

**Charles University in Prague**

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# **MASTER THESIS**

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## **Development and Changes of the Communist Party of Vietnam**

**Vývoj a proměny Komunistické strany Vietnamu**

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I hereby declare that I have elaborated this master thesis on my own using only the listed literature. I hereby declare that this thesis has not been used for another study or for obtaining another university degree.

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

In Mníšek pod Brdy on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012

## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the study of factionalism in the Communist Party of Vietnam and relates it to the recent problems of the Vietnamese regime. In order to determine the causes of the current crisis in Vietnam and introduce the environment in which Vietnamese elites operate, this study analyses both formal and informal structures of the political system of Vietnam and the principles of their functioning. This thesis criticizes misleading usage of faction as an analytical tool in the works on Vietnam and presents Andrew Nathan's factional model elaborated for China which is applied to Vietnam in a slightly changed form. We present evidence showing that the central political arena in Vietnam displays factional characteristics. Those findings are linked to the problem immobilism in Vietnam which is connected with instability caused by the absence of political initiatives and needed reforms (mainly the political one). Attention is also drawn to the need for the development of a theory of factionalism.

Key words: The Communist Party of Vietnam, factional theories, political system of Vietnam

## **Anotace**

Předmětem této práce je studium frakcionalismu ve vztahu ke Komunistické straně Vietnamu a současným problémům Vietnamského režimu. Práce ukazuje na příčiny současné krize ve Vietnamu a spojuje je s chováním centrálních elit které vykazuje znaky frakcionalismu. Analýza současného režimu ve Vietnamu s jeho formálními i neformálními strukturami a principy jeho fungování zároveň zasazuje elity do prostředí ve kterém jednají. Tato práce kritizuje nesprávné používání frakce jako analytického nástroje pro studium elit ve Vietnamu a představuje frakční model Andrew Nathana, který v lehce modifikované podobě aplikuje na Vietnam. Za použití mnoha příkladů práce dokládá, že centrální úroveň politiky ve Vietnamu vykazuje frakční charakteristiky. Tato zjištění jsou poté spojena s problémem politického zablokování (immobilism) a následnou politickou nestabilitou ve Vietnamu, která souvisí především s absencí politických iniciativ a potřebných reforem (zejména politické reformy). Pozornost je věnována také tématu prohloubení teorie frakcionalismu v nedemokratických režimech.

Klíčová slova: Komunistická strana Vietnamu, teorie frakcionalismu, politický systém Vietnamu

# Contents

Introduction.....	8
1. Political system of Vietnam.....	12
1.1 Typologization.....	12
1.2 Formal structures of the Vietnamese political system.....	15
1.3 Elections and casting of positions in Vietnam.....	19
1.3.1 Party central and local positions.....	19
1.3.2 Parliamentary elections.....	22
1.4. Party, state and society in Vietnam: Interaction of units.....	24
1.4.1 Analytical problems.....	25
1.4.2 Party-state relations.....	26
1.4.3 Party-state and society.....	29
1.4.4 The power of the people.....	31
1.5 Political system: Conclusions.....	33
2. A theory of factionalism.....	35
2.1 Elite politics and factional model.....	35
2.2 Faction: What is in the name of it?.....	36
2.3 Western studies of factionalism in democratic countries.....	37
2.4 Studies of the factionalism in China.....	40
2.4.1 A clientelist tie.....	41
2.4.2 Dittmer's definition of faction: goals of faction.....	42
2.4.3 Nathan's structural definition of faction.....	43
2.5 Nathan's factional model.....	45
2.5.1 Factor: Power limitations of factions.....	46
2.5.2 Factor: Clientelist ties.....	47
2.5.3 Factor: Size and shape of factional system.....	48
2.5.4 Limits and drawbacks of Nathan's model.....	49
3. Factionalism: A case of Vietnam.....	52
3.1 Clientelist ties and networks in Vietnam.....	52
3.2 Vietnamese conservatives and reformers/modernizers factions: policy positions.....	53
3.3 Application of Nathan's model to Vietnam.....	55
3.4 Factionalism and current crisis in Vietnam.....	64
Conclusion.....	66
Bibliography.....	69

## **Acronyms**

CCOM – Central Committee

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

CD – Christian Democrats

CPV – Communist Party of Vietnam

GCs – General Corporations

LDP – Liberal Democrats

NA – National Assembly

NASC – National Assembly Standing Committee

SOEs – State-owned Enterprises

VCP – Vietnam Communist Party

VFF – Vietnamese Fatherland Front

WPB – Ward Party Branch

## Introduction

After the Third Wave of Democratization<sup>1</sup> a few Communist regimes survived. Not surprisingly, they consequently attracted attention of political scientists even more than before. Many questions were raised and among the most important were those of the continuity and transitions of regimes and which part of regimes we should study: elites, institutions or society? Those questions still prevail and intuitively, the answer is ambivalent. All three entities should be studied given the complexity and interdependence of the subject matter. This thesis is focused on Vietnam. We will start at the political regime as a whole, but only to present a background for the main subject of the thesis – political elites in Vietnam.

More concretely, this thesis is primarily concerned with the study of factionalism in Vietnam in general and with the connection between the current problems and factional behavior of the central elites in particular. The impulse for a reflection on factionalism in Vietnam came from the relatively high number of studies on Vietnam which uses factional categories without a supporting theory. The authors of these studies try to name some phenomena using factional terms but without any theoretical model their conclusions and predictions often fail. Scholars who study neighboring China developed several models for the study of factionalism and in this thesis we will try to apply one of them – Andrew Nathan’s model – to Vietnam.

Vietnam is an interesting country to study because it is one of the few surviving Communist regimes that seems stable but in fact it is not as there are problems that could eventually pose a serious threat to the regime. It has been reported by some scholars and experts on Vietnam (Fforde 2012b, Koh 2012) that political elites are increasingly unable to govern the country, wildcat strikes of workers are numerous, corrupted politicians are not being dismissed, economic performance is declining, political processes do not deal with the pressing issues of everyday life of the society, and there are voices inside the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV)<sup>2</sup> that call for a political reform. Adam Fforde persuasively showed that one of the most serious problems is the crisis caused by the Party’s weak authority and the absence of the political reform (Fforde 2012a, Fforde 2012b). Inspired by his work we will focus on the study of the elites while trying to find out whether factionalism can help us to explain some of the causes of current problems in Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> Third Wave of Democratization is a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes during the 1970s and 1980s which was characterized as the wave of global democratic expansion.

<sup>2</sup> Official name of the Party in Vietnam is the Communist Party of Vietnam, it is usually abbreviated as CPV but sometimes also VCP (Vietnam Communist Party). Communist party of Vietnam (Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam) developed from the Indochinese Communist Party that was established in 1930.



This thesis will study factionalism both theoretically and practically while using the evidence found in Vietnam in the period from the late 1970s up to now. We will argue that the main problem of works on Vietnam rests in their effort to predict the future development on the grounds of the alleged strength of a concrete one faction (usually reformers or conservatives) while those factions are incorrectly based on political positions of their members (forgetting that the factional relations are based on clientelist ties in which a policy positions are rather burdens). We are convinced that factionalism can be a useful analytical tool when used correctly because it can show the dynamics of the conflict in a political arena and it can explain some aspects of elite's behavior. But at the same time we will be asking about the limits of the Nathan's factional model.

The name of this thesis is very general, originally, the intention was to elaborate the topic slightly different, but we modified it for the sake of the better result.

## **Overview of research on factionalism and literature**

Research on factionalism in Vietnam is highly underdeveloped. As was emphasized above, current studies on Vietnamese politics do not operate with the theory of factionalism, instead the category "faction" is used rather vaguely. This leads to inaccurate interpretations of the Vietnamese polity. Martin Gainsborough was perhaps the first scholar who criticized one frequent mistake: divisions of the politicians in Vietnam in terms of their alleged political positions. Works on China went much further but stayed at the level of central politics. Nevertheless, Andrew Nathan's "A Factionalism Model for CCP<sup>3</sup> Politics", Nathan's and Tsai's "Factionalism: A New Institutionalism Restatement" and Lowell Dittmer's "The Modernization of Factionalism in Chinese Politics" articles show two basic approaches to the study of factionalism: structural and cultural.

Literature used for this thesis can be divided into two basic groups: Materials written in Vietnamese language and English materials.

1. Vietnamese materials mainly consist of newspaper articles from various Vietnamese online newspapers, such as: VietnamNet, BBC Vietnam, Lao Động, Vn Express, Nhân Dân, Báo điện tử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam, etc.
2. English materials can be divided into several subgroups:
  - Scientific articles and books on the topics from the political theory and comparative politics. This group includes materials from the area of the study of non-democratic regimes represented by Jose Juan Linz, Barbara Geddes, Paul Brooker and others. We

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<sup>3</sup> Abbreviation for Communist Party of China

will use those materials in the first chapter of this thesis in which we introduce the political system of Vietnam.

- Scientific articles and books focusing directly on various aspects of the Vietnamese history, politics and economy are a major source of information for this thesis. Among the most important authors on the topic of this thesis are Adam Fforde, Martin A. Gainsborough and Carlyle A. Thayer. Articles by Adam Fforde are crucial for understanding Vietnam's economic development as well as some political aspects of Vietnam, above all the questions of power and authority, problem of weakness in the inner hierarchy of the Communist Party of Vietnam, etc. Martin Gainsborough in his book and articles made an important contribution to the understanding of the economic reform, the problem of state in Vietnam and related political issues, factionalism included. Carlyle Thayer's articles on Vietnam will serve as a basis for the paragraphs about society in Vietnam and Vietnamese political development. The works of those mentioned authors will be used in this thesis in both major parts: the first part about Vietnamese political regime and the second part about factionalism. Besides those authors there are many important case studies elaborated by the scholars on various aspects of Vietnamese state and society: David Koh, Edmund Malesky, Jörg Wischermann, Andrew Hardy, Zachary Abuza, etc.
- Scientific articles and books written directly on the topic of factionalism. In this category are two subgroups of materials we will use in this thesis: theoretical works on factionalism in democratic countries and theoretical works on factionalism in China. Fundamental book for the former subgroup is a book edited by Belloni and Beller. It summarizes the development of the study of factionalism and comprise articles of many experts on factionalism. Innovative approach of François Boucek towards factionalism (factionalism as dynamics) will also be important in our study. Substantial part of the second chapter of this thesis will draw from the important study of Andrew Nathan on factionalism in China. This work will be crucial for understanding the limits and advantages of factional theory as well as for the theory of factionalism in single-party regimes. Other important works on factionalism on China are those of Lowell Dittmer and Avery Goldstein.

## **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into three chapters: 1. Political System of Vietnam, 2. A Study of Factionalism and 3. Application of the study of factionalism to Vietnam.

In the first chapter we will introduce the political system of Vietnam while putting an emphasis on typology of the system and the relationships between the Party, state and society. Besides the understanding of the basic parts of the Vietnamese political system this section will provide a description of the environment in which political elites operate. This part will serve as a background to the study of the Vietnamese regime in general and limits of the study of factionalism in particular.

The second chapter will be primarily focused on the theory of factionalism. After a brief part about the development of the theoretical studies of factionalism in democratic countries we will proceed to the theory of factionalism that was tailored on China. Andrew Nathan's structural explanation of factions is of a crucial importance not only for this part but also for the whole thesis. In this chapter we will present both the advantages and the limits of his approach.

In the last chapter we will try to apply the theory of factionalism to Vietnam. In this empirical part we will test whether the Vietnamese regime shows signs of factional dynamics and whether the current crisis in Vietnam can be partially explained in terms of factionalism. We assume that it can but at the same time we call attention to Nathan's omission of local elites in his model.

## **Methodology**

This master thesis is based on the theoretical framework from the available literature that was introduced above. We will build the empirical part on the case studies and scientific articles on Vietnam written by Western scholars as well as on the resources published in Vietnamese language. The eventual limits of the empirical section thus stem from the absence of fieldwork in the form of interviews that would provide us additional evidence. However we believe that the data presented in the available literature and Vietnamese materials will cover the considerable part of the given topic and will be sufficient.

Nathan's structural explanation of factionalism based on a clientelist tie is a basic tenet of our work. Nathan elaborated an ideal model of the factional system which is characterized by fifteen key points. Those characteristics show how the existence of factions structures the political arena. As was written above, we will try to apply it to Vietnam. The presence or absence of Nathan's characteristics will uncover both whether Vietnam shows factional dynamics and what are the limits of the theory when it comes to explaining the elites behaviour.

# 1. Political system of Vietnam: Introduction

In this chapter we will introduce all of the basic components of the Vietnamese political regime and their relations – institutions of the Party and state as well as society. First, we will try to select the preferred typology for Vietnam and briefly discuss the problem of ideal types.<sup>4</sup> A second section will describe formal structures of the Vietnamese political system, including the Communist Party of Vietnam and its organs, state and its organs, mutual relationships of those entities and the role of elections in Vietnam. In the last part of this chapter we will address the problem of the relationship between the units of the regime. The purposes of this chapter are several. The most general one is to provide a comprehensive picture of the Vietnamese regime. While describing the system we will present interesting data and some of them will be useful (as the evidence) for the last chapter. But also, it is important to emphasize that elites (the main subject of this thesis) are a part of the environment which surrounds them and partially shapes their behavior.

In other words, the description of the “play-ground” in Vietnam will help us see the problem of leadership in general and factionalism in particular in a wider context. We will see that many of the paragraphs will support the view that the main problem of the current Vietnam rests on the relationship between central and local politics, the absence of political reform and overall immobilism.

In the first chapter of this thesis we will thus explore three areas of political system, those are: structure, actors and politics in Vietnam. By the notion structure are mean mainly institutional settings with both formal and informal side of it. A variety of actors and their importance for politics will be explored in the parts about state and society in Vietnam. The problem of the nature of politics and policy is penetrating all sections of the first chapter.

## 1.1 Typologization

Vietnam has developed into relatively open Communist regime that could be perhaps classified as “on the way towards soft authoritarianism”. The country opened to itself, came through the economical reforms, became less coercive, etc. This development is accompanied by various challenges that arise from the combination of factors: decline of ideology, openness, stronger civil society, increasing gap between the poor and the rich, problems of the inner hierarchy of the Party, etc. We will now briefly discuss typologies and try to find a convenient category for Vietnam.

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<sup>4</sup> Problem of ideal types will be important in the chapter about the limits of factional model.

Many political scientists made considerable efforts to conceptualize the variety of non-democratic regimes into the categories, that should help us to understand the identical and distinctive features of the groups of regimes and the patterns of their functioning. The classical division of Jose Juan Linz (2000) between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is still relevant and widely used but there are many works that go further and elaborate this basic tenet.

Paul Brooker in his book mentioned very important distinction between particular *forms of non-democratic government* (totalitarianism, authoritarianism, communism, fascism) epitomized by the answer on the question “*how* do they [the rulers] rule?” and the *type of regime* (military, party or personalist rule) connected with the question “who rules?” (Brooker 2000, p. 7).

In the party type of non-democratic regimes in particular (those are relevant for Vietnam), various typologies aimed to reflect the different important features and diversities inside the category. Robert C. Tucker’s category *movement-regime* was one of the early works that reacted on the rigidity in the application of the category “totalitarian” he put an emphasis on the difference between the various stages inside the Soviet Union itself (Bolshevism and Stalinism) and also more generally between fascist, communist and nationalist revolutionary movements<sup>5</sup> (Tucker 1961). His typology is focused on the origin of the regime in the revolutionary movement and ideological difference. The next step was done by Huntington and Moore in their work on the dynamics of established one-party regimes. Focusing on one-party regimes, they saw the importance in the origin, development and preserving of the regime (Huntington and Moore 1970). Later the question of the stability and maintenance of the regimes became the central with the findings of Barbara Geddes (1999).

The problems of typologization of the Vietnamese political system (and in fact any political system) come from a very general debate about the role of social sciences and their methodologies. With respect to the classification of systems the main problem rests in ideal types: “...they may be highly suggestive, yet they present two characteristic problems. First, they aggregate several variables, tending to obscure the relationships among those variables and leading to the knees for unspecifiable circumlocutions such as “elective affinities” between variables. Second, the relationship between empirical reality and the ideal type becomes problematic: the latter is neither a hypothesis to be tested against the facts nor an empirical generalization based upon them” (Remmer and Merckx 1982, p. 7). The result can be

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<sup>5</sup> His category’s name is revolutionary mass-movement regime under single-party auspices.

that ideal-types can overshadow the important details that make given regime different from the similar regimes.

This is well illustrated in an article written by Regina Abrami, Edmund Malesky and Yu Zheng: “Over the past year, Chinese newspapers have been filled with commentary on changes in the Vietnamese polity, which they deem to be more democratic. The discussion has been so intense that Chinese officials actually banned further discussion of the topic. The discussions pose an intriguing puzzle for comparative politics as; as none of the indices of governance currently available are able to adequately account for variation that Chinese journalists deem to be so important. The inability of these scales to capture within-typology variation is an important lacuna in our understanding of the behavior of authoritarian regimes” (Abrami et. al. 2007, p. 1).<sup>6</sup>

All that was written above is far from saying that typologies are useless, in many ways they provide a valuable help for comparative researchers, but we have to have in mind that ideal types have their limits: First, they can divert our attention from the significant yet liminal details that constitute the specific character of the given regime. Second, our analysis could end up as an effort to try to make the regime fit the given category. This paragraph is important because in the chapter about factionalism we will use ideal model of factional system and we have to be aware of its limits.

In majority of works Vietnam would be classified on the basis of the form of government as authoritarian (Hadenius and Teorell 2006; Geddes 1999; Brooker 2000) or perhaps hybrid communist (Brown 2000) and as a classic single-party, or one-party regime on a basis of the type of regime (Brooker 2000; Huntington and Moore 1970). With respect to Vietnam, we prefer category “an aspiring soft authoritarian”<sup>7</sup> or “soft authoritarian” form of government (because the regime opened itself, went through the economic reform but still it continues to repress some part of the society). As a type of regime we prefer Giovanni Sartori’s category party-state system (Sartori 2005, p. 40) because it reflects the importance of the interaction of the units in the system. This category has one essential advantage: it doesn’t forget that the Party in the system is not the sole player, logically when we use word “system” we have to have more than one unit. A system that can be defined as an interaction of its

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<sup>6</sup> The three authors focused on the vertical and horizontal accountability and showed important differences between Vietnam and China. They concluded that there appears to be greater horizontal accountability in the Vietnamese system in three specific ways: the power of the Central Committee of the Party over the Politburo; less party infiltration into the government apparatus, especially over civil service appointments and economic policy; and the slightly more prominent role of the Vietnamese parliament to query government ministers on television. In respect with vertical accountability, Vietnam also ended up as more accountable in comparison with China (Abrami, et al. 2007, p.34). More on this topic will be presented in the chapter about formal structures of Vietnamese polity.

<sup>7</sup> This term was used by Denny Roy in his 1994 article.

units, fits to the Vietnamese polity, because it puts an emphasis on the interaction between the Party and state. As Sartori writes: "... party and state are – vis-à-vis the population at large – two mutually sustaining and reciprocally reinforcing agencies. Whether it is the state that serves the party or, conversely, the party that serves the state, whatever the prevalence and the major vector of interaction, the fact remains that the (consolidated) one-party polities distinctly lack a party system precisely because they are party-state systems" (Sartori 2005, p. 40).

That says we should care about all the entities and their relations when we want to understand the regime as a whole. In relation with the study of factions this means that factionalism *itself* (study of the elites) can never explain the development in the regime.

## **1.2 Formal structures of the Vietnamese political system**

Formal institutions in the party-state authoritarian regimes are often very misleading structures to study, because their functions are in practice limited by the existence of parallel super-ordinate structures in the Communist parties. But in gradual opening-up of the regime, as it is the case in Vietnam, it is important to follow the changes or continuities as well as their interactions with the Party structures.

The Vietnamese political system can be for the sake of simplicity divided into two basic parts. The Communist Party of Vietnam and the state (executive, legislative, judicial branches and military). A special place has Vietnam Fatherland Front<sup>8</sup> (VFF), (Mặt trận Tổ quốc Việt Nam) an umbrella organization that associates Vietnamese mass organizations. The political system is organized according to the principal of "democratic centralism" in which central structure at the top of the hierarchy is repeated in the local structures of polity, and 4 administrative levels are hierarchized: the lower level is accountable to the higher level.

Communist Party of Vietnam has the monopoly of power in Vietnam. According to the Article 4 of the 1992 constitution: the CPV, the vanguard of the Vietnamese working class and loyal representative of the interests of the working class, the working people and the whole nation, who adheres to Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought, is the force assuming leadership of the State and society (1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Chapter 1, Article 4). Since the interconnection of system is a crucial question for the study of regime, more detailed account will be reported in following parts of this chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> Vietnam Fatherland Front (Mặt Trận Tổ Quốc Việt Nam) founded in 1977 is an umbrella organization that associates mainly mass organizations in Vietnam (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth League..but also CPV itself).

Three central positions in Vietnam are usually called *troika* and comprise of Secretary General of the CPV, the President, and the Prime Minister.

The highest organ of CPV is the National Congress (Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc). Congress convenes every five years,<sup>9</sup> it reviews the results of the realization of resolution of past 5 years performance, it decides the future line (đường lối) and policy (chính sách) of the Party, it supplements Party program (cương lĩnh) and Party statutes (điều lệ) if needed, it elects the Central Committee (CCOM), (Ban Chấp hành Trung ương) and it decides on the number of members of CCOM (Statutes of the Communist Party of Vietnam 2010-2015, Article 15). Martin Gainsborough in his significant work on Party Congresses in Vietnam from 2007 showed that formal organs as the National Congress of the CPV worth studying but we have to be careful about what exactly we focus on. He pointed out several important issues: Party Congresses matter and should be studied, but differently than how they have been studied so far. He writes: “To date, most academic analysis of Vietnam’s party congresses has focused on the presumed *policy* significance of a particular congress, with the analysis itself heavily based on extrapolation from leadership change and a reading of the Political Report.<sup>10</sup> This is often referred to as Kremlinology or Ba Đình-ology<sup>11</sup> in Vietnamese case” (Gainsborough 2007, p. 5). He also suggests that instead of focusing on the policy significance we should view them first and foremost as occasions when access to patronage and political protection are circulated and then to consider how political outcomes emerge as a result of this (Gainsborough 2007, p. 6). For the study of factionalism this approach has important consequences, because it diverts our attention from the formal to informal sphere, where policy positions of leaders are secondary. We will focus on this point later in the chapter about factionalism.

At the central level, permanent Party institutions are 1. Political Bureau (Politburo), (Bộ Chính trị) – official executive organ of the Executive Committee of the CPV in Vietnam, including top officials from the Party, Government and Military (currently has 14 members); 2. Secretariat responsible for managing CPV finances and the bureaucracy and; 3. Central Committee (currently has 175 full and 25 alternate members), being considered a legislative organ. Abrami and her colleagues compared relation between the Politburo and CCOM in Vietnam and China. They observed that there is an actual difference between the role of

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<sup>9</sup> The last National Congress XI was held between January 12 and January 19, 2011. 1377 delegates participated.

<sup>10</sup> The Political report is a key policy document that accompnies a party congress. It reviews the country’s political and economic performance over the past five years and sets out objectives for the next five years. The national Political report is compiled centrally drawing, at least formally, on inputs from the Party at different levels (Gaisborough, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Ba Đình is a district in Hanoi that is said to be a political centre of Vietnam, all the major government offices and embassies are located there.



Vietnamese and Chinese CCOM. Writing about Vietnam in particular, they found out that in relation to the Politburo, Vietnamese CCOM since 1980s extended its power. This process culminated with CCOM able to actually veto Politburo recommendations (Abrami et al., 2007, pp. 8 - 28).

Statutes (2010-2015) of the CPV describe the organization of the Party at the local level. The lowest level structures (3 and more Party members) are party cells (chi bộ), or if they have 30 and more members, they are called the Committee of a Party (đảng bộ) (Article 21). Party cells at the lowest level are the starting point for selection of national congress delegates. David Koh reports: The party cell elects its leadership annually. When a national congress of the CPV is to be held every 5 years, the party cell starts the process by holding a congress of its own and votes for a number of candidates to attend the WPB<sup>12</sup> congress, which is the next higher echelon (Koh 2006, p. 45). The hierarchical structure is repeated again in case of state institutions.

National Assembly (NA), (Quốc Hội) is a formal legislative body of Vietnam with 500 deputies. The NA has two types of membership: 1. Full-time members (đại biểu chuyên trách) – currently 154, and 2. Non-full-time members (đại biểu không chuyên trách) – currently 346, the latter are present in Hanoi only twice a year (for approximately two weeks) when NA meets as a whole. In the rest of the time, the agenda is mainly up to the NA Standing Committee (NASC), (Ủy ban Thường vụ Quốc hội) – the permanent body of the NA. Seventeen members of the NASC, full-time members of the NA and chairmen of the ten NA committees<sup>13</sup> play the major role in preparation of the legislation that is approved at the two sessions of the NA.<sup>14</sup>

According to Abrami and her colleagues, National Assembly in Vietnam increased its political activity in 3 distinct ways: strengthened its legislative role, increased public votes on officials to express dissent, and opened up their activities to media (Abrami et al. 2007, p. 23). In Vietnamese media among the most cited examples of strengthening the position of the NA were: rejection of the of Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng's proposal to build a high-speed rail line between Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City from 19 June, 2010. The plan was derailed when only 209 of the 493 deputies voted for the project in a ballot that required majority support (Steiglass 2010); Interpellation of the premier Nguyễn Tấn Dũng at the meeting of the

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<sup>12</sup> WPB – abbreviation for Ward Party Branch, the branch of the CPV at the Ward level.

<sup>13</sup> 10 committees of the NA are: Foreign Affairs Committee; Science, Technology and Environment Committee; Economic Committee; Legislative Committee; Law Committee; Defense and Security Committee, Budget and Finance Committee; Culture, Education and Youth Committee; Social Affairs Committee; and Ethnic Affairs Committee.

<sup>14</sup> Lists of members of various NA organs are available on the Vietnamese language web page of the National Assembly: <http://dbqh.na.gov.vn/thong-tin-bau-cu/XIII.aspx>.

National Assembly on 24 September, 2010 (Binh Nguyên 2010). A group of deputies was convinced, that the Prime Minister should take the responsibility for the problems and the rising debt of Vinashin (Vietnam Shipbuilding Industry Group) – state owned company that found itself close to bankruptcy due to the failures of the management. One of the deputies Nguyễn Minh Thuyết from Lạng Sơn province even called for the vote of confidence and the establishment of a special commission of inquiry, but this proposal was rejected. (*BBC VN*, 12 November 2010); Last but not least issue connected with live discussion in the National Assembly is bauxite mining in the Central Highlands area in Vietnam which involves a Chinese firm Chinalco (Than Pham 2009). Bauxite mining raised wide protests throughout the country, given the strategic position of the Central Highlands and complicated relationship with China.

In the following section we will discuss the significance of the mentioned cases, we will see, that the interpretation of this progress deserves an attention.

It is interesting to consider the position of the central government in Vietnam in terms of its relationship with the Party. Comparing Vietnam and China, Abrami, Malesky and Zheng also dealt with this relationship. They conclude: In sum, the CCP has designed mechanisms assuring a purely delegative relationship between party and government in China that doesn't exist in Vietnam, where the Prime Minister has the clear policy making power that is independent of the Party, cannot be overruled by VCP units at lower levels, and is reinforced by party status and patronage (Abrami et al. 2007, p. 22). Others analyses go further and stress that the Party General Secretary in current Vietnam is seen as subordinate to the Prime Minister (Fforde 2012a, p. 178).

On local levels, both National Assembly and government have its offices, People's Councils and People's Committees respectively. Adam Fforde reports: In Vietnam, each level of state administration in the province, district and commune has their respective People's Council and People's Committee, with the People's Committee being the executive agency of the People's Council at the level (Fforde 2003, pp. 11-12). In 2009 the Government started to experiment with the abolition of People's Councils at the level of district and ward in ten provinces and cities in Vietnam to simplify the administrative apparatus. According to the Communist Review the experiment was successful (Tuan 2011), but there were voices that express their worries, especially from the NA.

The last structure to mention is Vietnamese Fatherland Front – an umbrella organization that groups registered mass organizations. Among the largest mass organizations are Women's Union, the Youth Union, the Farmer's Association, the Association of Veterans

and Vietnam General Confederation of Labor. Irene Nørlund notes that public sector employees are automatically members or at least one mass organization (Nørlund 2007, p. 74). Mass organizations were always considered the Party's tool for organizing and mobilization of the people but in current discussions, it appears more and more interesting question how those organizations could become involved in civil society action<sup>15</sup> (Wischerman, 2010) or gain some degree of autonomy.

Structure of Vietnamese polity can be judged from different angles. It appears that in comparison with China, Vietnam has environment with stronger institutional rules and more stable patterns of accountability. On the other hand, all the written improvements should be treated carefully and in reference to the concrete political outcomes. In following part about the Party-state relation, we will address the problem of Vietnamese polity from a different perspective and we will see the limitations. But before that there is another topic to discuss – the elections and casting of important positions in the system. Without this, the picture of formal and informal structures of polity would be incomplete.

### **1.3 Elections and casting of positions in Vietnam**

In the regimes where a single party holds monopoly on power, elections are usually considered to be just a democratic facade. Important functions in the party-state are not elected, but decided by the Party on the basis of membership and position inside the Party apparatus. Those processes are closely tied to the question of elite's struggle for power (often based on patronage) and not un-frequently connected with the factional vocabulary. What is the role of elections in Vietnam?

#### **1.3.1 Party central and local positions**

Elections and casting of positions inside the Party are conducted by the Party statutes. In the Party hierarchy in Vietnam secretary general is the top position. It is elected every five years by the new Central Committee from the members of the newly elected Politburo (Article 17). Every five years in the pre-congress period, newspapers are flooded with predictions on who will be the next secretary general, usually the second two positions of troika are practically decided at the same time (later reaffirmed by the National Assembly). The predictions about the succession are usually based on the estimation, given the certain

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<sup>15</sup> Civil society action is an analytic tool used by Jörg Wischermann for Vietnam, it refers to the civil society as an adjective instead of noun and certain modes of action and interaction different from power relations, exchange or market activities or family and personal relations.

degree of institutionalization of the process. The key indicators are age, rank in the Party hierarchy, and place of origin.

Carlyle Thayer reports: Party convention dictates that in order to be qualified for election as a party secretary general the candidate must have served a full term on the Political Bureau. There are also age restrictions but these are flexible in practice (Thayer 2010, p. 2). Constraints on age are flexible but the usual age of retirement is over 65. According to the ideal model, top three positions should be distributed between three regions in Vietnam: North, Centre and South, but it is often the case that those functions are distributed between the Northerners and the Southerners as it is in current tenure.<sup>16</sup> Prior to the last National Party Congress in January 2011, direct election of the secretary general was discussed but at the end it was not applied (according to the media it was decided by the Congress' delegates). It is important to note that in the context of the Party apparatus direct election means election by the delegates of the Party Congress (Đại hội) instead of by the elected Executive committees (Ban Chấp hành Trung ương at central level or cấp uỷ at local levels), not election directly by the people (in the context of state administrative units direct election means election by the people, see below).

At the local level, however, experimentation with direct elections (again elections by the delegates of the local party congresses) of the party secretaries (bí thư – sometimes translated as chief/chair of the people's committee or mayor) was officially supported by the authorities. During the preparation of the Party National Congress in 2011, ten provinces have officially been selected<sup>17</sup> to pilot the direct election of party secretaries of local Committees of the Party (đảng bộ): Đà Nẵng, Lạng Sơn, Lai Châu, Thái Bình, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Ngãi, Ninh Thuận, Kon Tum, Bến Tre, Sóc Trăng (*Báo Lao Động Điện Tử*, 16 September 2010). This experiment was also realized in the scale 15-20% at the level of the districts (cấp huyện). According to the article published in the Party's online newspaper, direct election of party secretaries is the experiment that should expand democracy in the Party, among the chosen districts were for ex.: District Phú Văn in the City Thừa Thiên Huế, district Kim Bôi in the Hoa Bình province, District 7 in Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, district Đăk Đoa in Gai Lai province and district Tương Dương in Nghệ An province. Campaigns were according to reports successful but the central direct election of the party secretary general was finally not put into the Party Statutes (Trung Anh, 8 July 2010).

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<sup>16</sup> Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng and President Trương Tấn Sang are southerners and secretary general Nguyễn Phú Trọng is a northerner.

<sup>17</sup> Politburo selected the places for the experiment.

As was written above direct election in the context of party secretaries doesn't mean election by the people but election by the party congresses. For better illustration, in numbers this means following: Từ Liêm district in the capital Hanoi has about 550.000 inhabitants, from that number 9.955 are party members that were represented in the district party congress by 167 people. Those 167 people directly elected party secretary Lê Xuân Trường and 43 new members of the executive committee at the local level (cấp uỷ) (Khánh Linh 2010). Under the old system new party secretary would be elected by the executive committee. What is concerning experimenting with direct elections, the most cited example both in the media and by experts on Vietnam is Đà Nẵng, Vietnam's third largest city. Its local party congress had directly elected the municipal party chief for the first time in 2010.<sup>18</sup> By giving the party congress the vote instead of the executive committee, the number of electors appears to have been expanded about six times to about 300 (Coghill 2010). The personality that is connected with this progress is Nguyễn Bá Thanh, mayor of the city. On 24 February 2012 he talked with more than four thousand officials from all levels of the city. According to VietnamNet, three major issues were on the programme: chair of the people's committee (mayor) will be elected directly by the people; the candidates have to convene constituents by their action plans; and elected chair has the right to select vice chairs. This is what is called "Đà Nẵng mayor model". Original plan counted with the candidacy in which Đà Nẵng Party Committee will recommend two candidates and Fatherland Front one, but this lack of candidates was criticized so the new plan for the future consist of the proposal that any Vietnamese citizen who meets the conditions of the municipal People's Council election can run for the mayor position (Hao 2012).

It will be seen in the near future whether the direct election will be spread into all localities or even into the central level to increase intra party democracy. Experiments like this are often implemented gradually and rather slowly and their importance shouldn't be overestimated. The centre has the final word and this experiment can be easily forgotten with the explanation that the country is still not prepared or with the reference to the negative impact of corruption. Communist Party of Vietnam declares that the direct elections should strengthen the democracy within the Party and enhance the position of the heads of party committees (Tân Thảo 2009). But by allowing direct elections in the localities the center of the Party can follow the goal to generally strengthen the position of the Party Committees at the expense of the local People's Councils (especially when there are debates about abolishing of the People's Councils on the district level). This step of the central government

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<sup>18</sup> Đà Nẵng Party standing committee approved the plan on direct election in 2008 and submitted it to the National Assembly and Government for consideration, but this plan was in 2008 rejected.

shows how the centre only very slowly and distrustfully tests what will happen if it gives more and more power to local levels. The main problem rests in the loosing of control, this observation will be very important for the part about factionalism and the role played by the local elites.

### **1.3.2 Parliamentary elections in Vietnam**

National Assembly elections in Vietnam are according to the law held every five years.<sup>19</sup> Elections are direct (by the people) and all candidates are nominated through a vetting process known as “five gates”<sup>20</sup> Limitations on candidates in Vietnam are thus subjected to the vetting process, however, after the candidate list is drawn up, the party-state has less control over who is elected (Gaisborough 2005, p. 68). According to the new study of Malesky and Schuler from January 2012, those constraints on candidacy are of the primary importance. They found out that vote share in Vietnam is not associated with promotion to the NA or government leadership posts and leaders are in large predetermined prior to the election: “Our analysis shows that the criteria the regime uses for selecting leaders in the assembly is based on how they were nominated. That is, candidates who were nominated by the central institutions receive the leadership positions regardless of their relative performance in the election, where they were elected, or their personal background. This shows that the decision on which delegates are best suited to assume leadership roles is made well before the citizenry weighs in” (Malesky and Schuler 2012, p. 4).

Barbara Geddes writes that in the authoritarian regimes elections do not choose leaders and policies and asks what function then do they perform? She hypothesizes that elections help to solve intra-regime conflicts and overwhelming victories at the polls demonstrate to potential civilian rivals that they have little hope of defeating the incumbent, and that therefore it does not make sense to go into the opposition. Supermajorities and high turnout election outcomes signal that citizens remain acquiescent. Competitive electoral campaigns also help to keep local branches of the party accountable (they are trying to win over the

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<sup>19</sup> Malesky and Schuler note that voting system in Vietnam is multiple seat, multiple vote plurality (or Bloc Voting): Vietnam uses a block voting, where each district has between four and six candidates in competition for two to three seats, and each voter has as many votes as there are seats. This system means that even weaker centrally nominated candidates should win, because they were significantly more likely to be placed by provincial electoral commission in districts with lower candidate-to-seat ratios. Thus, they only had to defeat two out of four of the locally nominated candidates (Malesky and Schuler 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Those are: 1. NA sets the targets (how many ethnic minorities, women, non-party members..), 2. relevant bodies nominate candidates according to their allotted target and self-nominations, 3. provincial and central branches of the Fatherland Front organize meetings to create a preliminary list of candidates based on nominations, 4. meetings with candidates’ neighbors and co-workers (candidate must have at least 50% support), 5. finalization of the list of candidates by the VFF (Malesky and Schuler 2008).

independents or over the other local officials). The overall result should be regime persistence (Geddes 2006).

Edmund Malesky and Paul Schuler in their study in 2008 tested Geddes's hypotheses in Vietnam's National Assembly elections. They affirmed that Vietnam uses elections to generate supermajorities and high turnouts but they didn't find evidence for the hypothesis that elections hold local officials accountable (interestingly this is in accordance with Adam Fford's account of the weakness in the Party hierarchy).

High turnout was easy to generate, because voting in Vietnam is required by the law. Nevertheless there is an evidence of an effort to increase the turnout during the 2007 elections, for ex. by proxy voting (one member of the family voted for several other people).

Supermajorities in Vietnam are achieved by subtle forms of electioneering instead of more dangerous heavy-handed electoral interventions. Two forms of electioneering in Vietnam are: differences in the number of candidates running among electoral districts. Candidates selected for 5/3<sup>21</sup> districts had a higher success rate. Another way how to engineer victory would be to place regime candidates against easily defeatable opposition (Malesky and Schuler 2008, pp. 10-15).

The accountability of local officials is constrained by the setting of the system in Vietnam. Malesky and Schuler report that local officials make up the provincial election boards, who are involved in placing the candidates within each election district. Rather than ensuring accountability, the election rules actually provide greater opportunity for local officials to avoid accountability through selective placement of local champions (Malesky and Schuler 2008, p. 21). Competition with the independents is debatable because from 236 self-nominated candidates many were party members and many withdrew their names after apparent pressure, just 30 of self-nominees made it to the final ballot (Malesky and Schuler 2008, pp. 22-24).

Another theory tested by Malesky and Schuler in Vietnam was Blaydes and Lust-Okar "rent-distribution" theory, according to which voters vote on the basis of the likeness of the candidate to deliver the goods. Vietnam data partially supported those hypothesis in a sense that central candidates (who are more likely to deliver rents) were preferred by the voters<sup>22</sup> (Malesky and Schuler 1998, p. 30).

Interestingly, outcomes of the elections in Vietnam seem to be relatively democratic on the level of the leaders of the villages despite the fact that village election's formal prescriptions show neo-Stalinist features. (Fforde 2009).

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<sup>21</sup> In Vietnam there are three types of electoral districts: with a 5/3, 4/2 and 6/3 candidate-to-seat ratio.

<sup>22</sup> However they also stress that incumbents were more successful than the newcomers.

The answer on the question put by various political scientists and experts on Vietnam “Why do the authoritarian regimes hold elections?” is interesting for the study of Vietnamese system and its development. According to Malesky and Schuler, Vietnamese relatively competitive NA elections (being a costly event) can have several purposes: The Party can gain the information on the popularity of the candidates. By producing supermajorities and high turnouts it holds the opponents in check and people acquiescent. Last but not least Party may try to show that it is willing to democratize the system by visible but in effect not threatening changes. But potentially, elections could represent a way how to gradually change the settings. Being a top member of the National Assembly in Vietnam is certainly very important function to hold because it brings money. Not only the Chairman<sup>23</sup> and deputy chairs of the NA but also the Chairmen and deputy chairs of the NA Committees.<sup>24</sup> Given the evidence, those positions are in majority centrally nominated and this means relatively high degree of commitment to the Party. Thus if we want to compare the relative importance (for the change in Vietnam) of Party elections and National Assembly elections, the former seem to be more significant. In the cities/provinces, districts and grassroots where direct elections of People’s Committees were held, it was welcomed by both the population and local leaders. Time will show whether Đà Nẵng model will become a standard. For the study of elites and factionalism this means again that we should turn our attention on the problem of the relation between central and local Communist politicians. We tend to think that where are the resources and spoils (positions and functions) there are also factions.

#### **1.4 Party, state and society in Vietnam: Interaction of units**

In the following part we will go through all of the layers of the regime in Vietnam and watch the interactions between them. Vietnamese polity is multilayered system, the basic parts of the system comprise of party, state and society. At the top of this system lies the political power and we have to watch its flows and channels as well as how this power is transformed into the political outcomes. This complicated and interdependent system deserves more attention, because it can help us to look beyond the frontiers of formal policy which will be in turn important for the study of leadership.

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<sup>23</sup> The Chairman of the NA is a member of Politburo.

<sup>24</sup> As was already said, NA in Vietnam has 10 basic committees plus one Standing Committee, together 55 chairs and deputy chairs, see table 1: Committees for the 12th Vietnam National Assembly (Malesky and Schuler 2012, p.16).



### 1.4.1 Analytical problems

Vietnam is by some seen as an example of the Communist country that thanks to the introduction of the economic reforms and diversification of foreign policy keeps pace with the dynamics of the region. On the other hand, others write about Vietnam as about Leninist and neo-Stalinist state (Fforde 2009). There are many stereotypes and labels that are used in Western research and those can lead towards the biased or misrepresented conclusions.

The first problem is introduced in Adam Fforde's work about the ontology of the Vietnamese state (Fforde 2009). According to him the absence of a stable ontological definition of the state in Vietnam leads to contradictions in research studies on Vietnam. He argues that in many Western research works there is a shared assumption, that relations between analytical categories and observables are relatively unproblematic. He shows that there is no stable relationship between the term "state" and its object – what policy operates upon (Fforde 2009, p. 10). The primary problem rests in our way of thinking about things. That is to say, when thinking about particular problems of Vietnamese polity, it is important to differentiate between "what we think the terms mean" and what are their actual meanings in local context. Part of this problem is to separate what formal policy is (what official documents says) from what is actually happening "in the terrain". For better understanding, Adam Fforde address this problem by exploring the Vietnamese term "cơ sở" ("grassroots") and what this term suggests about the relation between rulers and ruled. He reports that in official documents "grassroots communities" are better translated as references to the base of an apparatus or in rural areas sub-structures as Party, State and Mass Organizations at commune level or below, but when this is used as a guide to elections at grassroots, it don't necessarily describe what happens in many villages where we can increasingly see contestation process that is in contrast with outer Leninist or neo-Soviet appearance of the system (Fforde 2009, pp. 12-21). Another example can be already mentioned direct election (bầu cử trực tiếp) that in case of the election for the chief of Party Committee means election by the party congress while in case of the National Assembly it means election directly by the people. Those ideas are for our thesis very important because the problems with factionalism are similar. When we think about faction, we usually have in mind some concrete notion what is faction, but if we try to define it we find ourselves in problems. In the last chapter of this thesis we will show that we should indeed care about those things. Now we will show how narratives differ in the case of Vietnamese economical reform, it will support the ideas above.

Martin Gainsborough as well as Adam Fforde draws attention to this problem. According to Gainsborough reform lens put the emphasis on change, but in Vietnam the

continuity is important. Reform is usually seen as a result of policy change introduced by Vietnam's elite, but in Vietnam it was not indeed the case (reforms are interpreted as a continuity of illegal practices that were present in Vietnam long before the official launch of reforms in 1986, year 1986 saw just the retroactive approval in the form of official policy line). Gainsborough also presents one argument that is significant for the study of factionalism in Vietnam, it is this one: "...the inappropriateness of reform as a window onto Vietnam extends to assumptions about what constitutes politics, which is itself bound up with the use of the word 'reform'. Here the tendency is to view politics in terms of disputes between rival factions grouped around distinct policy positions: traditionally the 'reformer' and 'conservative' language, which, the record shows, Vietnam scholars have found hard to jettison despite its many problems" (Gainsborough 2010, p. 7). This account touches the problem of factionalism. We will see in the next chapters that faction as an analytical category has significant limitations that stem from the several possible definitions of the faction, but above all from its frequent associating with the *policy*. We will deal with this topic in the third chapter.

Having those problems in mind we will now proceed to the analysis of party-state-society relations.

### **1.4.2 Party-state relations**

Samuel Huntington wrote that if we want to talk about single-party system, we have to consider the relative strength of the Party vis-à-vis other institutions and groups in the system, those can be: personalistic actors such as charismatic political leader; traditional actors, such as the church or the monarchy; bureaucratic actors, like the state administration, the police and the military; parliamentary actors, such as national assemblies, local government bodies, and associations; and functional social-economic groups, such as peasants, workers, managers, technical specialists, and intellectuals (Huntington and Moore 1970, pp.6-7). Sartori would certainly object to the term "single-party system" as being fallible, but the idea of interactions between the Party and a variety of actors is essential part of the Vietnamese political system. If we try to address the question of the linkage between Party and state (put aside the society), we have immediately face to the problems, the reasons are following: First of all it is not clear what we mean by the state. Second related to the first one, there are no clear boundaries between state and Party. Third, if we narrow state to the institutions, which is itself problematic, there are problems too: representatives of the state apparatus are in majority Party members who are bound to the Party for their positions, state institutions often

have officially many powers on the paper, but in reality they are not visible in the form of political outputs, etc.

What can Vietnamese narratives tell us about the relationship between the Party and state?

First picture of Vietnamese party-state relation is presented in an interview, published on VietNamNet on 16 January 2007 with the title “Resolving the relationship between the Party and state”. Vietnamese journalist Khánh Linh asked [at the time] deputy chairman of National Assembly office Nguyễn Sỹ Dũng about relations between the Party and state in a context of discussions about Vietnamese polity. According to Mr. Dũng Vietnamese model is overall designed as a parliamentary model. In that model the party that has the majority is the party that forms the government, but the difference is that in a Vietnam head of the party doesn’t hold the Prime Minister’s post. In his words, in the Vietnamese model the Party and state (both parliament and government) stick together in organic union which in turn eliminates the conflict. He also stressed that even closer connection between the Party and state would have the positive effect<sup>25</sup> (Khánh Linh 2007). What we can notice at this characterization is that from this official political point of view, the debate about system of government can be held, discussions on the power of government and the National Assembly are relevant, but at the end of the day unity and the absence of conflict are more important, party and state should stick together. In the interview the emphasis is placed on institutional component of the state (state institutions) and the Party is seen as inseparable part of it.

Another part of the picture was provided in the review of the book published in 2009: “Nhà nước trong hệ thống chính trị ở Việt Nam hiện nay” (State in current Vietnamese Political System). It says that the state has a very important role in the political system of Vietnam, especially in the triangle relationship between Party, state, and mass organizations. The state is a pillar (trụ cột) and a tool (công cụ) of organization and realization of the will and the power of the people. On the other hand, the state accepts (chịu) the leadership and implements political line of the Party. In the history, thanks to the Party and the people’s efforts, the state gained its independence from the French. In the beginning it was the Party that protected the existence of the state. Because of the continuing conflicts with foreign powers (France and USA) Party had to apply the formula of direct and strict/absolute (tuyệt đối) leadership position with respect to the state. After the 1986 relationship between the Party and state had changed. The administrative function of the state and leading role of the Party were fixed (Thương Huyền 2009). This article shows Vietnamese narrative about the

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<sup>25</sup> Mr. Dũng used phrase “Đảng đã hoá thân vào nhà nước” – Party embodied/incarnated itself into the state.

origins of the relationship between the Party and the state and its development but the message is almost the same, the role of the state is perhaps clearer, but its task to apply Party's line is unquestionable. The interconnectedness between those two units is natural given the development.

The interesting thing is that the focus of the Vietnamese leadership is directed towards "making clear what are the powers of various state institutions", or towards the efforts to give them more authority and functions, this process was already marked as "statisation". This "statisation" in practice means that the Party puts an effort into the developing of the NA (interpreted by some scholars as neo-Stalinist organ without effective outputs) and let government to implement, but the outcomes are not visible. Processes that were mentioned earlier, such as interpellation of the Prime Minister and increasing number of discussions in the National Assembly have to be judged against the evidence. It is often the case in Party-state relation that what in the beginning usually seems as an important initiative or sign of autonomy ends with no political output. Chinese cooperation in bauxite mining wasn't prevented, proposal for a vote of confidence was refused, commission of inquiry in the Vinashin case wasn't established and Nguyễn Tấn Dũng was reelected as Prime Minister. All those and other issues show that the space for the real action from the side of state institutions is still blocked and Vietnam thus suffers from immobilism.

As Adam Fforde emphasises, an important aspect with respect to the effectiveness of the implementation of policies is the relationship of central organs (government and NA) with their local counterparts (People's Committees and People's Councils) and with the Party's organs, generally said: relations of power and authority. Vietnam is administered on the principle of double subordination which means that local People's Committees are subordinated both to the central Government and to the People's Councils that elected them. This system creates the chain unclear relations and power centers that in turn limit the ability to implement policies: "Areas of administrative competence (and power) overlap, so that what should be done in any particular instance is not clear. Which body has authority to decide what should happen? The answer is, very often, unclear" (Fforde 1998, p. 30). The result is that central regulations and directions at local level are often changed or are not implemented at all. Those are the issues connected with the problem of decentralization in Vietnam: "The current administrative system is decentralized only in a limited sense, i.e., the process focuses on the delegation of tasks from central to provincial and district units. In the area of planning and management, the grassroots-level has not yet participated fully in the process. Also, it is not clear how much the existing legal framework allows local government units to be creative

and proactive in making decision and planning to exploit the potential of the locality” (Fforde 2003, p. 24). There is also a contradiction between giving the localities more powers (which would increase the efficiency) and the fear of the centre that it will diminish the control of the centre and authority.

The connection between neo-Stalinist institutions and Party is identified by Adam Fforde as the source of the current crisis of Vietnamese regime. His explanation is based on the argument that: “...the CPV was not able to learn from how Soviet experience had led many Soviet Communists, such as those around Gorbachev and Yetsin, to focus upon political power as they wanted to wield it was impossible with Soviet political institutions, given their limitations” (Fforde 2012b, p. 6). In short, political institutions and norms stayed neo-Stalinist in Vietnam while economical environment saw the tactical withdrawal from neo-Stalinist path. This combination and the continual absence of political reform led to the situation where corruption and the inability to govern (inability to deal with the issues) creates a serious threat for the CPV.

Above chapters can be concluded as follows: both Vietnamese accounts and Western analyses use “party-state” to refer to the unity of the Party and state institutions. The effort to clarify the functions of both entities can not change the fact that those state institutions are still rather ineffective. The party let deputies in the National Assembly debate the issues but the outcomes are so far insufficient. With the economical reforms and opening up of Vietnam, the society is changing and the Vietnamese leadership has to face an increasing number of challenges that will be debated in following part. Leadership is trying to hold its grasp of state institutions and keep the ideology in a Marxist-Leninist borders, and at the same time it is unable to reform them effectively. It would be easy to interpret this situation as follows: the elites who are not able or willing to reform the country are so called “conservatives” who are in majority in current government or conversely that “reformists” are in the minority and unable to push for the political reform. This interpretation is offered by Alexander Vuving (2010) and others, but again things seem to be more complicated. We will see it in the next chapters. Let us now turn to the last important unit of the system: society.

### **1.4.3 Party-state and society**

The party-state-society approach is based on the idea, that it is important to analyze how society can influence the sphere of politics. Some of the problems that were emphasized at the beginning of the previous chapter can be said also about the relationship between party-state and society relations, namely that there is no clear boundary and the difference between

public and private is blurred. That is what leads us to the sphere of governance instead of government. Gerry Stoker in his article differentiates between term 'government' that refer (according to the Anglo-American political theory) to the formal institutions of the state and their monopoly of legitimate coercive power and 'governance' as a new process of governing, in developing countries it connotes the interdependence of public, private and voluntary sectors (Stoker 2000, pp. 17-18). But how does this interdependence look like in Vietnam?

In his analysis of state in Vietnam Benedict Kerkvliet identifies three interpretations of the political system. The "dominating state" interpretation emphasizes the Communist Party and other official agencies and institutions, and finds that groups or activities in society have little or no influence on the political system or national policies. For this school CPV is in the center of analysis and the only important influences outside the state are the international ones. The "mobilizational corporatist" school highlights the role of organizations that the state itself dominates. State agencies use such organizations to mobilize support for their programs. But those organizations can also be channels through which citizens influence authorities. The "dialogical" interpretation draws attention to limitations in the state's control over society and to ways beyond formal channels through which people can affect state agencies and policies (Kerkvliet 2001).

The third interpretation is perhaps the most interesting for this thesis because it puts an emphasis on the actors that can be (as well as the leadership) potential source of the change in Vietnam. Many political transitions were started in a situation of crisis when the populace reacted on the failures in the regime performance. Graeme Gill writes about the lack of focus on society in the transition literature: "...little attention is given to the people. The result is that elite interactions are portrayed as taking place within a rarefied arena, isolated from the populace and society within which is ultimately encapsulated. Politics is thereby divorced from its social moorings, with all participants somehow disconnected from the broader social and economic milieu" (Gill 2000, p.85). Societal activities and actors that matter can be various: political participation (including strikes and riots, elections, etc.), role of particular groups, such as business, dissenters, mass organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc. (for the simplicity's sake called civil society). All those are important actors whose role should be judged.

We already considered the role of the elections in Vietnam and said that in current state they are not of the primary importance because their potential for being a stimulator of change is for now relatively low. Strikes in Vietnam are increasing in numbers. According to Saigon Times article: "A report by the Vietnam Labor Federation shows that 2,978 strikes and

thousands of labor disputes erupted nationwide in 1995-2009, revolving around such issues as wages, bonuses, working hours and rest time, collective labor agreements, social insurance and so on. Sometimes employees have a convincing case, but their strikes are not led by grassroots labor unions<sup>26</sup> and are therefore considered illegal” (Trien 2010). Potentially they can be challenging for the Party, but first it seems that a bigger problems are present in non-state enterprises and companies with foreign direct investment which push the attention outside the state, second those problems are partially on the shoulders of the Trade Unions that were given relatively wide space for their operation, and third the scope of the strikes is still not explosive. What about society?

#### **1.4.4 The power of the people**

David Koh starts his article about negotiating about the karaoke shops through the local administrators in Vietnam with the symptomatic sentence: “The Party Has Policies, but the People Have Ways” (Koh 2001a). It is supposed to tell us something about the relationship between political decisions and how they are implemented in Vietnam. The interesting question is the one about tolerance of the Party when it comes to transgressing of some of the rules. This “system” is widely spread throughout the country, people test what will be tolerated and when they are successful, others start to practice it too, but there is overall uncertainty behind this process, anytime it can happen that tolerance will end. In many ways this principle reminds Martin Gainsborough’s account on “uncertainty as an instrument of rule”. He described the situation when equitized companies in the 1990s still reported to the controlling institutions from the time they were state enterprises<sup>27</sup> despite the fact they need not to (Gainsborough 2010). Very often “procedures” are just done even though they bring with them certain inconveniences, many are undergone because of the known principle of “personalized networks”. Douglas Pike writes about networks in his article about informal politics in Vietnam: “...the Vietnamese believe, one must establish a network (Americans would term this contacts) to cope with problems and challenges and to open doors for opportunity. Such bilateral relationships are existential and situational in that they can be altered to fit specific solutions” (Pike 2000, p. 273). Those networks are present everywhere, it is one of the feature that interconnects the whole system. Political networks will be of the crucial importance for the study of factionalism. However, for now, the society is of the primary focus.

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<sup>26</sup> According to current legislation (Labour Code 1994, amended in 2002, 2006 and 2007), strike in Vietnam is legal when it is led by the grassroots trade unions, i.e. unions at the lowest level (in companies).

<sup>27</sup> Controlling institutions are state administrative units with formal jurisdiction over the state enterprises.

An important ability of the society is to somehow influence the formal rules or their implementation. There are many cases when some processes are running without the formal approval of the Party. There are plenty of examples in Vietnam based on case studies on concrete topics that support this assertion. Those are already mentioned village elections (Fforde 2009); Koh's study that shows how the Party was unable to deal with the karaoke shops as a place of presence of the "social evils" (prostitutions, drugs) despite its campaign against those "social evils," the reason is simple, local administrators allow karaoke shops because they are the important source of money for localities (Koh 2001a); Another example can be Andrew Hardy's account on household registration<sup>28</sup> in Vietnam. With the transition of economy valid hộ khẩu became a less important thing to have. There are services, that are available on the market, but for some services hộ khẩu is still the indispensable thing, those are identification cards and passports for legal travel overseas, certification of births, marriages and deaths. On the other hand legally, household registration is not anymore a condition of eligibility for a state job and generally said people's livelihood is not that depended on the household registration. Those changes were impeded by the negotiating of the people with the local administrators while this negotiating was allowed thanks to the unclear regulations (Hardy 2001).

There are many other examples, but the pattern is usually the same, the Party tolerates certain behavior because it keeps the system working. There are extra services that can be paid and people who are both willing to pay and receive the money for those services. Meanwhile the space is opening up and changing. Thus, society in Vietnam is inseparable from the state. In any case it is a vibrant and living organism with increasing needs and interests. Young generation is especially "open" to the influences from the West and it never misses the opportunity to go abroad. Changing society means changing demands. There are ways how to accommodate them, the unreformed Party so far chose the strategy of tolerance with occasional interventions but it is perhaps the question of time those demands will be voiced more loudly. Many times in the text, an emphasis was put on the tolerance of the illegal or unofficial processes from the side of the Party, and the question arises is why this tolerance? Is it caused by the weakness or is it Party's strategy? We will try to answer those questions at the end of this thesis.

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<sup>28</sup> Hộ khẩu is a system of household registration in Vietnam that was established in 1950s. Everyone has to be recorded as belonging to the household. The system served as a mechanism of the control of the movement of citizens and as a tool for regional economic planning.



## 1.5 Political system: Conclusions

The aim of the above text was to create a relatively complex picture of the Vietnamese political system, or in different words to characterize the space in which Vietnamese leadership operates. To study elites separated from the political system and from their environment would certainly lead to incorrect conclusions about them. So, what is the important information for the study of elites that can be derived from the examination of the political system? There are three crucial areas that are relevant for the study of the leadership with respect to the environment (at the beginning) we called them for simplicity's sake: structure, actors and politics, but naturally those three are linked together and overlapping.

In this thesis we started with the structure (typologization and description of formal system and elections with an emphasis on the difference between the theory and practice), then we continued with the actors (inside the state and society) while trying to interconnect this with the question of politics.

First, we focused on typologies, we categorized Vietnam as an aspiring soft authoritarian country (form of government) and party-state system (type of regime). This says to us that Vietnam has been coming through the market economic reforms, it opened itself (which is especially visible if we look at the society), and we can see a certain degree of decentralization. But the opening up of the country naturally has been posing some problems. Communist Party of Vietnam finds itself at the impasse. There is a contradiction between the efficiency of policies (which is not possible without political reform, a real decentralization and clear relations of authority), and between the fear of the Party from the weakening authority and control. What is more, current system brings spoils that can be divided which feeds the factional politics where effective policies and reforms are threatening.

Second, we looked at the formal institutions and informal practices. Foreign media inform about the increasing role of the National Assembly, experiments with direct elections and other changes but we showed that if we look at the problem from a different angle we find out that there is a big difference between what is formally written and what is the practice. Direct elections are not exactly direct and the testing of it is very gradual. In the case of the National Assembly elections there are limits on candidacy which again feeds clientelism and factionalism.

Third, we considered the importance of the relationship between the units of the system. We started with the CPV's narratives about the relationship between the Party and state. State organs were never supposed to be independent, they are the administrative bodies led by the Party and there are no effective checks on the government. The problem is that this

story has been narrated for too long. Majority of the leaders who struggled for the independence are not alive anymore. There are no mechanisms how to sack corrupted politicians and no effective administrative body. In sum, everyday problems are not dealt with. Society is increasingly vibrant and tries what will the Party tolerate. Those are pressures that the Party has to face. In the next chapters we will try to find what is the share of factionalism when it comes to the causes of the current crisis. We assume factionalism at least partially shapes it. To start somehow we showed that there is a lot of opportunities for establishing clientelist ties and dividing the spoils.

## **2. A theory of factionalism**

Division and conflict are natural for politics. Vietnam is not an exception despite the efforts of the Party to present itself as the unified organism. The following large chapter is theoretical. It is divided into several parts. In the first paragraphs we theorize about “faction” and its relation to the elite politics. In further parts there is an evaluation of the study of factionalism in democratic countries which is followed by the chapter about the study of factionalism in China. We found Andrew Nathan’s approach towards the factionalism the most persuasive and thus we used in this thesis. His model shows some important characteristics of factional arena as well as how factionalism structures politics. This chapter evaluates the advantages of the theory of factionalism and what are the problems of application of this theory in the real political arenas.

### **2.1 Elite politics and factional model**

Word “faction” is widely used in many spheres of life today to describe a sort of group partitioning, but most commonly it is connected with the party politics. That is why this phenomenon was elaborated in big part by political scientists (but also anthropologists). Majority of analyses of factionalism tended to explain the intra-party behavior in Western democracies, only later when the concept of totalitarianism was debated and criticized, the new approaches close to the factional theories were applied also on communist countries (mainly Soviet Union). Those pluralist theories were represented by Gordon H. Skilling and Jerry Hough. Skilling started at the society and interest groups, but from that point it was just a short way to the questioning of the Party conceived as a monolith: “Within the ruling party itself, groups or factions opposing to the leadership have not been admitted in theory or permitted in practice” (Skilling 1966, p. 435). Or elsewhere: “Unlike all other systems, the Soviet has been often depicted as one in which struggles over ideas and interests, or conflicts of rival groups, are absent. Issues requiring decisions are raised not by society or social groups but presumably by the party, or better, by its topmost leaders, without regard for the values and interests of other entities. The monolithic party has been regarded as the only interest group, not itself differentiated in its thinking or behavior” (Skilling 1966, p. 439). Further development saw the spread of the factional studies in Chinese elite politics.

Factional model represents one way how to study political elites and what to ask about them. It supposes that political elites are divided into the competitive groupings, however, it is supposed to tell us much more than this, it is a theory of conflict. Our thesis argues that the main problem of the works on the Vietnamese factionalism is that it is used rather as a tool for

division of the politicians, and it underestimates the implications of the model with respect to the consequent characteristics or limitations that factionalism poses on the political behavior.

Factional theory was elaborated in the West and primarily applied to the democratic countries, that is why we will firstly summarize the major findings in those studies. We are convinced, though, that studies on factionalism in China is more fruitful for the study of Vietnam given the affinity of the two regimes both geographically and ideologically.

Elites and factionalism in China were studied since 1970s and it is a valuable theoretical source for this thesis. The major shift in the study of elites in China is well illustrated in the article on Chinese elites written by professor Avery Goldstein. The early works focused on the elite's backgrounds and life experiences. By the mid-1970s, the study of China's political elites shifted from an interest in who they were to how they operated (an emphasis was put on the informal connections as opposed to the formal functions of politicians) (Goldstein 1994, p. 714-715). This was reflected in a number of studies on factionalism that consider informal connections being a basis of the concept. It is interesting to notice that except Martin Gainsboroug, David Koh and partially Douglas Pike this shift was not noticed in the works on Vietnam.

Should the faction be a useful analytical tool we have to explain how and what exactly it can help us to understand in the sphere of elite political.

## **2.2 Faction: What is in the name of it?**

In the world of politics "faction" is usually taken as an intra-party phenomenon but it wasn't always the case. Historically the factions were predecessors of political parties but very often those two terms were interchanged, and both parties and factions had negative connotations because of their alleged inherent divisive character. Tradition bias against faction was expressed in James Medison's objection in Federalist, no. 10, he referred both to faction and party as if they were synonyms, and in some cases used the phrase, "the spirit of aparty and a faction". Washington's warning also referred alternatively to a party and a faction (Belloni and Beller 1978, p. 5.) If we look at the terms from linguistic perspective we can see it even more clearly: the word "party" comes from Latin word *pars* which has the meaning: "a part, a side", or from french *partir* "to divide" ("faction" Online Etymology Dictionary). Origin of the word "faction" can be traced to the 14th century (French *faction*), a Latin word *factionem* (nom. *factio*) means "political party, class of persons" or "to do" ("faction" Online Etymology Dictionary).

Later the situation changed, parties were recognized as the legitimate platforms for contestation over the assertion of interests, but factions still carry their negative attribute. As Beller and Belloni wrote: “Factions lack visible legitimacy (...) they are often viewed from the vantage points of parties – often to explain party weaknesses, disintegration of unity, corruption, and opportunism among party leaders” (Beller and Belloni 1978, p. 6). This is also the explanation why the communist single - party regime’s leaders put an emphasis on the unity, integration, solidarity and fighting with corruption. Vietnam Express quotes Vietnamese President Trương Tấn Sang: “The Party many times emphasized: Corruption causes negative effects in many ways, it decreases the confidence of the people and it is one of the major challenges for the Party and regime” (*VnExpress*, 28 January 2010). Titles of many other articles stress Party unity and solidarity: “Unity is a strength of the Party” (Đoàn kết là sức mạnh của đảng) in *Nhân Dân* (Mùng 2008), or “The success of the unity in the Party and among the people” (Thành công của từ sự đoàn kết trong Đảng, trong dân) in *Dân trí* (P.Thảo 2011), etc. Those issues are connected with the monopolistic position of the Party in Vietnam and the arguments of politicians why Vietnam doesn’t need multipartism. It is quite clear why Vietnamese political representation uses such rhetoric, Western analyses, on the contrary, stress the divisions inside the Party. At this point, it seems the right question to ask: why is so seductive for us, Western scholars, to apply the concept of faction to single-party communist regimes?

The explanations could be following: First it could be simply the matter of our efforts to classify politicians to shed light on how the “mystical and secretive” Party works. It is hard to imagine that there would be no conflict in the Party even though it tries to hide it when it comes to public speeches. Communist parties’ decisions take place behind the closed door and we want to understand those intra-party processes, thus we tend to make the analyses that would help us to predict the future development. Second, it may be the wishful way of the Western scholars’ thinking about single-parties, an intention to see divisions in them, for it can signalize the weakness. Or put it differently, factions are considered to be the embryonic phase of multipartism.

Our tendency to categorize and analyze communist politicians in terms of factions is evident but how precisely can factions help?

### **2.3 Western studies of factionalism in democratic countries**

There is an agreement between scholars who study factionalism that the definition of faction provided by Raphael Zariski more than fifty years ago is still the most accepted one.

Zariski defined faction as: “any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a distinct block within the party – to achieve their goals” (Zariski 1960, p. 33). As we will see later in this chapter, it is highly problematic to use this definition in the context of Vietnam.

The first serious study of factions in political science dates back to the 1950s when V. O. Key used the idea to explain politics in so-called one-party American states where intra-party rivalry was the only form of political competition. Key approached the study of factions in terms of the functions they performed in the political process, this direction of the factional studies was retained by Rajni Kothari who studied Indian dominant party system with the conclusion that factionalism substitutes political parties competition and serves as a counterweight to the negative aspects of one-party politics. In 1960 Raphael Zariski published an article in which he conceptualized faction as an important political category focusing mainly on structural aspects of it: organization and duration, self-awareness of faction members (faction cognition), their common underlying motivations (factional *raison d'être*), and the setting in which factions develop (the faction system) (Beller and Belloni, 1978, pp. 7-9). In sum, early works on faction reflected two basic directions: study of the *function* and study of the *structure*.

Another influential approach toward factions comes from Kenneth Janda's work on political parties. Focusing on the coherence in the party behaviour, he created the typology of factions based on the studying of six basic topics: legislative cohesion, ideological factionalism, issue factionalism, leadership factionalism, strategic or tactical factionalism and party purges. Those categories were tailored primarily to the democratic countries, this is especially visible on the first variable (legislative cohesion), Janda writes: “The legislature constitutes one of the main political arenas in which one would expect to find evidence for or against party coherence” (Janda 1980, p. 118). Naturally, it is problematic to apply this model to Vietnam where despite the increasing role of the National Assembly, it still stays in many cases just a rubber stamp.

The most innovative approach towards factionalism comes from the work of Françoise Boucek. In her article she starts with the evaluation of existing research while noticing that its limits rest in the focus on typologies and categories of subparty groups. According to her those doesn't explain intra-party behavior and the process of change, because they are static tools. She proposes to focus on intra-party dynamics instead of on organizational forms of factions (Boucek 2009, p. 445). Or elsewhere: “In this article, I suggest that it is time to think again about the conceptualization of factionalism in political science. Typologies and

classificatory schemes are the beginning of a theory. However, with a static view of factionalism these tools cannot capture group dynamics and explain the process of change. They cannot therefore provide convincing and parsimonious answers to key research questions, such as why some political parties contain factions while others do not, why factions become embedded inside some parties but not in others, and why factionalism grows and transforms over time, and so on” (Boucek 2009, p. 446).

Françoise Boucek puts an emphasis on factionalism as a process, it can have three faces: cooperative, competitive and degenerative (Boucek 2009, p. 460). Those dynamics can be conceived as a stages of the development of the factionalism, however, various political parties need not necessarily go through all of the phases.

Cooperation is according to Boucek the starting phase: “By providing a structure of cooperation between separate intra-party groups, factionalism can diversify party appeals and accelerate party integration. (...) This type of factionalism often results from a primordial sorting-out process when a democracy or a party becomes established.<sup>29</sup> Political elites and followers with convergent preferences and attitudes, but who belong to separate political groups (but are located on the same side of a salient political cleavage), often emerge as a key factors during periods of political change, such as regime change, transition to democracy, party system realignment, party mergers and party splits” (Boucek 2009, p. 15).

Cooperation in the formative phase is usually replaced by competitive factionalism in later stages of party existence: “While factional competition is not necessarily a bad thing, it can be difficult to manage. Divergent factional preferences and polarized party opinion create splitting pressures and loosen intra-party ties as factions become opposed rather than simply separate. In addition, too much fragmentation complicates decision-making and the enactment of coherent policy packages” (Boucek 2009, p. 19).

The last degenerative form is according to Boucek the most dangerous one because it can cause the demise of the party. Factions gain too much of independence and power and the lack of consensus cause that the party is not able to act as a whole. In Boucek’s words, factions may become *veto players*. Private interest of faction leaders becomes the primary goal to attain and the only issue to deal with is how to divide the spoils (Boucek 2009, p. 23).

What can be derived from the above text? Up to now, the study of factionalism in democratic political systems could be divided into three main circles. Majority of works is focused on the structure of factions and function of factions (factional typologies). Factionalism as dynamics was a new approach elaborated by professor Françoise Boucek and

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<sup>29</sup> Author show this cooperative stage on the examples of Italy’s former Christian Democrats (CD) and Japan’s Liberal Democrats (LDP).

its starting point is in accordance with our reservations concerning the way how factionalism is used: categorizations of the top politicians and creating of the factional typologies instead of trying to figure out the dynamics, how factionalism works, how and what it limits in terms of elite's actions and behaviour.

What are the problems with the application of those theories to Vietnam? First, and the simplest one can be marked as "the lack of available data" in current communist systems because of the efforts of the monopolistic parties to emphasize the unity and hide any cleavages. Variable as the coherence of the Party or alike will be hard to ascertain from public informations. Second, but connected with the first one: there is no way how to make a research on duration or self-awareness of the members of factions or underlying motivation. In democratic countries factions are legal entities with traceable membership and goals which is not the case in Vietnam. Politician in Vietnam is a member of the Communist Party, in the public he advocates the policies of the Party and official picture of the Party. The way how to resolve this problem is to start at the relationship that establishes the ties between elites. This is exactly what was done at the beginning of the study of factionalism in China.

In the following section we will focus on the works on Chinese factionalism. The purpose of it is to map existing theoretical framework for the study of factionalism and find the answers on the important questions: How was factionalism on China developed theoretically and why, and in which shape theories of factionalism can be useful for the study of the Communist Parties, what are the problems, etc.

## **2.4 Studies of the factionalism in China**

One of the most simple but interesting sentences with respect to factions is the one in Andrew Nathan's article (1995) about factionalism: "...factions have consequences as well as causes". Lowell Dittmer adds another two basic dimensions: "actors and goals" (factions and particularistic interests) (Dittmer and Wu 1995, p. 476). Those sentences sum up what is the subject matter: focus on both explanation of the causes of factionalism (either cultural, structural or both) and consequences of the existence of factional behaviour (i.e. concrete political strategies, patterns of cooperation and consensus, constraints on the players, etc.) (Nathan 1995, p. 168). Actors and goals can be considered but we assume that it will be problematic. In the following section, we use the debate between Andrew Nathan and Lowell Dittmer (with the commentaries of Tang Tsou) to illustrate the differences between the main approaches towards the study of factionalism and informal politics in China. This discussion is very fruitful in terms of the theory of factionalism.



### 2.4.1 A Clientelist Tie

Chinese researchers started to elaborate factional theories because of the reality observed in the history and at present in many spheres of the Chinese life. It is a common for both China and Vietnam that things are being done informally, with the help of people that are a part of any person's "network" (means the network of people that can be mobilized in time when they are needed). Being an everyday reality, this principle is said to influence also politics. In politics, there are resources such as positions and relations that can be exchanged for support and other things. When this networking takes part inside the Party, we talk about factions.

Theoretical works on factionalism in China have the similar basis: a variant of clientelist tie<sup>30</sup> as the foundation of the factional behavior. Andrew Nathan's work starts by the reference to clientelist tie: "The starting point is a kind of human behaviour which I shall call the "clientelist tie". A clientelist tie is a non-ascriptive two-person relationship founded on exchange, in which well-understood rights and obligations are established between the two parties" (Nathan 1973, p. 37). Among the crucial characterizations of the clientelist ties are that they are the relationships between two people, based on the constant exchange of gifts or services through which the relationship is cultivated, it can be abrogated by the members at will and that it is not exclusive – which means that either member is free to establish other simultaneous ties so long as they do not involve contradictory obligations (Nathan 1973, p. 37). This is one of the key features that make the study of factions based on those ties very difficult. We can assume that any attempt to classify politicians into factions will be problematic, first, due to the possibility that politicians are "members" of various "factions" based on the situation in which they currently found themselves and second, there are many other types of relationships that shape the outcomes. Nathan clearly separates clientelist tie from other kinds of relationships, on one side from the power relationship (because in this type of relationship subordinate has no real choice but obedience) and on the other side from other exchange-based relationships (Nathan 1973, p. 38).

Lowell Dittmer operates with the term "value-rational relationship"<sup>31</sup> which he describes as the one that is valued as an end in itself; typically built upon various connections (guanxi) that include shared kinship ties, common geographic origin, former classmates, teachers or students or some other bonding experience (Dittmer 1995, p. 470). Tang Tsou

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<sup>30</sup> Tang Tsou in his article from 1995 recognizes Nathan's contribution to the study of factions when he writes that Nathan clearly distinguished clientelist ties from authority relationships and generic exchange relationships. For details see Nathan 1973, p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> As opposed to "purpose-rational relationship".

comment this in his article as follows: “By replacing Nathan’s concept of clientelist leader-follower ties with the notion of a ‘relationship’ or ‘connection’ of an informal or personal character and by broadening the focus of the discourse from a ‘factionalism model’ to ‘informal politics’, Dittmer provides a foundation solid and broad enough to build a synthesis of the newly available data on the one hand and ideas, concepts and theory of the politics of CCP elites on the other” (Tang Tsou 1995, p. 98).

Those passages are important for two reasons. First, we have to realize that factionalism if recognized as a model for elite politics, it is functioning next to other shaping factors: formal rules (legal system, institutionalization...), economic development, commitments and bonds stemming from the international aid and treaties, other informal relationships and cultural factors, etc. This is to say that purely factional analyses are just a part of the picture.

And second, the emphasis is on the centre: the limit of factional model rests in the practical applicability of factionalism only on the elite politics (upper level of the VCP). In this thesis we argue that the problems of the factional theories on China is that they omit the lower levels of politics. As we analyzed earlier, lower levels of politics in Vietnam are of the crucial importance. In the following part we will advance towards the theory of factionalism, in particular to the question how should be factionalism defined and why.

#### **2.4.2 Dittmer’s definition of faction: goals of factions**

Lowell Dittmer and Yu-Shan Wu are the proponents of the cultural explanation of the factional behavior and consider factionalism as one type of informal politics.<sup>32</sup> According to Lowell Dittmer and his colleague a clientelist tie in general and the way how works the bonding process in particular is the basis of factionalism that is culturally given (Dittmer and Wu 1995, pp. 472-473). Dittmer and Wu tended to modify factional model so that it fits current economic development in China: “Our most basic modification of the original model is to see Chinese factionalism as concerning itself not only with particularistic group and member interest, but also with economic and other public policy issues” (Dittmer and Wu 1995, p. 467). However, further in the text authors explicitly write: “It is not unthinkable that an informal grouping with a policy line may conflict with an informal grouping without such a line, or that the same group may adopt a line and then drop it. These cases show that defining informal politics in general, and factionalism in particular, is a conceptual dead end

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<sup>32</sup> The other types are: bureaucratic politics, independent kingdom and opinion group. This typology is based on structure and action.

in terms of identifying actor's purposes. Motives are difficult to ascertain, and in most cases they are mixed (...). We propose the following revised conceptualization, which defines factions exclusively in terms of their structure" (Dittmer and Wu 1995, pp. 478-479).

In his response Andrew Nathan comments that Dittmer and his colleague never provided the definition or analysis based on structural aspects faction (Nathan and Tsai 1995, p. 165). And it is indeed visible in the conclusion of Dittmer and Wu's work, when the authors explain the basic arguments of the article, they write: "First, Chinese informal politics can still be best characterized as factional politics, with the proviso that the original definition<sup>33</sup> of factionalism be broadened with respect to elite goals. (...) Factions can be used to promote different sets of elite goals, the most prominent of which are security, material interests, and ideological and policy commitments." (Dittmer and Wu 1995, p. 492).

This thesis argues that this definition of faction and its applicability is limited. Surely, elites have goals, some are prevailing in certain times, but it is rarely possible to ascertain those goals, because it is a flexible mixture of goals depended on the actual situation. Goals are changing, purposes are changing too and what is more factions probably hide their goals. The only thing that is not changing in factions is the basis – type of relationship and the structure.

### **2.4.3 Nathan's structural definition of faction**

If we get back to Nathan's model we can see that his focus on the structure can give us some detailed insights into the characteristics of the political arena. The first structural aspect to be considered is one to one relationship rather than corporate relationship between leaders (or subleaders) and followers. This is expressed in the communication pattern. Andrew Nathan writes about upward and downward communication to explain the way how the information is delivered to members of the faction. According to Nathan the communication net contains of nodes (subleaders) through which the information flows, the same pattern works also with the recruitment. Thus the characterization of faction is that it is a network that is very fluid, it can be contracted and expanded, it can recruit various people for various situations, it can be dissolved and then reconstituted again, all depends on the ability of the leader (subleader) to secure and distribute the rewards. (Nathan 1973, pp. 42-43). Another important aspect is a complexity of faction. The most complex is the faction the less control has the leader over the structure, the more possible is a tendency towards emerging of various

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<sup>33</sup> Original definition is based on the "guanxi", vertically organized, reciprocity oriented relationship that is according to Dittmer given culturally.

interests and following splits. Nathan concludes: “A faction is limited in size, follower commitment, and stability by the principles of its own organization” (Nathan 1973, p. 45).

There are the important outputs of those structural characterizations, factions are likely to be rather numerous (however the number is limited as we will see later) and small-scale which is *not* in accordance with the results of various studies on both China and Vietnam where are recognized just two or three large factions, for example (Cheng Li 2005, Vuving 2011).

Andrew Nathan’s major contribution to the study of factionalism in China, is a theory that is supposed to explain: “How the Chinese leaders organize themselves to carry out conflict, how they mobilize resources (and what resources) for the struggle, under what formal or informal rules the conflict is carried out, what sanctions are visited upon losers, and so forth” (Nathan 1973, p. 35). In other words, how factionalism structures political behavior. The way how factionalism is used in this case was by the author himself marked as an “institutionalist restatement”. This theory is a part of the important discussion between Andrew Nathan and Lowell Dittmer about the factional model, how it can be useful and what are the problems of this analytical tool: “For twenty-two years scholars have found the factionalism model useful as a starting point for analyzing how Chinese elite politics work. The notion of clientelist connections upon which the model is built has also found acceptance and served as a core of a wide range of research. But Lowell Dittmer and other scholars have found various aspects of the model problematic. We agree with much of what the critics have said, but not with Dittmer’s proposed solution. In our view, many of the factionalism model’s problems derive from the fact that it did not succeed in distinguishing between cultural and structural (or institutional) variables in the explanation of political behavior” (Nathan and Tsai 1995, pp. 157-158). In short, on the level of causes, the theoretical problem of factional model (according to Nathan) can be condensed into the question: is it the culture that determines factional political behavior or is it the structure? Of course this question cannot be answered either way, expectedly, both variants could partially explain factional behavior.

To solve this problem, Nathan proposed to treat *factions as institutions*, that are albeit established by both the culture and the structure but.. “...once institutions are established, actors maneuver within their boundaries. The factionalism model sought to specify how strategies of action are available or limited for actors located in the particular institutions defined as factions” (Nathan and Tsai 1995, p. 164). In other words, if we recognize factions as existing institutions (irrespective of who are their members and how fluid they are) we can try to derive how their existence structures the behavior of their members.

## 2.5 Nathan's factional model

Firstly, it will be useful to summarize the main points of Nathan's model while using both his central works (1973, 1995). Structure (by structure Nathan means patterns of incentives outside the actors' heads) and culture (attitudes, values, and beliefs inside the actors' heads) mutually constitute themselves and create institutions (factions). Political actors are in turn limited in their actions and behavior by the existence of factions. However, faction is just one type of political organization, Nathan created a typology based on two classifiers: 1. Members' bases for association and 2. Groups' patterns of coordinative communication (Nathan 1995, pp. 161-170). Factions are exchange based<sup>34</sup> with noded communication.<sup>35</sup> Nathan summarized the theoretical relationship of factions in the table below.

**Table 1: Summary of Theoretical Relationships of Factions  
(Type 15 - Exchange and Noded)**

<b>I. CLASSIFIERS</b> (institutional attributes)	<b>II. CONSEQUENCES AT THE GROUP LEVEL</b>
<p>1. Basis of association – exchange - material, self-regarding, instrumental and immediate goals - goods are mostly private, not public</p> <p>2. Pattern of coordinative communication – noded - high tightness, authoritativeness, and secrecy - low level of differentiation</p>	<p><i>Organizational capabilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not willing to take risks</li> <li>• Willing to pursue intermediate goals</li> <li>• Unstable in group membership</li> <li>• Not likely to survive from one generation to the next; likely to dissolve</li> <li>• Not very resistant to repression</li> <li>• High degree of flexibility</li> <li>• Capable of maintaining secrecy</li> </ul> <p><i>Strategies and tactics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid violence due to their self-regarding nature</li> <li>• Shift ideology to meet tactical needs</li> <li>• High level of bargaining, negotiating, and alliance behaviour</li> </ul>

<sup>34</sup> Others types of association are kinship, community, and agreement.

<sup>35</sup> Others patterns of coordinative communication are hierarchical, segmentary, and network.

	<p><b>III. CONSEQUENCES AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL</b></p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict patterns: low level of violence; high level of alliance behaviour, and shifting ideological articulation</li> <li>• Tendency towards systemic balance of power</li> <li>• Tendency towards systemic persistence</li> </ul>
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*source: (Nathan 1995, p. 187)*

For the sake of simplicity, Nathan proposed his model so that it fits the ideal type political system, where factions are prevailing type or organization. There are fifteen key characteristics<sup>36</sup> of factional environment that is supposed to say what modes of conflict will be typical for factions (Nathan 1973, p. 45). Following paragraphs present the points without evaluative comments but the chapters about the limits and modifications will be presented later.

### **2.5.1 Factor: Power Limitation of factions**

The first set of propositions is connected with the power limitations of factions. Nathan presupposes that unlike formal organizations, factions enjoy less power capability because of the limitations on their extent, coordination, and control of followers. This according to him shapes the forms and nature of conflict in the political arena. In this section Nathan presented eight points as follows:

1. “A code of civility arises which circumscribes the nature of political conflict.” This in practice should be observable at the level of party purges. Nathan writes: “Factions relatively seldom kill, jail, or even confiscate the property of their opponents within the system.” The exception is persecuting of persons who became a threat to the factional system as such.

2. “Since the factions are incapable of building sufficient power to rid the political system of rival factions, they have little incentive to try to do so. Therefore: Defensive political strategies predominate over political initiatives in frequency and importance.” We would add to this point that the factional system as such can be even considered

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<sup>36</sup> Those fifteen points are quoted from Nathan’s work, derived from the chapter “The Characteristics of Factional Politics”, pp. 45-52.

advantageous, because it is relatively safe and predictable environment. Related to point are another two characteristics:

3. “When a faction does take a political initiative (which it does only on those rare occasions when it feels that its power base is secure and its rivals are relatively off balance), it relies upon secret preparation and surprise offensive.” And:

4. “In the face of the political initiative, the defensive orientation of the other factions in the system tends to encourage them to unite against the initiative. Thus factional political systems tend to block the emergence of strong leaders.” Strong leader is in Nathan’s consideration a threat for all factions and the factional system as such. This means that factions cooperate when it is needed but when the danger is over they stop. The system is thus extremely fluid, this led Nathan to another point:

5. “Since the Political life of a factional system consists of occasional initiatives by constituent factions, followed by defensive alliances against the initiator, any given faction is obliged to enter into a series of constantly shifting defensive alliances. Factional alliances cannot remain stable. Today’s enemy may have to be tomorrow’s ally.” Another point is:

6. “It is impossible for factions to make ideological agreement a primary condition for alliance with other factions.” Nathan argues that factions operate within a broad ideological consensus, there are ideological boundaries that cannot be crossed but within this boundary doctrinal positions can be shifted (and are shifted) in order to achieve some particular goals.

7. “When decisions (resolutions of conflict, policy decisions) are made by the factional system as a whole, they are made by consensus among the factions.” And connected with it is:

8. “There is a typical cycle of consensus formation and decline which characterizes factional systems. The cycle begins with a political crisis and ends with the action to solve the crisis.”

The first group of characteristics stems from the fact that factions are informal entities that enjoy less power than formal entities. Structuring of the political arena looks as follows: no purges or jailing, defensive strategies instead of active policymaking, blocking of the rise of strong leader, shifting alliances, acting within basic broad ideological consensus, but shifting policy and ideological positions, policymaking or action only after the consensus is made and there is a cycle crisis-consensus (Nathan 1973, pp. 46-48).

### **2.5.2 Factor: Clientelist ties**

Second set of characteristics of Nathan’s theory stem from the fact that factions consist of a series of clientelist ties: “The resources with which the faction carries out political

conflict are not corporate, shared resources, but the personal resources of the individual members – their personal prestige, official positions, and their own further clientelist ties.” (Nathan 1973, p. 49). Those are thus assets that can be fought and lost. In this group there are just two characteristics:

9. “To weaken their rivals, factions try to discredit opposition faction members, dislodge them from their posts, and buy away their allies. This leads to the politics of personality in which rumor, character assassination, bribery and deception are used.” And:

10. “Another feature of factional system is doctrinalism, the couching of factional struggle for power in terms of abstract issues of ideology, honor, and face.” Nathan adds that the distance between the cliques in ideology and program is in fact insignificant but nevertheless, debates are intensive and revolve around the small points.

### **2.5.3 Factor: Size and shape of factional system**

The last set of propositions characterizes the shape of the factional system. Nathan’s eleventh point is concerning the number of factions in the ideal factional system but other points are rather further characteristics from various areas.

11. “Any factional arena is composed of score or two factions. This is so because in an arena with a very great number of factions, it will be in the interests of the factions to amalgamate, in order to defend against other factions doing the same thing.” When we put this assumption together with the one about the limitations on the membership it can be concluded, that factional arena is *relatively* small-scale (approx. twenty to forty factions) and very flexible playground but with the rigid rules of conflict.

12. “Resources over which factions are struggling should be allocated among themselves and in accordance with the rules of conflict they are following, rather than to some force from outside the system which pays no attention to those rules and whose victory would end the political existence of the factions.” This point was already mentioned in the previous text. When there is an inside threat that would be able to overthrow the system, all factions unite together, the same situation would be the one with the outside force that would threaten the system. At this point the threat for the factions can be according to Nathan “foreign conquest, rebellion or military coup” (Nathan 1973, p. 50). Other characteristic touches the problem of legitimacy:

13. “Within the factional elite, it is taboo to question the principle of legitimacy upon the factions base their claim to a role in the larger society.” In the last two points Nathan mentions important problem – immobilism:



14. “Issues which arise within the elite are resolved only slowly and with difficulty. The consensus which is necessary for action is difficult to achieve because every decision is more advantageous to some factions than to others. (...) The resulting failure of policy to move clearly in any one direction is what was called, in the French Third and Fourth Republics, immobilisme.” And:

15. “The immobilism of factional systems, the lack of extreme sanctions employed in their struggles, and their tendency to defend their existence against rival elites or external threats mean that they are in certain sense extremely stable.”

All those fifteen points are interesting suggestions on how should the political arena shaped by the existence of factions look like. But on the first sight we can see some problems. Those will be considered in the following chapter.

#### **2.5.4 Limits and drawbacks of Nathan’s model**

In this section we will search for the limits of Nathan’s theory and we will also try to suggest some updates. Nathan himself writes about the limit of his model in the last chapter of his article.

The first drawback that he describes is naturally the one we would expect to be mentioned at the beginning and stems from the fact that Nathan’s model is an ideal-type model. In the first chapter of this thesis we already referred to this limit. As every social reality, also elites and their behavior are too complex: “The factionalism model posited here assumes a situation where politicians rely exclusively upon clientelist ties to structure political action – a condition which must be set if a relatively coherent and comprehensive model is to be constructed, but which is not likely to be satisfied by many actual cases” (Nathan 1973, p. 65). But at the same time he claims that the model is useful because it provides us the information about predominant dynamics at some point of time (Nathan 1973, p. 65).

A second important note of Nathan on the limits of his model is concerning the other existing constraints on behavior. Except the “organizational-structural” constraints (that he presents in factional model), there are others constraints, such as: cultural, institutional and ideological (Nathan 1973, p. 66). This was Nathan’s own criticism, we will now present ours.

The first remark is rather technical. Nathan’s division of the characteristics into three major groups (power limitations, clientelist ties and size and shape) is somehow confusing, for ex. his group of two characteristics that stem from the fact that factions are based on clientelist ties. In a certain sense all the characteristics can be said to be derived from the

existence of the clientelist tie which creates the base for the factional relationship. But there are more serious limits than this one.

Very often, Nathan's point which is supposed to characterize a kind of behavior structured by the existence of factions can be explained differently, for ex. absence of Party purges needn't imply a code of civility that arises from the power limitation of factions. It can be rather the result of the development of the regime as such, i. e. opening of the regime, dependence on foreign aid which is conditioned by the lower repressiveness, etc. Or let us consider this characteristic (number four): the factional system blocks the emergence of strong leaders. There are other checks that block the emergence of strong leaders: institutions. Institutionalization is not considered by Nathan, because at the time he had written his article there were perhaps no signs of it, but nowadays it is a salient feature of both Vietnam and China. If top political functions are limited by the age, term of office and hierarchy advancement then there is a bigger chance for any politician to get into a high position in the Party and state as well as a sort of stable setting which is advantageous for the Party as a whole. At the same time it prevents the emergence of the strong leader. On the other hand we can suggest to add a tendency towards institutionalization into the characteristics of the factional system. Why would it be advantageous for the factions? Because it increases their chance for gaining some important functions for their members as well as stable resources for rewards and also alternating of factions in the functions. We could continue with this critique in other points but it is now more important to explain why it is problematic. When we try to search for the evidence in the concrete country and concrete period, we find out that we are in a trouble. If we find a feature that is in accordance with the Nathan characteristic we cannot be sure it has actually a factional explanation. Someone can object that it is relativism, but we rather wanted to say that we should be careful when using empirics. Further critics aim at concrete points.

Point nine is according to us problematic. First it would be dangerous for factions to try to discredit the opposition because there are probably issues that can be used by the opposition as a revenge (given a corrupted system in Vietnam). What is more, the system as a whole would become untrustworthy if too much of politicians would be discredited publicly. On the other hand, we agree that politicians are just the people and they sometimes do not think about what is the best for the whole. Nevertheless, we can say that the evidence for this point will be difficult to find because we cannot know the real reason why a politician was punished.

The last point (number fifteen) where Nathan writes about the stability of the system is not much persuasive. He assumes that no faction in the system would issue a clear policy in one particular direction and action will be difficult to achieve which will cause immobilism. From immobilism together with the lack of sanctions and tendency to factional alliances when the system is threatened Nathan derives that factional systems are extremely stable. But on the other hand, how long can such a system survive given the fact that policies are not decided and the country is practically not governed? Even if factions exist in current Communist regimes they must be clearly aware of the fact that the legitimacy based on performance is the type of legitimacy they have to care about. That is why stronger institutionalization was a logical step in the development of the regimes, because it bounds the elites. We can perhaps even talk about the development of factionalism into the more institutionalized form.

Our last critics is perhaps the most important one. As we wrote above Nathan explicitly says that his model is good for central politics only. But what about the role played by the local elites in current regimes? Do local elites play some role in the factional dynamics? Those questions are not answered by Nathan's model but as we know in current Communist regimes local elites *are* important players. They indeed play an important role because in a certain sense they cause instability.

In the next chapter we will try to apply Nathan's model to Vietnam, this should help us to find out whether Vietnam shows factional dynamics and if yes, then we will ask for the role of localities in the instability of the regime.

### **3. Factionalism: A case of Vietnam**

The last chapter of this thesis is the empirical one, but at the end it slightly goes into the theory because it considers the role of local elites in factionalism. We will start at the clientelist ties in Vietnam, then we will proceed to the section about the most common mistake in the studies of Vietnam: the one of defining factions (usually reformers and conservatives) according to their policy goals. After that we will try to apply Nathan's model to Vietnam and in the last section of this thesis we will show that current problems of Vietnam can be partially explained in terms of factionalism.

#### **3.1 Clientelist ties and networks in Vietnam**

Networks, patronage and clientelism are widespread phenomena in Vietnam. In the first chapter we cited Douglas Pike's article about informal politics and establishing of networks. Networks in Vietnam are indeed of crucial importance for every person. In a common life it usually starts in the family and continues through the friends and further. In politics, but also in the business networks and connections open the door. We can even say that in Vietnam it is hard to be successful without them.

Let us first look at the example of Nguyễn Minh Triết who was President of Vietnam from 2006 to 2011. It will show us how networking looks like in Vietnam. Bill Hayton in his book describes Triết's career: "President Triet rose to power through the structures of Binh Duong province, just outside the Ho Chi Minh City. He helped to turn it into an economic powerhouse, attracting huge amounts of foreign investment, providing hundreds of thousands of jobs and contributing a significant proportion of the national budget. He did so by bending the rules, breaking fences, to please investors. (...) The reward for his success was promotion within the Party, first to boss of Ho Chi Minh City and then to head of the state. But his base is still in Binh Duong province and it's now a family fiefdom. His nephew has taken over as the provincial boss and his family control many of its administrative structures. Vietnamese talk about being under someone's 'umbrella'. Triet's 'umbrella' shelters his family and network in Binh Duong just as his colleagues' umbrellas shelter theirs in other places" (Hayton 2010, p. 20). Being a member of the network or being under "umbrella" means advantages and profit. In fact there is an unwritten rule: the more powerful people we know the better for us. Hayton writes that firms do not hesitate to pay large sums of money for introductions and access to decision-makers: "A good introduction to a key official can be worth as much as \$100,000." (Hayton 2010, p. 23).

In the business this rule is well known and connections between the business and politics is in Vietnam very strong. State-owned enterprises are naturally key players, but as Hayton writes, also private enterprises are dominated by the networks: “Many ‘private’ businesses are either former state-owned enterprises or still have some state ownership and are still run by Party members. Even truly private companies find it almost impossible to obtain licenses, registrations, customs clearance and many other vital documents without good connections” (Hayton 2010, p. 22). For politicians this means profit and for policymaking it means that policy can be shaped according to opportunities.

In the following section we will argue that divide elites in Vietnam into factions according to their policy goals (as it is usually done) is an oversimplification. To support this by the evidence from Vietnam, we will use Alan Gainsborough’s study that was already mentioned in the previous part of this thesis.

### **3.2 Vietnamese conservatives and reformers/modernizers factions: policy positions**

As was already said, very often Vietnam is supposed to have two (or three) major factions: conservatives and reformers (or modernizers). To come up with an example we can use the model of Alexander Vuving.<sup>37</sup> He writes: “The conservative is one who is more likely to opt for a ‘closed door’ and ‘party first’ policy” (Vuving 2010, p. 367). Concrete example can be according to Vuving former General Secretary of the Vietnam Communist Party Lê Khả Phiêu who: “May embrace the ideas of ‘intra-party democracy’ ‘socialist-oriented market economy’, and Vietnam as a ‘modern nation’ and a ‘friend and reliable partner to other countries’, but his emphasis is on the class nature, as opposed to a whole-nation nature, of the party’s core interest, preserving the country’s ‘socialist’ identity, and contrasting it with the ‘capitalist and imperialist’ West” (Vuving 2010, p. 367). A second player in Vietnamese politics is according to Vuving a group of modernizers who are for openness and the whole-nation’s perspective, again he provides an example: “A modernizer, such as the late Prime Minister Võ Văn Kiệt, may vow to maintain ‘the leadership role of the party’ and build ‘socialism’, but his vision of the party and socialism are completely different from those of the conservatives. Kiet and other modernizers within the VCP want a party that regards the interests of the entire nation as its own and define socialism as ‘a rich people, a strong nation,

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<sup>37</sup> Alexander Vuving writes about Four Players of Vietnamese politics (central government): faction of modernizers, conservatives, rent-seekers and China. But other scholars use those divisions too: Zachary Abuza, Carlyle Thayer, Gareth Porter and many others.. Works of those authors are surely important contributions towards the knowledge of Vietnamese politics, their primary research topics are not factions (except for Alexander Vuving), but they nevertheless use the concept reformer and conservative and others factions.

and just, democratic, and civilized society'. Patriotism, not Marxism-Leninism, is the bonding and guiding idea of the modernizers" (Vuving 2010, p. 368). Those are strong claims given the fact that we can barely know the motives of politicians and the goals they are following.

We will now look at the evidence from Ho Chi Minh City, the alleged center of reformers. Alain Gainsborough in his book offers an interesting insight into this problem: "The seeming willingness of scholars to label Ho Chi Minh City's leaders as reformers sits uncomfortably with the fact that in practice it is often difficult to know where a politician stands. A good example can be found in the way in which politicians can in their public pronouncements combine support for the private sector and 'a leading role' for the state sector, without any apparent feeling that they are being inconsistent." (Gainsborough 2010, p. 32).

There are certain characteristics of "reformism" that were taken into account by Alan Gainsborough. Vietnamese reform is being usually connected with the rise of the private sector, with the retreat of the state, rise of the reformist interests and decentralization. Gainsborough brings the evidence for the opposite processes in the Ho Chi Minh City. Instead of the rise of the private sector, raise of the new state business interest occurred; the state was not contracting, quite conversely, number of people employed in state sector raised and state institutions continued to control the business (through business licenses..); there was also evidence of more parochial interest as opposed to reformist, politicians argued about business and bureaucratic interests instead of different approaches to reform (Gainsborough 2010, pp. 32-47). Additionally, there is the argument about the functioning of the system. If you want to become a top politician you need to have central connections. Ho Chi Minh City's leaders who later held the important functions had those connections: For example Trương Tấn Sang (current President of Vietnam) was variously reputed to be a protégé of both former Prime Minister Võ Văn Kiệt (marked as a core reformer) and former party general secretary Đỗ Mười (said to be prominent conservative) (Gainsborough 2010, pp. 47-49). This chapter was supposed to draw the attention to the dangers of creating the definitions of factions on the basis of goals or motives of politicians. There is the set of goals that factions would probably follow, but it is very complex and changing set that can't be supported by the evidence. This is not to say that we shouldn't use the term "reformatory" or "conservative" but we should be careful when we do any analysis: politician that is said to be reformer can easily do the conservative steps and probably could fit the rent-seeking category too, policy is not revolving around the reformer-conservative axis in Vietnam.

Enumeration of the factions in Vietnam is very frequent and a goal of those analyses is to show that there is a change in the balance of factions, that one faction takes the leading role and thus the course of Vietnamese politics is predicted to change: “The previous Politburo contained three clearly identified reformers: Nguyen Van Linh, Vo Van Kiet, and Mai Chi Tho, and some would also have placed Nguyen Co Thach in this category. Of these, only Vo Van Kiet remains. Of the three neo-conservatives: Do Muoi, Vo Chi Cong, and Nguyen Duc Tam, none remains if it is assumed that Do Muoi, as the new secretary-general, has risen from the neo-conservative camp to the more Olympian position as moderator among the factions. It can be argued that this represents a shift in the Politburo balance of power from neo-conservative to reformer” (Pike 1991, p. 79). Douglas Pike uses the labels for factions (Martin Gainsborough counted that Pike used no fewer than seventeen labels for factions, such as: reformers, pragmatists, neoconservatives, conservatives, ideologues, military, modernizers, technocrats..), but in the same article Pike somehow reflects that it is problematic when he writes: “New members [of the Politburo] tend to be apolitical, or at least not clearly identified with any major political faction or with clear political ideological positions. According to this second interpretation, it would be a mistake to believe that Do Muoi replacing Nguyen Van Linh represented a conservative replacing a reformer. Rather it is a manifestation of Hanoi's politics of factionalism.” (Pike 1991, p. 79).

We tried to show that divisions of the factions based on policy positions are not very useful. In the next step we will try to apply Nathan's model to Vietnam to see whether the country shows factional characteristics.

### **3.3 Application of Nathan's model to Vietnam**

We will now proceed to the application of the model to Vietnam. First, we have to specify the time period: since this thesis focuses on current politics, it seems logical to limit the search for the cases that occurred in the time period from 1986 when reforms were launched up to the present day.

We can test the first assumption about the absence of killing or jailing by watching the cases of senior politicians who were purged. Killing or jailing was indeed rare. Politicians in Vietnam are usually sacked. In fact there are several reasons why top politicians in Vietnam were sacked: they either had opinions that were unacceptable, they were too ambitious or they were corrupted. Among the most salient cases was the one of Trần Xuân Bách, a Politbureau member who was sacked in 1990, officially for violating party discipline, but ostensibly for his “advocacy” of political reform (Abuza 2000, p. 8). Another known case was Nguyễn Hà

Phan, a member of the Politburo and deputy chairman of the National Assembly who was expelled from the Party in 1996, officially for “serious mistakes in his past work activities”. “Phan was in charge of the party’s economic commission and also of a special personnel commission charged with examining the suitability of delegates to the Eighth Congress. Shortly after Phan’s demise, his ideological and political mentor, senior Politburo member Dao Duy Tung, was reportedly placed under house arrest” (Far East and Australasia 2003, p. 1422). Some foreign media speculated that the real reason was linked to intense, high-level debate over the nation’s future course, and in particular over how far to push economic reform (*Deseret News*, Apr. 26, 1996).

During the 1900s and 2000s some corruption scandals led to the dismissal of Vietnamese politicians of high ranks. The most salient example was “PMU18 scandal” at the beginning of 2006. “Earlier in the year the head<sup>38</sup> of the Ministry’s Project Management Unit 18 had been arrested and charged with misappropriating US\$7 million from the budget to gamble on European football results. At the same time, the Deputy Minister of Transport was detained.” (Thayer 2007, p. 382). In this case, however, the fraud was evident.

For the study of factionalism is illustrative 1990s corruption case of Ngô Xuân Lộc, deputy prime minister who was connected with the Thang Long amusement park scandal in 1998. “...in December, the National Assembly dismissed Lộc from his state post and removed two deputies, one of being implicated in the Thang Long scandal and the other for negligence. (...) [In early 1999] as a result of the intervention of Đỗ Mười, Ngô Xuân Lộc was rehabilitated. Shortly after the [Sixth] plenum, it was announced that Lộc was appointed special advisor to the prime minister for industry, construction and transport” (Thayer 2001, pp. 182-183). This case clearly shows how things can work if someone has the right connections. It also supports Nathan’s proposition.

In other cases, politicians were not re-elected or weren’t allowed to serve the second term, as a good example we can use the case of Lê Khả Phiêu: “At the Ninth Congress in April 2001, an alliance of all groups removed the much-disliked Le Kha Phieu as General Secretary” (Koh 2001b, p. 539). David Koh reported that the reasons for this step were several: in 2000 Phiêu suggested to do away with the Board of Advisers<sup>39</sup> and the top politicians with influence in the Board reacted by the letter to the Politburo to denounce Phiêu. Among other reasons were that Phiêu often used intelligence to spy on other Politbureau members and “also made many concessions to China in negotiations on the land border treaty” (Koh 2001b, pp. 539-540). At the end he was not re-elected. This is a typical

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<sup>38</sup> Đào Đình Bình – Minister for Transport.

<sup>39</sup> Board of Advisors to the Central Committee.



example how things can go easily without jailing or loud manifestations. In sum, politicians in Vietnam today are seldom jailed with the exception of obvious corruption cases that are publicized in the media as was the case of PMU18. This state of things in Vietnamese politics reminds us of the principle “balance of power”.<sup>40</sup> A term commonly used in international relations can be applied here.

The Second and the third assumptions can be tested together. Can we see in Vietnam defensive strategies predominating over the political initiatives? We should perhaps make a distinction between overall political direction of the country which is decided consensually by the Party and formally approved at the National Congress and between particular policies that can be contested. We already mentioned “statisation”, a process that occurred in Vietnam with the advancement of the economic reforms. Political initiatives were conveyed from the Party to the state, this is one of the possible manifestation of the above points. Some part of the responsibility was formally devolved upon the state, but in the first chapter we showed that The Communist Party of Vietnam does not intend to give up its decisive role in policymaking.

We can explain moderation in policy initiatives in terms of the secondary position of policy in Vietnam as it was reported by Gainsborough and Koh. The reason is simple, in the environment where personal networks are of crucial importance it is risky for any politician to take policy initiatives, because there is quite a big possibility that his preferred political position will be in contradiction with the policy preferences of the other important personalities in the system: “A leader who wants a smooth term would find it difficult to press for radical and quick changes and would want to avoid stepping on too many toes. This is an important dynamic in the leadership selection process” (Koh 2001b, p. 539). We will illustrate this in the next point (about the tendency to block strong leaders) on the already mentioned case of Lê Khả Phiêu. At the same time we will cover another point, the one about shifting alliances.

Lê Khả Phiêu was a potentially strong leader that was sacked after serving three years of five-year term of the General Secretary post. Zachary Abuza devoted a whole article to analysis of the career of this politician, he writes: “Phieu was elected more or less by default, not because he had a large base of support or was able to cobble together a coalition of various factions. On the contrary, no faction was able to dominate the carefully and artificially crafted Politburo” (Abuza 2001, p. 4). Abuza explains several reasons of the downfall of Phiêu, among them one of the most important was Phiêu’s ambition: “Le Kha Phieu was an inordinately ambitious man. (...) First, there were widespread reports that Phieu tried to

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<sup>40</sup> With respect to factionalism this term was used by Avery Goldstein on China.

consolidate his power even more by changing Communist Party statutes so that he could concurrently assume the position of President and party General Secretary. (...) The second mistake Phieu made in his attempt to sure up his power, was to attempt to abolish the position of Advisor to the Central Committee, a position occupied by the former General Secretary Do Muoi, the former President Le Duc Anh and the former Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet. (...) Phieu's mistake is not that he underestimated their continued influence and power, but that they could act in concert. Muoi, Anh and Kiet were never on the same ideological page" (Abuza 2001, pp. 13-14).

If we look particularly at the relationship between Lê Khả Phiêu and Lê Đức Anh we can see Nathan's "Today's enemy may have to be tomorrow's ally" point. At the beginning of Phiêu's career he was Anh's protégé. Phiêu served in Cambodia under the guidance of Anh and became the Political Commissar of the armed forces. At the Party Congress in 1996, Phiêu gained a high position in Politburo thanks to Anh's recommendation. Later they became adversaries because of Phiêu's step aimed at the cancelling of the Board of Advisers where Anh held his position (Koh 2001b, p. 539). As a result Anh stepped into the alliance against Phiêu.

In sum, there are mechanisms that prevent a politician from acting on his own hook. Collective leadership is a principle that have been always emphasized in Vietnam and when this principle is threatened, the ad hoc coalitions of heterogenous politicians intervene to protect this basic setting. This brings us to another point of Nathan's characteristics, the sixth point about the ideology. As we already wrote Nathan is convinced that factions operate within a broad ideological consensus, there are ideological boundaries that cannot be crossed but within this boundaries doctrinal positions can be shifted (and are shifted) in order to achieve some particular goals. That is why politicians in Vietnam do not usually fit the categories as conservative or reformist. It is a common situation that a politician who is said to be conservative does some reformist steps and conversely. One example is the most prominent reformer Nguyễn Văn Linh who became General Secretary in 1986 and supported the introduction of the economic reforms. Later at Sixth Plenum in March sided with the conservative elements in their call for a break in the Glasnost drive and he denounced "the excess of liberalization" (Bui Xuan Quang 1989, p. 8).

Martin Gainsborough mentions Lê Khả Phiêu, who often referred to be a conservative was nevertheless associated with the call for democracy also in the political sphere (not only in the economic area) (Gainsborough 2007, p. 10). Examples are many, Đỗ Mười was also reported as generally conservative politician who advocated purely leftist economic policies

in the 1970s then economic reforms in 1980s. It can be said that we usually find some inconsistencies within the alleged stance of the politician and his real steps. It is connected with the opportunities and interests, and the shift from rigid ideology to pragmatism. There are spoils that can be gained through the skillful maneuvering and politicians are aware of it.

Next two characteristics about consensual decisions and crisis-consensus cycle. Leadership in Vietnam regularly pronounces consensual policymaking as a basic principle of Vietnamese politics from the beginning of the existence of the CPV. Consensual policymaking is currently influenced by the lobbying from the various interest groups. In an article conveying the 2012 New Year message Vietnamese Prime Minister of Vietnam acknowledged the surging influence interest groups have on the policymaking process. Prior to him Party General Secretary voiced the same concern (An Dien, Thanh Nien, 6 January 2012). We can think about how policies are shaped separately from what is the outcome. The outcome usually seems to be consensual. Suffice to look at the controversial decision of the Prime Minister about bauxite mining in the Central Highlands by the Chinese company. No government member come out against this decision. But at the same time, this decision caused massive protests, not only from the side of the common people but also from the National Assembly deputies. Naturally, in case of important decisions the problems in reaching consensus exist. For ex. When Vietnam and United States reached the Bilateral Trade Agreement, Vietnam has a delay in signing the deal because of the absence of consensus: “The weakness of the country’s current [at that time] top leaders – VCP General Secretary Le Kha Phieu, Prime Minister Pham Van Khai, and President Tran Duc Luong – made it difficult for them to forge a consensus on such a controversial issue” (Manyin 2002, pp. 44-45). Consensual decision making is important in Vietnam but the consensus is difficult to reach because of the interests and pressures that interfere in the process.

What about the consensus-crisis cycle? Let us consider the crisis in Vietnam in 1970s there are many interpretations of how it developed into the reform process. According to some scholars elites reacted to the emerging situation that was caused by the mixture of factors (economical decline, international development, domestic social problems, etc.). In other words it is problematic to say that reformers and conservatives reacted on a crisis by consensus based on the agreement of the conservatives to give to the reformers mandate to act. It leads us to the interpretation that the reform in Vietnam was actually in hands of elites and directed by them. But as we already said in the previous chapter, Martin Gainsborough and others would disagree.<sup>41</sup> However, elites played some role, at least in terms of securing

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<sup>41</sup> For details on the interpretation of the reform in Vietnam, see Gainsborough 2010, p. 5-8.

the economic transition. In his 2012 article Adam Fforde writes about three crises: The first one (1989-91) was successfully solved by the VCP who secured a transition to rapid market-economy, and economic growth. The second one (1997) “showed that there was still enough residual authority in the system to exercise state power when a crisis demanded it.” But the third one (2007-?) is the most serious one because it perhaps cannot be solved without a political reform (Fforde 2012b, pp. 15-19).

Bill Hayton wrote in detail about one particular part of the crisis (but the crisis of a different level than Adam Fforde writes about) in 2008 and how the Party succeeded in handling it. At that time it was the Party’s acting (effective policy instead of corruption and faction-ridden politics) that ward off the crisis. To simplify the whole story there was a period of wild gambling on the market before 2008. State owned enterprises (SOEs) expanded their businesses in several areas, among the most popular were real estate, finances, oil and such. The expanding of SOEs into those areas was allowed thanks to the advantages that SOEs enjoyed as cheap loans, low interest rates, etc. “In April 2008, Prime Minister Dung publicly urged SOEs to limit their non-core business to 30 per cent of their total capital. The fact that the government was reduced to ‘urging’ SOEs to follow the law revealed the problems it was having in maintaining control. The SOEs didn’t listen; behind the scenes in-fighting raged. The government was forced to try a different route. The central bank, which had been giving to GCs<sup>42</sup> an easy ride with low interests and generous money supply, was ordered into line. Rates were raised and the flow of cheap money reduced. Protective umbrellas had been put away; the leadership had been impelled to act in the national interest. It worked, the economy cooled down and the crisis abated” (Hayton 2010, p. 21). But it doesn’t mean that everything was resolved, this was just one small part of the story, suffice to look at the state of things now.

Presently in Vietnam we are the witnesses of the political crisis par excellence. Not only Western scholars but also top Vietnamese politicians recognize this crisis and write about it. The most obvious case was current General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng’s statement at the end of 2011 that “if the party wanted to remain in power, it must reform or die”. Among the most pressing issues are according to him: high inflation, high national and foreign debts, barriers that inhibit “leadership, management and administration”, besides “A number of party members lack proper discipline, are plagued by individualism, selfishness and opportunism” (*BBC*, 27 February 2012). This crisis is needed to be dealt with, but the question is how. The main problem rests in party discipline and the absence of political

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<sup>42</sup> GCs is an abbreviation for General Corporations.

reform. We will have to wait what will happen. Related to the characteristics of the factional arena, cycle consensus-crisis can be blocked if some forces in the system will be unwilling to support the political reform.

Other two characteristics will be also mentioned together, those are trying to discredit opposition factional members (through the rumor, bribery or assassination) and doctrinalism (factional struggle in terms of abstract issues of ideology, honor and face).

In Communist Review available online<sup>43</sup> we can read that corruption, bribery, extravagant life, waste and arrogance are said to be the evils that have to be stopped: “Those party members who degraded and made the mistakes, according to Lenin, should be expelled from the organization to make the party clean” (Nguyễn Đức Thắng, V.I. Lenin building., 14 June 2012). But in the concrete cases we can never know the real reasons why particular politicians were punished (moral failure or factional fighting). In Vietnam we can see many campaigns against so called “social evils”. This is an official position of the Party. However, unofficially those activities bring profit and are often tolerated. We showed this in the first chapter on the Koh’s case study of karaoke shops. As a result, trying to find the motives and reasons in the concrete cases makes from us fortunetellers. Also corruption cases and other scandals are such a sensitive issue in Vietnam, it damages the picture of the Party as a whole not only domestically but also internationally. But on the other hand, evidence from Vietnam shows relatively many examples of politicians being sacked over some “moral shortcomings”, ranging from sexual harassment, hacking websites, gambling, having relations with sex workers, etc.

Some time ago Đặng Thị Hoàng Yến, wealthy Vietnam MP was sacked over husband fraud claim and for making false declaration on her application to be a parliamentary candidate<sup>44</sup> (*Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 26 May 2012). Cases like this one can be found in the media, often with speculation about the real reasons, the problem is we cannot confirm or deny that they are the result of factional fighting in Vietnam.

Doctrinalism is visible in Vietnam, for ex. when it comes to SOEs and their role in the Vietnamese economy. This source of money brings profit to many. There are politicians who are affraid of further shifts towards market oriented economy which would perhaps lead to curtail subsidies for SOEs. In practice this would mean that politicians would lose their money. In the public, however, this is packed into the fear from undermining of the “socialist

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<sup>43</sup> Communist Review is available here: <http://english.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/default.aspx>.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted from the report of Radio Netherlands Worldwide: “Yen, 53, also omitted to mention that she was a member of the ruling Communist party in her first application to be a parliamentary candidate, reports said.”

foundations” (Manyin 2002, p. 45). Others who learnt how to gain profit from private companies would have the different rhetorics.

Next characteristic says that any factional arena will have from twenty to forty factions. It is not possible to confirm this or deny because of the insufficient information. But from the logic of the model (clientelist ties, noded communication, flexibility in ideology and policy positions, etc.) this characteristic seems persuasive. Professor Adam Fforde quotes in his article about Vietnam from 2012 his professor Suzanne H. Paine: “At any point in time, the range of opinion within a ruling Communist Party is at least as great as that within the general population, and, at times of crisis, certainly greater” (Fforde 2012b, p. 3). It is hard to believe that just two or three would attract the followers.

Twelfth characteristic seems to be difficult to confirm too. When there is an inside threat that would be able to overthrow the system, all factions unite together, the same situation would be the one with the outside force that would threaten the system. At this point the threat for the factions can be according to Nathan “foreign conquest, rebellion or military coup” (Nathan 1973, p. 50). None of it threatens Vietnam. We can only debate the threat of China. So far we don’t have the evidence of increasing unity among the Vietnamese elites when it comes to China’s expansionism in the Asia, but it is important to say that despite the South China Sea dispute, it is hard to imagine that China would really attack Vietnam with the intention to conquer it.

Thirteenth point supposes that factions wouldn’t question the principle of legitimacy upon which they base their claim to a role in the larger society. First, we have to search for the sources of legitimacy in current Vietnam. Carlyle A. Thayer identifies multiple sources: “The CPV still retains a reserve of political legitimacy based on its leadership in the various wars of national resistance against foreign intervention and as inheritor of the charismatic legitimacy of Ho Chi Minh. The VCP can also lay claim to performance legitimacy. It has successfully extricated Vietnam from socio-economic crisis, promoted economic growth, and reduced poverty. Another source of political legitimacy has been the VCP’s maintenance of domestic political stability. (...) Vietnam has also attempted to base its legitimacy on rational-legal norms through the ‘rule of law’ embodied in the 1992 state constitution and legislation passed by the National Assembly” (Thayer 2009, pp. 62-63). If we look at the media and generally all sources of informations in Vietnamese we won’t find a single politician currently in the function who would question any of those sources of legitimacy, quite the opposite we can find many and many examples where those sources of legitimacy are emphasized. There are a number of campaigns in Vietnam connected with the personality of Hồ Chí Minh and

his thoughts and deeds, for example Politburo Directive “to study and follow Uncle Ho’s moral example”.<sup>45</sup> The socialist rule of law state is said to be a basic principle in Vietnamese constitution and top politicians often emphasize the need for the contribution to building a socialist rule of law state. For example Nguyễn Minh Triết, former President of Vietnam in his speech on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the 10th General Assembly of the ASEAN in October 2009 said: “Developing the State Rule of Law for citizens in Vietnam has naturally become an objective trend and a constitutional principle, showing the combination between State rule of law and owned characteristics in Vietnam” (Triết 2009).

The last two points are important and they will be considered together. It is point fourteen – immobilism and fifteen – extreme stability of the factional system given by immobilism, lack of sanctions on elites and tendency towards alliances. Nathan thinks that immobilism will be in the factional system caused by the absence of a clear policy in one direction. In Vietnam immobilism is partially caused by the factional fighting (there are long periods when politicians are trying to gain the consensus) and partially by the fact that when policy is decided then there are problems with the implementation. Let us consider this step by step.

Brantley Womack in his article about Vietnam from 1997 identified the causes for political immobilism as the effect of a decade of economical reform. He wrote that economical reform was on one hand the most successful economic policy in the history of the Party but on the other hand it had many undesirable consequences such as widening gap between the rich and poor, the need for decentralization that is dangerous for the center and if applied it increases the disobedience of the local levels, increasing dissatisfaction on the side of society, difference between young and old generation given the different environment where those generations grew up, etc. (Womack 1997, pp. 85-86). According to Womack those forces would in a parliamentary regime confront openly each other but in Vietnam: “such pluralism and confrontation is not permitted so interests outside the political class are pre-empted and if necessary suppressed, and interests within go through a private cycle of consensus and discipline known as democratic centralism” (Womack 1997, p. 86). Vietnam has a serious problem with immobilism, according to Adam Fforde it is caused by the two other things: breakdown of Party internal hierarchy (disobedience of the local politics in the implementation of the policy) and absence of the reform of formal political institutions. This

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<sup>45</sup> For more details, see article “ Politburo Directive to study and follow Uncle Ho’s moral example reviewed”, available: <http://www.nhandan.com.vn/cmlink/nhandan-online/homepage/politics/domestic/politburo-directive-to-study-and-follow-uncle-ho-s-moral-example-reviewed-1.348551>.

immobilism doesn't produce stability at all, it produces the crisis. For immobilism in Vietnam we can find many causes. The question is, do those causes have the roots in the factionalism?

To sum up, in the predeceasing part we tested Nathan's factional model in Vietnam. We saw that many of his fifteen characteristics are present in Vietnam. But instead of the predicted stability, what we can see in Vietnam is instability. It can be objected that the causes of the crisis in Vietnam are not coming from the factional dynamics in Vietnam. But what if they at least partially do?

### **3.4 Factionalism and current crisis in Vietnam**

We should now think about the relationship between the crisis, the role of local elites and unreformed institutions in Vietnam. Inability or unwillingness of the Vietnamese leaders to reform the formal political institutions can be caused by the factional dynamics. Political reform is an important step and despite some of the Vietnamese politicians already expressed the need of reform, it is very likely that consensus will be very difficult to reach. Especially when the current setting provides Vietnamese elites sources for their patronage networks. We put an emphasis here on the topic of continuity versus change in Vietnamese regime as it was introduced in the previous part of this thesis. An insight into the economic reform process is very illustrative at this point. Adam Fforde describes the process of 'rent switching' as a set of strategies that were exerted as economy was changing. A certain group with political power (local party and planning bodies) use a social networks to switch the mode of rent creation (seek the rents elsewhere) to maintain advantage as economic system changes. Thus various groups retained their positions whether in the central planned or under the market economy (Fforde 2002). We can see that politicians rather adapted themselves when it was needed instead of trying to do the political steps that could lead to the jeopardizing of their positions. Political institutions now need reform but if they work "correctly" it would mean less resources for rent creation.

This hesitating with the political reform can be explained in terms of the characteristics of the factional system. If we look at the relevant characteristics of factionalism presented by Nathan (defensive political strategies, unlikely to take important political initiatives, decisions made by consensus, cycle crisis-consensus and immobilism), they all support our interpretation. The only one, namely crisis-consensus could potentially lead to the decision to do the political reform. But in case the situation is not that serious, we can expect gradual shifts.



What about the problem with the collapse of the Party inner hierarchy and disobedience of local elites? Let's suppose there is a factional system at the local level too. We already wrote that Nathan limited his model on central elites but there is no reason to believe so because: clientelist ties are present everywhere, there are resources that can be divided (functions, personal networks..) And what is more local leaders were empowered in the last thirty years and thus gained even more resources which can be used in exchange relationships. We assume that between the different levels of the factional system (central and local) there is the most serious antagonism because it is probable that the interests of local levels are different from those of central level. In Vietnam it is usually local level which has a tendency to experimenting. We will support this by the study of Edmund Malesky where he shows the impact of foreign direct investment on empowering of the local leaders.

Malesky describes that subnational leaders gained autonomy thanks to the reform experiments (violating central laws on economic policy) which was tolerated by the center because of the revenue it brought to the country as a whole (Malesky 2008). Localities thus gained advantage: not only in the form of money, but mainly in the form of their bargaining abilities with respect to the center. The situation emerged when local leaders want further and officially approved decentralization and perhaps more power while central elites are afraid of losing of control (with the further losing of authority). Gaining consensus between central and local factions in this situation is more than difficult and instability is increasing.

We will now summarize the ideas of the sections above. Vietnam shows many characteristics of the Nathan's factional model. However, we argued that this model should be updated because Nathan do not consider the role of local elites. Central political arena tends to be immobile but the local levels push for change which creates instability. Local elites are in certain sense pushed by the system to disobedience, which means illegal practices based on corruption, patronage, etc. This in turn feeds again factionalism at the local level. We can conclude that factional model should be extended or modified so that it considers also local leaders and their role. At this point, however, this topic is opened for further research.

## Conclusion

In this thesis we focused on factionalism in Vietnam both theoretically and practically. In this thesis we defended two main propositions. First, that theoretical grasp on factionalism in Vietnam is missing which results in misleading conclusions about development of the Vietnamese political regime. And second, that Andrew Nathan's factional model can contribute to explain one part of the current crisis in Vietnam, namely the central elites behavior in face of recent challenges. However, we also argued that the model should be extended so that it reflects the role of local elites in the system. Nathan's model suggested fifteen key characteristics of factional system, we changed the last one (where Nathan expects stability we expect instability) and applied it to Vietnam. This thesis documented that the central political arena in Vietnam shows majority of the factional characteristics. Finally we linked immobilism of factional systems with the current situation in Vietnam, namely central elites unwillingness to political reform and other decisive political steps, and concluded that factionalism thus contributes to the Vietnamese central elites behavior and consequently also to the current crisis in Vietnam.

We divided our thesis into three main chapters. The first chapter introduces the political regime in Vietnam or in other words the environment which surrounds the Vietnamese elites. We tend to think that Vietnam's "aspiring soft authoritarian" regime is not sustainable in its current form, the country needs further reforms because without them it could get into serious problems. After the economic market reforms and opening up Vietnam developed into a less coercive (or more tolerant) regime. Naturally, this had several effects that we presented in this chapter: increasing demands from more and more Westernized society, in certain sense loosening of the principle of democratic centralism with increasing autonomy of the local elites, and more space for bargaining with the regime. It appears that there are antagonistic tendencies in current Vietnam. We showed in this thesis that society tries to go forward while party-state shuffles the feeds. We drew an attention to unreformed institutions, very slow and cautious "experiments" with direct elections or elsewhere, control of the nomination process in the National Assembly elections and other problems. All this converges to one point: Party's hesitating with clear and decisive political steps. Supportive for this interpretation of the state of things in Vietnam is the discussion about economic reform also presented in this chapter. It is often interpreted erroneously (as the change that was introduced by the political elites) but Gainsborough and Fforde showed that policy played an insignificant role in it. To summarize it, this chapter showed that Vietnam is not that stable even though at first sight it may seem to be. The challenges are gathering under the

surface. We interpreted the political situation as immobilism or blocked politics which in a combination with other factors has a threatening potential. The first chapter showed us above all the “symptoms” (immobilism, hesitation of central elites, etc.) whereas the following chapters searched for the causes in the factional politics.

The second chapter is a theoretical one about the study of factionalism with the emphasis on the studies of factionalism in China. We assumed that China and Vietnam are similar regimes and made use of the fact that the study of factionalism in China is theoretically developed. At the beginning of the second chapter we presented a brief section on the development of “faction” and the approach toward factionalism in democratic countries. We concluded that Western factional models are not suitable for the study of Vietnam because they do not count with the limits on data in non-democratic regimes. We started the section about the study of factionalism in China at a clientelist tie which establishes the basis for factional relationships. We saw that clientelist tie itself has some features that shape the character of a faction: it is flexible, not exclusive, based on a constant exchange of gifts or services, it can be abrogated at will, etc. This itself foreshadowed that categories (Conservatives and Reformers) used in Vietnam are too rigid.

We favored Nathan’s structural-institutional approach. First, because we saw that it avoids the problems when trying to ascertain the motives and goals of factions (which are not traceable, they are changing and factions often try to hide them). Second, we agreed with Nathan that factions are mutually constituted by the culture and structure but once established they have certain characteristics. Subsequently, we put those characteristics under the scrutiny to draw attention to the limits of the model. The two most important problems were the following: the first is that Nathan designed his model only for central politics. We argued that the role of local elites in current regimes is undeniable. And the second problem is that Nathan assumes extreme stability of the factional system. We tend to think that such systems are unstable because of immobilism that they cause. To confirm this assumption we proceeded to the evidence in Vietnam.

Chapter three has the dual purpose of application of Nathan’s model to Vietnam and deciding whether it can help to explain the causes of the current political crisis. We started this chapter with a brief section about the presence of clientelist ties and networking in Vietnam. We showed on examples that networking in Vietnam is a part of everyday reality, politics included. In this chapter we criticized current studies on Vietnam which divide politicians into groups based on alleged policy positions. To support our stance we borrowed Gainsboroug’s findings and evidence from Ho Chi Minh city.

After that we sought for the evidence for the fifteen factional characteristics suggested by Nathan and we found many examples that signalize the presence of factionalism in the central politics in Vietnam, such as Vietnamese politicians changing their policy stance, shifting political alliances, blocking of strong leaders, etc.

In the last section of this chapter we attempted to connect the current crisis in Vietnam with our findings. We suggested that the current problems of Vietnam can be partially explained in terms of factionalism. Party at the central level hesitates with the political reform which is likely to be one of the manifestations of the factionalism (related to defensive political strategies, unwillingness to take important policy initiatives and an emphasis on consensus of all factions in the system when it comes to important decisions). We are convinced that the existing setting is advantageous for the central elites because it offers them opportunities and resources for rent creation, rewards for their followers and, generally said, profit. But we also stressed that the role played by local elites in the explanation of the crisis is crucial (in accordance with Adam Fforde's findings). Local leaders were empowered and gained autonomy thanks to economic prosperity and partial decentralization. They became the potential threat to the Party as a whole. The center needs them but at the same time it loses control over them and with it also authority. The role of local elites is missing in the Nathan's model and we suggest this to be the subject of the future research.

We tend to think that the new model for factional politics for China and Vietnam should (besides power limitation of factions; clientelist ties as a basis of factions; and size and shape limitations) include also central-local dimension because with the changing character of the Communist regimes ("softening") local elites may play much more important role for transitions than we would ever expect from the regimes that officially embrace democratic centralism.

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