaw the development of a formidable state apparatus and implemented soviet-inspired policies which fundamentally altered the principles and institutions governing routine social life. After 1975, the CPV extended this same governance template to southern reaches of the country. In response to the erosion of Viet Nam's planned economy in the 1980s, the CPV has embraced market-based strategies of accumulation while retaining Leninist political institutions.

In Viet Nam, changes in political institutions have been driven by competition within a stable but comparatively de-concentrated Party apparatus. The development of Vietnamese authoritarianism over the last two decades has not coincided neatly with mechanisms and five-year timetables of democratic centralism and Party congresses, but with the much messier waxing and waning of more or less powerful Party factions. These political struggles have unfolded horizontally – within the upper echelons of the Party – and vertically – between ruling central factions and local Party interests.

The party's economic policies and their resultant economic institutions and institutionalized economic outcomes have structured interests and incentives within the Vietnamese Party state and Vietnamese social life more broadly. These interests and incentives, in turn, shaped and structured subsequent Party activities. The 'strength' of the CPV's de-concentrated structure is evidenced by the fact that political and social changes (particularly in the economic sphere) more often occur from the bottom-up and not the

top-down. Political and economic reforms are more often responses to already existing practices or the result of pressures on the central government by various factions.

As a political and economic framework, market-Leninism has served the CPV with an ideology that placates dominant Party and state interests, while retaining a concentration of power within the state. Vietnamese market-Leninism's quasi-democratic elements act to mitigate tensions and contradictions of a market economy in which the CPV and state elite have gained much greater benefit than other political constituencies. Whether these tensions and contradictions can be resolved within the hard limits of 'democratic centralism' remains to be seen.

Contemporary commentators may ruminate over the CPV's various failures and inadequacies, or view the CPV and its rhetoric as backward (or even quaint). Be that as it may, the CPV is today arguably as strong as ever. Unlike other authoritarian parties, the CPV has and continues to enjoy broad legitimacy across large (if not all) segments of society. From its inception in exile, through decades of war and economic crises, and up until the present, the Party has consistently viewed itself as indispensable to the interests of Viet Nam's national development and social justice. The current image of the Party – in its own narcissistic eyes – still conforms to the socialist idealism present at its founding.

Notes

- 1 The CPV, originally the Indochina Communist Party and then the Worker's Party (after 1951), was established between 3 and 7 February 1930, in Hong Kong (Smith 1998). It was renamed as the CPV in 1976.
- 2 To my knowledge, the term market-Leninism was first used by *New York Times* journalists Nicolas Kristof and Cheryl WuDunn, in their 1994 book *China Wakes*. I arrived at the term independently and have sought to specify its conceptual and practical meaning.
- 3 See Tai (1992), Marr (1981, 1995).
- 4 For example, the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League (Việt Nam Thanh Niên Cách Mệnh Đồng Chí Hội), established in the late 1920s, served as the secretive core leadership group of the CPV.
- 5 'The Vietnam People's Army under Doi Moi' (1994) *Pacific Strategic Paper* no. 7, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- 6 For a detailed account, see Marr (1981, 1995).
- 7 See Marr (1995).
- 8 For more on Viet Nam's politico-administrative hierarchies, see Porter (1993), Phong and Beresford (1998), Kerkvliet (2005).
- 9 Socialist ideology holds that under any mode of production, the dominant class has such a position.
- 10 As Kornai (1992) notes, 'Such an ideology feeds into the cult of leadership that surrounds the man at the pinnacle of power, who is seen as "father of nation" and which justifies the centralization of power.'
- 11 For example, there was criticism of the costliness of military tactics, exemplified by the Tet Offensive, which is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of some 70,000 Viet Cong troops, including over 10,000 elite soldiers (Interview with a

Vietnamese military official, January 2008, Radio France International). In Viet Nam and internationally, there was criticism of the CPV's targeted killing of civilians.

- 12 For example, in two bouts of anti-'revisionism' campaigns (in 1963–64 and in 1967–68), where more radical elements of the party sought to quash calls for moderation in land reforms (see Quinn-Judge 2004).
- 13 Acrimony with China, which had mounted since before 1975, led to expulsion of Hoàng Văn Hoan from the Politburo, marking only the second such instance in the CPV's history (see Quinn-Judge 2004).
- 14 For example, provinces had an incentive to minimize their revenues targets while maximizing actual revenues once the three-year targets had been set.
- 15 Trần Độ, July 1999.
- 16 For example the considerable degree of redistribution across regions as well as some aspects of some social policies (see London 2008).
- 17 The Decree was accompanied by other related laws and policies aimed at enhancing participatory democracy, including stipulations for regular meetings between local elected officials and citizens, declarations of assets by local officials, public posting of budget information, and reforms of mechanisms for complaints and denunciations: see MoET and UNDP-UNESCO (1992), Hai (1991), and UNDP Vietnam.(2006).

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