

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**

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Department of Political Science  
Political Science

**DISSERTATION THESIS**

**Vietnamese Political Power, Authority and Legitimacy in the  
Context of Emulation Movements**

Politická Moc, Autorita a Legitimita v Kontextu Hnutí Socialistické  
Soutěže ve Vietnamu

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I hereby declare that I have elaborated this dissertation 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.

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In Prague on 31 May 2018

## **Abstract**

This dissertation thesis centres on the stability and instability of the Vietnamese communist regime, and how to understand this topic today. This problem was explored with the help of an imported political tool, which Vietnam adopted from the USSR, through China, in the late 1940s, and which experienced a revival in modern economically liberalised Vietnam: emulation movements. This thesis assumed that historic and current emulation movements were designed to control, but also to bring legitimacy or a 'legitimacy effect' (and the related stability), through their different functions. It asked how they succeeded in this task comparatively, in their historic and current incarnations. The framework of functions of emulation movements in Vietnam combined with the theoretical concepts of David Beetham, Max Weber and Robert Lamb served as basic theoretical tenets. The thesis concluded that emulation indeed helped create foundational regime legitimacy and offered possible links to a new communist doctrine. The thesis showed that a predominance of successful legitimization, combined with legitimacy effect and Ho Chi Minh's charisma, helped stabilize the DRV regime, especially until 1954. The analysis of present-day emulation movements, however, showed the weakness of the VCP as it struggles to fulfil the criteria of 'legitimate' authority, thus increasingly it relies on legitimacy effect and coercion. As progress and quality of life are increasingly the goals demanded by the population, and the VCP navigates a clash between the contrasting values of capitalism and communism, a clash between the value of patriotism and dependence on China, and a clash of the effectiveness of the market mechanism and the inefficiency of communist tools and institutions, it increasingly struggles with opposition. Based on original data collected in Vietnam, this dissertation also showed how this fits with the broader picture of power, authority and legitimacy in Vietnam.

**Key words:** Vietnam, Emulation Movements, Legitimacy, Legitimacy Effect, Authority, Power, Communist Regime

## **Anotace**

Tato disertační práce se zaměřuje na problém stability a nestability Vietnamského komunistického režimu a jak tomuto problému rozumět v dnešním Vietnamu. Toto téma bylo uchopeno skrze hnutí socialistické soutěže (Emulation Movements) ve Vietnamu – politický nástroj, který Vietnam převzal ze Sovětského Svazu prostřednictvím Číny ve 40. letech 20. století. Překvapivě, po období útlumu, byla tato hnutí v moderním, ekonomicky reformovaném Vietnamu znovu obnovena v 90. letech. Tato disertační práce stojí na předpokladu, že historická i dnešní hnutí socialistické soutěže byla možná původně vytvořena za účelem kontroly obyvatelstva, ale také za účelem přínosu legitimacy, efektu legitimacy a tudíž stability. Tuto druhou možnost daná práce zkoumá prostřednictvím funkcí těchto hnutí a ptá se, jak hnutí socialistické soutěže uspěla v legitimizování a ustabilňování Vietnamského komunistického režimu v historicko-komparativní perspektivě. Práce využívá dlouhé řady primárních zdrojů a kombinuje rámec funkcí hnutí socialistické soutěže s teoretickými koncepty předních autorů píšících na téma politické legitimacy, Davida Beethama, Maxe Webera a Roberta Lamba. Tato práce došla k závěru, že hnutí socialistické soutěže skutečně přispěla k vytvoření legitimacy nového zakládajícího se režimu a pomohla vytvořit spojnice mezi importovanou komunistickou doktrínou a Vietnamským obyvatelstvem, tradicemi a kulturou. Legitimita presidenta Ho Chi Mina, jeho charisma a efekt legitimacy, to vše pomohlo ke stabilizaci režimu Vietnamské demokratické republiky, zejména do roku 1954. Analýza současných hnutí však odhalila slabiny současné Komunistické strany Vietnamu (KSV), která nespĺňuje kritéria “legitimity” a více a více spoléhá na efekt legitimacy a kontrolu. Čím více společnost vyžaduje kvalitu života a KSV musí balancovat mezi kontrastujícími hodnotami komunismu a kapitalismu, mezi střetem hodnot patriotismu a závislosti na Číně, a také royporem mezi efektivitou trhu a neefektivitou komunistických nástrojů a institucí, více a více naráží na protesty a opozici. Na základě dat sesbíraných ve Vietnamu, tato disertace ukazuje na tyto problémy v širším kontextu moci, autority a legitimacy ve Vietnamu.

**Klíčová slova:** Vietnam, Hnutí socialistické soutěže, Legitimita, Efekt legitimacy, Autorita, Moc, Komunistický režim

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## **Acronyms**

APPTSSNB – All people Participate in Protection of Territorial Sovereignty and Security of National Borders

APPSF – All People Protect the Security of the Fatherland

BNC – Building New Countryside

CCOP – Central Committee of the Party

CPAG – Chinese Political Advisory Group

DRV – Democratic Republic of Vietnam

ICP - Indochinese Communist Party

PAVN – People’s Army of Viet Nam

SFHE – Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Example’

SOEs – State-Owned Enterprises

SRV – Socialist Republic of Vietnam

VCP – Vietnamese Communist Party

VFF – Vietnamese Fatherland Front

VWP – Vietnamese Workers’ Party

## Introduction

*“Emulation is planting, rewarding is harvesting”*

- Ho Chi Minh<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation thesis is about the stability and instability of the Vietnamese communist regime and how to understand it today. This problem is explored with the help of an imported political tool which Vietnam adopted from the USSR, through China, in the late 1940s and which is surprisingly in use in modern economically liberalised Vietnam: **emulation movements**. This thesis assumes that historical and current emulation movements were designed to control but also to bring legitimacy or a ‘legitimacy effect’ (and the related stability) through their different functions. This thesis asks how they succeeded in this task comparatively, in their historic and current incarnations.

Emulation movements were designed in Soviet Russia and, as it was officially presented, they were to serve a double purpose: to raise economic production via friendly competition and to create a ‘new socialist man’.<sup>2</sup> As these purposes do not appear to be highly relevant in today’s Vietnam,<sup>3</sup> this thesis asks why Vietnam maintains a tool which does not seem to have many practical benefits. The underlying reasons are in my view related to the ‘hidden’ functions that emulation movements fulfil. This thesis suggests that emulation movements had in the past, and have now, a set of functions which were and are important for regime sustenance and stability. However, this thesis will also show how the outdated design of Vietnam’s emulation movements, in combination with the new changes and challenges that the country deals with, create instability in modern Vietnam.

In a broader perspective, this thesis is framed in the discussion of the durability of revolutionary regimes, which was invigorated by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. They explain the durability of revolutionary regimes through four variables: destruction of independent power centres, strong ruling parties, invulnerability to coups, and enhanced

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<sup>1</sup> “Thi đua là gieo trồng, khen thưởng là thu hoạch” (Ho Chi Minh, June 1948)

<sup>2</sup> A ‘new socialist man’ was a creation of Soviet propaganda, he/she was a selfless worker with a positive attitude to work, ever prepared to work over time, a person devoted to socialism.

<sup>3</sup> Vietnamese leaders gave a green light to the economic reforms of Đổi Mới in 1986 and invited a market economy in the country. In the 1990s Vietnam experienced substantial economic growth which resulted in the country reaching the middle-income status in 2011. As such, emulation which was meant to be a polar opposite of market competition thus inevitably lost its momentum in Vietnam. An assumption could be made that a ‘new socialist man’ had been created and in the context of a market economy, is not as relevant.

coercive capacity. In their view, revolutionary regimes manage to destroy alternative power centres, do not face military coups, create a powerful disciplined party and coercive apparatus which can immediately suppress any emerging opposition. Levitsky and Way admit that there are also new sources of stability even when the revolutionary heritage is long forgotten: institutionalized mechanisms of leadership succession, economic growth and renewal of conflict (Levitsky and Way 2013, pp. 14-15). This straightforward picture of entities called revolutionary regimes is not, I believe, entirely satisfactory.

If we take more than a cursory look at the case of Vietnam, we discover arguments that the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) is not as strong as it looks, and indeed is facing an inner crisis; so much so, that official documents affirm that the Party struggles with inner discipline, to the extent that if such issues are not addressed, it will face to a challenge to its legitimacy which has the potential to threaten the very existence of the regime (Resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party, 2011). Furthermore, in Levitsky and Way's work, I see a void left in explaining the relationship between political strategies such as coercion and other factors such as economic success, which are completely independent sources of stability. This thesis will show how economic success creates legitimacy while also undermining it. Due to their emphasis on coercive institutions, it appears that Levitsky and Way see regimes like Vietnam more as 'survivors' rather than regimes which pursue 'success'. The regime in Vietnam can control society with its powerful coercive apparatus but there are many cases when we can observe that it hesitates to use its power in a coercive manner, as coercion can and does also threaten to create the adverse effect of instability. The leadership realizes that coercion does not lead to regime popularity or success and tries to increase legitimacy with various different strategies. Theoretically, the presence of legitimacy ensures that the Party does not need to coerce but what does this mean for Vietnam? This thesis is based on the argument that there can be many reasons for stability and also, that it is important to look at the other side – instability or opposition and how it is triggered. If we look first comparatively at the sources of stability and instability in historical and current emulation movements, I argue, are able to better consider the role of coercion or legitimacy in the durability of a specific revolutionary regime: Vietnam.

## What are Emulation Movements?

The word ‘emulation’ comes from Latin ‘aemulatio’, with the two related meanings ‘rivalry’, and ‘imitation’ (Mahoney 2017). *The Oxford English Dictionary* explains emulation in terms of ‘effort to match or surpass a person or achievement, typically by imitation’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). The Vietnamese equivalent for the English expression ‘emulation’ (*‘thi đua’*)<sup>4</sup> is explained in the Vietnamese dictionary in terms of ‘bringing talents and strengths together to achieve the best result in combat, production, work or study’<sup>5</sup> (Hoàng Phê 1988, p. 967). This definition is visibly adapted to changing Vietnamese specific conditions: the list of goals to achieve initially starts in wartime with a focus on combat and only later is followed by production. Based on this Vietnamese dictionary definition we can assume that Vietnamese emulation will be materially different from its Soviet or Chinese counterparts despite being modelled on them. An emphasis on combat in Vietnam was given by the fact that when Vietnam launched their emulation movements it was at war with the colonial power France.

‘Emulation’ can be tracked back to the writings of Karl Marx however it was developed into a specific Soviet model by V. I. Lenin in 1919. This Soviet imprint gave birth to the notion of ‘socialist emulation’, which we know today from the communist or former communist countries. At the heart of the Soviet-style socialist emulation was the ideal of a worker who would typically work in his free time or over-time to achieve an exceptional work result and increase production voluntarily, based on his or her own initiative. That person then became a model emulated by other workers. Emulation was associated, furthermore, not only with an increase in industrial production but also with the creation of a new socialist morality and a new approach to work. An ‘Emulation Model’ was a person or group of people who embodied the characteristics of a ‘new socialist man’<sup>6</sup> which became a central theme of Soviet emulation. The phrase ‘Emulation Model’ was often associated with the idea of a ‘hero’ who was to be followed. The characteristics of an emulation hero were expressed in terms of sacrifice, patriotism, initiative, selflessness, hard work, volunteering, modernisation, industrialisation, and ethical standing. This model worker was propagandised by the regime

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<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, I generally use diacritics on Vietnamese words and names. The exception (because of its frequent use) is the name Ho Chi Minh (‘HỒ Chí Minh’). Similarly, I do not use diacritics on the names of Vietnamese authors for which did not contained diacritics in the original sources.

<sup>5</sup> Original: ‘Thi đua là cùng nhau đem hết tài năng, sức lực ra nhằm thúc đẩy lẫn nhau đạt thành tích tốt nhất trong chiến đấu, sản xuất, công tác hoặc học tập’.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2, (Fitzpatrick 1999 cited in Yu, 2010, p. 233).

through media, school textbooks, different genres of literature, film, propaganda billboards, slogans, street names, brochures, pictures, stamps, songs, etc.

Emulation movements were often also based on a system of strong material incentives that created motivation to participate. Those who became emulation models and heroes received substantial rewards, financial bonuses, material rewards or special channels to better healthcare, travels, etc. This was not the case for all countries, for example Mao Zedong in 1960s abolished material incentives, however most communist countries used this type of motivation.

The content of emulation changed over time and throughout its development in different environments, countries, and leaders. The original purposes and functions of emulation shifted and developed to serve different ends. These changes, in Vietnam, are central to this thesis. I ask, what are the purposes of emulation movements today? There are, I argue, multiple reasons why emulation movements are a useful and valuable subject for study.

## **Why Focus on Emulation Movements?**

First, emulation movements in Vietnam are a largely unexplored part of Vietnamese everyday reality. There are no Western works written directly on this topic. That creates both challenges and opportunities. Emulation movements are a substantial part of Vietnamese formal politics to which the regime devotes appreciable resources, and as such, are worth exploring even for the sake of adding to our knowledge of Vietnam and her politics. However, the study of emulation movements provides more than that fundamental opportunity.

The second reason why emulation movements are an important area for research is the fact that individual movements address major issues that Vietnam currently deals with: degradation of morality and ideology, security, countryside, environment, education, family, etc. (see Chapter 4). This shows that the VCP acknowledges that these issues are problems that require solutions. Indeed, these topics, especially the areas of morality, security and environment create a direct challenge to the VCP, as they trigger and have triggered substantial open opposition. I will look at these topics (Chapter 4) and investigate the reasons for the opposition, and how the emulation movements engage with the topics and so seek to manage this opposition. This directly provides material for the topic of stability and instability. Emulation movements in Vietnam, according to the VCP, are supposed to deal

with imminent issues and problems. This thesis will investigate whether this is the case. The question of the gap we arguably see today, between an economically-reformed Vietnam, and the suitability of emulation as a practical tool for the VCP, is particularly important and so a focus of this thesis.

Third, there is a historical component to emulation, as the first movements were launched by Ho Chi Minh in 1948, after the 1945 Declaration of Independence but well before the formal international acceptance of the Hanoi-based Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1954. This historical component is important for Vietnam as it set and articulated many of the important values which people have now been taught for decades. Now the same values create frictions due to the fact that they are deeply embedded in older generations, whereas whilst new generations seem to appreciate these values, they seem to have taken on slightly shifted forms; this tension can be studied through the changing nature of emulation campaigns. These values can be generalized in the term ‘patriotism’ but as we will see, this topic is complicated as it contains many different specific values. Comparison between the original shapes, purposes or topics of emulation movements and the current shapes, purposes and topics is therefore a valuable basis for helping us understand change in today’s Vietnam. Emulation in this historically comparative perspective is particularly useful because it can help us to understand some aspects of the VCP’s legitimacy today, and the limits which past perspectives on ‘heroes’ and other values impose upon contemporary regime strategies.

### **Thesis Assumption: The Functions of Emulation Movements**

This thesis assumes that the connection between legitimacy and emulation movements is best understood through consideration of the *functions* of emulation movements. The functions of emulation movements are tied to a simple question: What was/is the motivation for communist regimes to organise emulation movements? Although answers will differ for various countries and various periods of time, this thesis focuses on Vietnam and what these functions can tell us about legitimacy or what I will call ‘legitimacy effect’ (see below, Chapter 1).

Countries which adopted the Soviet communist model adopted also political tools and institutions which were designed to serve certain purposes, indeed most of them were primarily designed to control their populations. However, if we look at emulation movements in Vietnam, we discover more functions than just control. They arose during wartime, in fact

rather early in the struggle against the French led by the VCP, and then evolved to suit new conditions both during peace and again war (Marr 2013). The functions of emulation movements and exploring their connection to legitimacy, legitimacy effect, and stability/instability are amongst the contributions of this thesis.

## **Emulation, Legitimacy and ‘Legitimacy Effect’**

The connection between emulation movements and the problem of legitimacy is not immediately obvious. There are, I argue, three main reasons.

The first reason is that the concept of legitimacy has, in political science, different understandings. One of these understandings is derived from the almost canonical work of Max Weber with his three ideal types of legitimate power. His understanding is above all descriptive, which means that legitimacy simply *IS* when we have evidence that people obey laws/authority which legally gained power (legal-rational), monarchs (traditional) or exceptional personalities (charismatic). Weber does not therefore deal with the problem of values (whether the laws, tradition or charisma reflects some specific underlying values) or consent (whether people agree or disagree). This led many scientists to add these additional layers to their notion of legitimacy. For example, David Beetham who criticised Weber for being ‘incomplete’ and who introduced three essential parts of legitimacy: norms, underlying values, and consent. As a second example, another contributor, Robert Lamb, from the area of conflict and peace studies, provided tools for the practical analysis of legitimacy with the idea that legitimacy needs to be considered far more concretely, and to lose its abstraction. If we look at these different theoretical accounts of legitimacy, however, we find some connecting features: legitimacy can be about rules, beliefs, values, and consent. In a practical sense, I look (when analysing Vietnamese emulation movements) for their actual or intended effects on the regime’s worthiness of support and stability, or alternatively to the opposite, unintended effects on its worthiness of opposition and instability. These are the common delimitations which create a connection to emulation movements. Emulation movements were/are a tool through which we can observe and infer norms, values and beliefs. They are also a tool for mobilisation, and as such they provided at least ‘surrogate consent’.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This expression is appropriated from Beetham (1991). ‘Surrogate’ consent is consent that is related to the mobilisation of grassroots in the communist regimes. As an evidence of popular commitment, this orchestrated



The second reason why the connection between emulation and legitimacy is not immediately obvious is guided by our Western biases. Vietnam is a non-democratic regime and as Prof. Lucan Way suggested (personal conversation in Sydney, 2017), there may appear no reason to focus on legitimacy when the VCP has a powerful coercive apparatus which is stronger than the need for legitimacy – force will win out in the end. Despite, and in opposition to this view, a central goal of this thesis is to show that legitimacy does have its place in Vietnam, that emulation movements show the regime seeking it and ‘legitimacy effects’ and so the dismissal of legitimacy as a topic not worth exploring would wrongly narrow and restrict our scope of understanding of the Vietnamese political landscape. Whilst the thesis does nonetheless acknowledge that some forms of power or habit create the same effect as legitimacy, that is support, consent or stability, the evidence provided, and its analysis, suggests that the VCP is concerned about its legitimacy and the need to avoid or reduce the extent to which it relies upon coercion. This thesis works with the novel expression ‘legitimacy effect’ (see below Chapter 1) to express this idea. For Vietnam, I argue, legitimacy and legitimacy effects are both important.

Third reason is that there has been limited understanding of emulation movements and how they practically work in Vietnam. This thesis fills that gap in the literature.

## **Goals of This Thesis**

This thesis has multiple challenging tasks ahead. The broadest way to express the sum of these tasks is: to gather a better understanding of the political regime and the country of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Understanding Vietnam politically means: understanding the institutions and tools the VCP uses for governing Vietnam; understanding the ideology and narratives that the VCP as a Party with the monopoly on power promotes; understanding the challenges and stabilisers of the Party-State; understanding elites and society; and understanding the political culture and tradition. An important element of all of this understanding is the way in which power, authority and legitimacy operate in Vietnam. Emulation movements are a very useful entity to engage with because as we will see, they contribute to all of these understandings.

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mobilisation of the grassroots (some substantial minority), according to Beetham, served as the surrogate consent of the population as a whole (Beetham 1991, p. 182).

The first goal of this thesis is to examine emulation movements in Vietnam to provide a basis for their analysis. This includes discovering: how emulation was imported to Vietnam; in which context it was initiated; and what the specifics of emulation in Vietnam were compared to other countries. The comparison is especially relevant against the country of origin of socialist emulation (the Soviet Union), and China, which had a substantial ideological and practical influence on Vietnam. It also includes details about the organisational aspects of emulation and rewards. This thesis will introduce the vocabulary of Vietnamese emulation movements and also the narratives, topics and values perpetuated by the movements. An examination of movements in Vietnam will be provided for two separate periods: 1948-1975 and 2006-2018. Apart from reasons of economy, these two periods were selected for the following reasons. In 1948, emulation was officially launched by President Ho Chi Minh in Northern Vietnam, just three years after he had read the declaration of Vietnamese independence at Ba Đình Square in Hanoi. Emulation movements were developing through the First Indochina Conflict (1946-1954) with the colonial power, France, and in the 1960s they gained their peak prominence. However, this did not last long due to Vietnam's entering war with the US, the Second Indochina Conflict (1964-1975). The period from 1975, that is after Vietnamese unification, appears as a period of change. Unification seemed to shift attention away from emulation movements. The renewal of interest in emulation movements from the VCP came again in the late 1990s and specifically in 2003 when Vietnam promulgated the Law on Emulation and Rewards. This second period therefore is one that starts after the emergence of a market economy in the early 1990s, and coincides approximately with the political unrest in Thái Bình Province<sup>8</sup> in the Red River Delta in 1997 that showed the existence of major popular discontent with the regime.

The second goal is to create a typology of present-day emulation movements in Vietnam. To facilitate this, the movements will be divided according to Areas of emulation based on three axes: Scope, Mandate to Launch and Participation (see Chapter 4). As no typology of emulation movements in Vietnam has yet existed, this thesis makes that contribution.

Third, this thesis will elaborate a list of functions of emulation movements, including both the functions that are officially proclaimed and functions that are rather hidden. In this

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<sup>8</sup> Thái Bình protests were peasant's protests in Vietnam in late 1997. Among the main causes of protests were 'compulsory labour, arbitrary fees and taxes (ranging from land use fees to teacher's fees)' and overall corruption of local politicians. The protests were considered to be the 'largest threat to regime's legitimacy since the early 1980s' (Abuza 2001, p. 83).

context ‘functions’ are defined as the set of purposes that emulation movements arguably fulfil. These include lists of both ideological and practical functions.

Fourth, this thesis develops the topic of ‘legitimacy effect’ (see Chapter 1) and will consider habit, seduction, persuasion, and manipulation as important power-strategies deployed by the regime which seek to create this effect.

Fifth, through emulation movements and their connection to legitimacy and the legitimacy effect, this thesis will aim to uncover and elucidate the problem of stability and instability in Vietnam.

The sixth goal of this thesis is, based on the findings, to draw broader conclusions about relationships between power, authority and legitimacy in Vietnam.

## **Overview of the Literature**

This research was complicated by a problem concerning a lack of existing secondary literature. There is a serious scarcity of English language resources devoted to emulation movements in general, and emulation in Vietnam in particular. While there are some English language materials written on emulation movements in the Soviet Union or China, scholars in the field of Vietnam seem to be substantially behind. For this thesis it created a challenge as most of the information used had to be tracked down in Vietnamese written resources. The thesis is written without ample reference to extant analyses with which it can engage, as these are, for Vietnam, almost entirely lacking. However, primary materials are rather abundant and were utilised extensively in this thesis.<sup>9</sup>

## **Vietnamese Language Resources**

The Vietnamese resources used in this thesis can be divided into the following categories: Archival material; Journal articles; Newspaper articles; Electronic resources; Legal documents; and Speeches.

Archival materials concerning emulation are located in many places. Some materials are a part of the Centre of National Archives III. (‘Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia III’), and

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<sup>9</sup> I am a Czech native and as such, Czech is my primary language. I have been learning Vietnamese since 2005, I have lived in Viet Nam and I am equipped to make the translations as required.

many are located in the Room of the office of the Deputy Prime Minister (‘Phòng lưu trữ phủ thủ tướng’). Other materials are stored in Ministries. A relatively large part of the archival material has been digitalized and is available online at the website of State Record Management and Archive Department of Vietnam<sup>10</sup>. The historical overview of emulation movements in Vietnam in this thesis draws upon the archival material available online.

Articles in Journals are another valuable source of information on emulation movements in Vietnam. In this thesis I have used many official journals, for example, *The Communist Review* (‘Tập chí Cộng Sản’); the *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* (‘Tập chí Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn’); the *Journal of Technology and Science of Quang Binh Province* (‘Tập chí Thông tin Khoa học và Công nghệ Quảng Bình’); and the *Journal of Political Theory* (‘Tập chí Lý luận chính trị’), etc.

Newspaper articles used in this chapter can be divided in two categories: 1. articles published in the 1950s and 1960, either in the *National Salvation Newspaper* (‘Báo cứu quốc’) or the *People’s Newspaper* (‘Báo Nhân Dân’); 2. Articles published since 2000 in numerous newspapers, primarily published electronically. Among the most notable is the *New Hanoi* (‘Hà Nội Mới’), a newspaper of the Party Committee of Hanoi City; and a number of local newspapers: the *Quang Binh Newspaper* (‘Báo Quảng Bình’), the newspaper of the province Quang Binh; the *Hai Phong Newspaper* (‘Báo Hải Phòng’), the newspaper of Hai Phong City; the *Vietnamese Agriculture Newspaper* (‘Báo Nông nghiệp Việt Nam’) and many others.

‘Electronic resources’ is a general category for numerous materials available online, on diverse websites. These include the websites of local Party or state organisations; the Central Committee for Emulation and Rewards (‘Ban Thi đua - Khen thưởng Trung ương’), Mass Organisations<sup>11</sup> – Communist Youth, Women’s Union and Trade Unions; Radio Voice of Vietnam, Speeches from the National Patriotic Emulation Congresses, etc.

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<sup>10</sup> Available online at: <http://www.archives.gov.vn/Pages/Home%20page.aspx>.

<sup>11</sup> Vietnam developed their political organisation of people based on the Soviet model. Different groups of people in Vietnam are associated in so called Mass Organisations which are under the control of the VCP. Vietnamese Mass Organisations are, for example: The General Confederation of Labour (Trade Unions); the Ho Chi Minh’s Communist Youth Union; the Women’s Union; the Farmer’s Union and the Veterans Union. Wischerman in his 2003 article writes that despite the fact that in history Mass Organisations served as the ‘transmission belts’ that submissively helped to implement authority’s decisions, present-day Mass Organisations in Vietnam have greater independence which resulted in increasing conflicts between them and the government (Wischermann 2013, p. 8). Mass Organisations in Vietnam are grouped in an umbrella organisation called Vietnam Fatherland Front (‘Mặt Trận Tổ Quốc Việt Nam’) (VFF).

Legal documents include predominantly presidential decrees (‘sắc lệnh’), resolutions (‘nghị định’) and directives (‘chỉ thị’) that were issued since 1947. I also work with the Law on emulation and Rewards (‘Luật thi đua, khen thưởng’) and other legal documents.

Ho Chi Minh’s speeches, writings and remarks are available in his *Selected Writings* (‘Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập’) or elsewhere. Volume 5 of *Ho Chi Minh’s Selected Writings* is an important source of information about the beginning of emulation movements. Various speeches from other influential figures are also used.

### **English Language Resources**

English language secondary sources were primarily used for the early sections of this thesis. Emulation in China is covered in the books and articles written by Sheridan (1968); Kaple (1994); Yu Miin-ling (2010) or Funari and Mees (2013). Literature on emulation in the Soviet Union is also relatively abundant, partly in the original works of V. I. Lenin and his successors, and partly in academic works which cover different perspectives and periods of emulation movements in the Soviet Union (Thurston 1993; Siegelbaum 1988; Slapentokh 1988, 1990, 2001, etc.).

The section on the history of emulation in Vietnam was problematic given the shortage of English language secondary literature. One exception is a book with a related topic of Vietnamese heroism between 1948 and 1964 written by Benoit de Tréglodé (2012), which was very valuable. David Marr touches very lightly this topic in his 2013 book about Vietnam in 1945-1946 (Chapter 9 on mass mobilisation) and his earlier book about Vietnam in 1945 (1997). Alexander Woodside also circles around in his book *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam* (1971). Other materials written in English were not found.<sup>12</sup>

Other resources used in this thesis are the more general writings of political scientists and others related to the theoretical and conceptual understandings of the problems of legitimacy, power and authority. The literature here is abundant.

In a large part, this thesis works with the concept of legitimacy and ‘legitimacy strategies’. The thesis works primarily with three authors already mentioned who have contributed to this topic - Max Weber, David Beetham, and Robert Lamb. These three authors

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<sup>12</sup> Potentially, the French language resources could be helpful for this thesis, for example Christopher Goscha’s books, however, my knowledge of French language was not sufficient for engaging with them.

were selected as they represent different but complimentary and interesting approaches to problem of legitimacy (and the related authority). Apart from their prominence in the field, their positions were found useful in the analysis below (Chapter 6). Weber's descriptive writings on legitimacy (particularly that of charismatic authority which I found relevant and useful for Vietnam) were drawn from the book *Economy and Society* (1978), and an essay, *Politics as a Vocation* (1921). David Beetham, an author directly criticizing Weber for an incomplete account of legitimacy, contributed to the topic in a book, *The Legitimation of Power* (1991), and an article, *Max Weber and the Legitimacy of the Modern State* (1991). His work I found useful because of his concept of charisma which is relevant in considering the personality of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. The last author whose work has a primary input in this thesis is Robert Lamb, who attempted to bring legitimacy from an abstract subject of political philosophy into a more practical sphere, reshaping it into a tool for analysis. His interesting thoughts on this topic are presented in his work: *Rethinking Legitimacy and Illegitimacy* (2014). His work I found useful because of his contribution to the topic of what I call 'legitimacy effect'.

Hannah Arendt's republican normative account of legitimacy is available in the book, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thoughts* (1961), particularly in an essay, *What is Authority?* This thesis does not directly work with Hannah Arendt's theory but rather uses some specific components and vocabulary, which I will mention where relevant.

The concepts of political power used in this thesis come from two primary sources: Steven Luke's book, *Power: A Radical View (Second Edition)* published in 2005 and Thomas Wartenberg's book, *The Forms of Power* (1990). What Wartenberg and Lukes have in common, I argue, is an innovative and interesting approach towards the basic concept of 'power' in political science. Lukes introduces power dimensions which helps this thesis, specifically in the section which seeks for an explanation of 'legitimacy effect' (Chapter 1), where his third dimension of power can, I argue, be clearly observed. Wartenberg's understanding of power invites the idea that legitimacy can be potentially also thought of as a dynamic rather than static phenomena, which is again useful when considering the changing apparent functions of emulation movements in Vietnam.

Furthermore, this thesis is framed in Levitsky and Way's writing on the durability of revolutionary regimes. Since they are currently working on a so far unfinished book on this topic, I draw from their article from 2013: *The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes*, published in Vol. 24, No. 23 of the *Journal of Democracy*.

## **Methodology**

This thesis uses interpretative methods to examine stability and instability in the Vietnamese political system, framed within the issues of legitimacy and ‘legitimacy effect’. This research is based on a collection of two different sets of data: 1. data related to emulation movements in Vietnam; and 2. data relevant for the topic of the connection between power, authority and legitimacy in Vietnam.

For the first data set I consulted Vietnamese resources, particularly literature, media, archival documents and official Party documents and websites. The collection of this data was a particularly long process for two reasons. Firstly, the majority of resources were in the Vietnamese language which required extensive commitments of time for reading and subsequent translation of required cited sections into English. This also built up the vocabulary for translations into English of this under-researched topic. Many translations, especially of the names of emulation movements, are my own because there are no official English translations. Secondly, the nature of the Vietnamese resources is rather challenging due to its inconsistency. For example, newspapers and websites often provide information which was taken from some other resource without adequate citations. Many articles are published without affiliation to a certain author or date of publishing. Thirdly, due to the secrecy of the regime, some official information is unavailable, for example, systematic statistical data related to emulation movements in Vietnam (which almost certainly exists but is secret).

Collected data were analysed from different perspectives provided by the theoretical tenets of the three selected authors and their works on political legitimacy: Max Weber’s charisma; David Beetham’s rules, beliefs and consent; and Robert Lamb’s focus on ‘what does legitimacy do?’. Looking at legitimacy through the lenses of these three authors, I develop arguments about some effects that can be observed, put together and thought of as existing within a dynamic political and historical context. This thesis does not intend to argue for or against, or assert, ‘one correct’ understanding of legitimacy; instead, it uses the ideas of different authors to complement each other and so create a comprehensive view.

For the second data set, I proceed to analyse the problem of power, authority and legitimacy in Vietnam in the context of emulation movements. I add to my other data qualitative data collected during fieldwork in Hanoi in 2013 and 2014. For this, I chose to analyse politics via language using semi-structured interviews and participant observation in

an attempt to uncover Vietnamese perceptions of authority, and how they are discussed and positioned within power relations. As the position of the VCP stays unchallenged and the VCP seeks to suppress any kind of opposition to the Party's monopoly, asking directly about political opinions in Vietnam does not bring any reliable data. The alternative approach I adopted which favoured asking about Vietnamese language ('what do the expressions mean?') dealt with this issue. I achieved many interesting observations and findings from people's explanations of the words (authority and power). Some findings were published in an article co-authored with Adam Fforde, '*Political Authority in Vietnam: Is the Vietnamese Communist Party a Paper Leviathan?*', in the Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs in 2017.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

The first chapter opens with a discussion of the problem of emulation and legitimacy or 'legitimacy effect'. This is followed by a brief discussion of the possible and likely functions of emulation movements. A section of the first chapter is devoted to institutional arguments about the durability of revolutionary regimes, engaging with Levitsky and Way, 2013. Subsequently, the chapter provides a discussion of the problems of power, authority and legitimacy. This thesis provides the detailed accounts of legitimacy of the three selected authors: Weber, Beetham, and Lamb. Additionally, this section, inspired by the ideas of R. Lamb and T. Wartenberg introduces the concepts of 'legitimacy effect' and 'legitimacy dynamic'.

The second chapter examines the problem of 'socialist emulation' as a political practice that emerged in the Soviet Union and was adopted and modified later in China. The chapter opens with the historical debate between Proudhon and Marx about competition and emulation, followed by Lenin's contribution to the topic. The chapter investigates which shapes emulation gained during the rule of different leaders and periods of time in Soviet Union, starting from Lenin's 'Communist Saturdays', going through 'Stakhanovism' of the Stalin era and emulation during Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev. The chapter then discusses emulation in China, which dates back to the early 1940s (Yenan period), and its later shapes in 1960s, with comparisons to the Soviet Union.

The third chapter then starts to address the history of Emulation in Vietnam. This chapter provides an introduction to the topic of 'patriotic emulation' in Vietnam with



historical links to traditional heroism and the Vietnamese experience with large mobilisation movements. This chapter sets the beginnings of emulation in Vietnam in its historical context, particularly describing the precarious attempts of Ho Chi Minh throughout the 1940s to gain support from the Soviet Union and China for Vietnam's anti-colonial activities and (from 1945) war. The chapter traces emulation influences and links between the Soviet Union and Vietnam; and China and Vietnam. Subsequently, I examine the call for emulation in Vietnam which was published by Ho Chi Minh in 1948. Although this chapter deals with the period 1948-1975, however, I divide this in two parts according to historical events and phases:<sup>13</sup> (1946-1954) – the First Indochina Conflict; (1954-1975) – Division of Vietnam, Second Indochina Conflict and Unification. Each period had their National Patriotic Emulation Congresses and their emulation movements and campaigns.

The fourth chapter introduces emulation movements in Vietnam in the period after *Đổi Mới* (the program of economic reforms launched in 1986)<sup>14</sup> with an emphasis on the period since the VCP proclaimed the need to reinvigorate patriotic emulation in the late 1990s after the *Thái Bình* political unrest.

This chapter starts with an introduction to the official documents of the Party which reflect this need, as well as the Law on Emulation and Rewards from 2003. In following sections, the chapter then discusses the organisation of emulation in 'the new period', the problem of 'voluntary emulation', funding of emulation movements, and the main emulation organs (the Central Emulation Council and Committee).

This chapter also presents my typology of emulation movements in the new period. Although the typology was an outcome of my analysis of data from this chapter, I decided to insert the typology at the beginning of this chapter to facilitate better understanding of my discussion of the selected emulation movements. The movements selected for this chapter represent both national-level (the three largest movements) and local-level emulation, and also movements launched by either individuals (Prime Minister), or groups (Mass Organisations). The focusses of emulation movements can be seen to reflect those areas in which there are, according to the regime, problems to be addressed: Culture and society (Education, Family and Cultural life, Environment, Countryside), Security and Party Building (Corruption and Morality).

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<sup>13</sup> This division is identical with how Vietnamese divide their emulation periods.

<sup>14</sup> The VCP alternatively calls this period 'the new period'.

The fifth chapter provides and discusses a list of the apparent functions of emulation movements in Vietnam. The functions are grouped according to whether they appear to serve ideological or practical goals and are derived from both the specific topics of individual movements and the logic of emulation according to my analysis. The table of functions is created for both historical and current emulation movements as they differ.

The sixth chapter provides an analysis of historical emulation movements as they appear linked to the problem of legitimacy and legitimacy effects. I analyse the functions of historical emulation movements within the context of Weber's charismatic legitimacy, Beetham's norms, values and consent and Lamb's legitimacy effects. The same chapter also provides an analysis of current emulation movements in Vietnam. Its broad conclusion is that through emulation movements we can indeed see the regime seeking legitimacy, but with varying apparent degrees of success.

The seventh and last chapter considers emulation movements and legitimacy issues in the more general topic of power and authority in Vietnam. In this section, I use the data collected during the interviews in Hanoi in 2013 and 2014. Linking to the broad conclusion of Chapter 6, this argues that the current regime indeed struggles to be 'legitimate authority', and recognises this through its attempts to bolster and secure legitimacy and legitimacy effect through the hoped-for effects of its emulation movements. When it is unable to do so, it resorts to coercion.

# 1. Theory

## 1. 1. Introduction: Emulation and Legitimacy

Emulation movements were a crucial part of the strategy of pursuing imported communist doctrine, which Ho Chi Minh actively promulgated after the August Revolution (1945) in the newly formed Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the North.<sup>15</sup> But perhaps even more importantly, it was a way to mobilise a high percentage of population for the goals that the new Vietnamese government promoted. Hannah Arendt (1961) called these constituting moments ‘new beginnings’. The Vietnamese revolution (and the DRV) were the results of many factors which can be characterized together as a long-hated French colonialism and the weakness of co-opted monarchical rule. The opportunity for the revolution came after the surrender of Japan in mid-August 1945. Yet, when on 2 September Ho Chi Minh read the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence at Ba Đình Square in Hanoi, he knew that the French will not give up Indochina easily. There was a colossal task ahead of him for the population and its political organisations, above all the Communist-led Việt Minh<sup>16</sup>, to protect and nurture the newly independent state while gaining support from society and securing legitimate authority.

The primary topic of this thesis: emulation movements and the problem of power, authority and legitimacy is framed within the more specific question of the stability of the current Vietnamese regime. More concretely, do emulation movements contribute somehow to ‘legitimacy’ and consequently to the stability needed to sustain of the regime? Emulation is one of the ‘institutions’ that has its roots in the beginnings of the DRV but still takes a large space in Vietnam’s official propaganda and related activities today. This thesis observes emulation movements throughout different periods and compares their development and effects across time. In the contemporary market economy of an increasingly globalising Vietnam, this institution seems to be redundant and anachronistic but Vietnamese regime still defends it and tries to renew its aura. This thesis asks why.

Because of the lack of specific theoretical foundations to link socialist emulation to its functions, this thesis seeks to create these foundations. I establish a link between legitimacy

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<sup>15</sup> In the Chapter 3 of this thesis I explored historical emulation movements (1948-1975) in the Northern Vietnam, however, I acknowledge that despite limitedly, emulation campaigns were also exported to the South. After 1975 Vietnam was unified in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), emulation thus was unified as well.

<sup>16</sup> Việt Minh (League for Independence of Vietnam) was a coalition that was established by Ho Chi Minh in 1941 to fight against French and Japanese.

and emulation, and here my assumption is simple: emulation has a set of functions which are meant to bring some form of stability and therefore also legitimacy (besides control through the coercive power of the security apparatus). This thesis suggests that one important reason why the Vietnamese government keeps this Soviet tool is because it is meant to bring stability via its different functions, both ideological and practical. References to these functions of emulation movements are indirectly scattered in the Soviet, Chinese and Vietnamese literature. This thesis collects them together.

The desired outcomes of the thesis are the following: 1. Mapping of emulation in Vietnam; 2. Creating a suitable typology of current emulation movements in Vietnam; 3. Creating a list of the functions of emulation movements in Vietnam for both the historical period and currently; 4. Linking these functions to legitimacy issues; and 5. Analysing existing movements in the context of ‘legitimacy dynamics’ (see below). 6. Showing the differences between the past and current emulation and 7. Contextualizing these issues within the broader picture of power, authority and legitimacy in Vietnam. I start here with a discussion of the theoretical framework and its related concepts.

## **1. 2. Theoretical Framework and the Concepts used in this Thesis**

Vietnam as an Asian non-democratic country is a very specific country to study and emulation movements in Vietnam have not been explored in detail by scholars. This situation leads to the relative absence of the selection and use of theories which would help in facilitating our understanding of this specific topic. That is one reason why this thesis comes with its own theoretical framework that draws upon more general theories. At the beginning is an assumption composed of two sections: 1. The assumption that emulation movements are a political tool which has certain functions; 2. The assumption that these functions are predominantly advantageous for the ruling Party and therefore in general contribute to stability. Because of the lack of research on this topic, these functions have so far not been systematically explored. Therefore, thesis goes first through the historical and existing emulation movements in Vietnam to name these functions, and then provides an analysis which combines theories of legitimacy to analyse the functions of emulation movements.

In terms of its conceptual framework, this thesis presents a combined approach, that means, that I do not work just with one approach of one author writing on legitimacy. I use primarily the ideas of three authors, Max Weber, David Beetham and Robert Lamb. To a

limited extent, I also work with the contra-pole to Weber, the account of Hannah Arendt, to highlight certain important ideas she contributed to the topic of authority and legitimacy. Her work, however, is for this thesis secondary. Max Weber's realist approach is 'completed' by David Beetham's work and extended by the practical suggestions of Robert Lamb.

Max Weber's important contribution to the topic of charisma (Weber 1978) is useful for Vietnam but in itself does not provide sufficient basis for understanding how Ho Chi Minh historically gained legitimacy and support. This is where David Beetham came as an important critic of Max Weber, criticizing that Weber is not 'wrong' rather incomplete (Beetham 1991). Beetham provided three features which need to be present if we want to talk about legitimacy: underlying rules, values and consent components. Values and consent turn out to be crucial for understanding Vietnamese stability and instability in historical comparison. Robert Lamb advanced the topic of legitimacy even further by relating stability and legitimacy and by noting that other factors can have the same effect as legitimacy, these entities, however, are often power-based.

Therefore, next to the concept of legitimacy as defined by Beetham (for details, see below, Section 1.5.1.), I have developed the expression 'legitimacy effect'. This concept relates to circumstances whereby the outcomes that would be expected from a regime with legitimacy are present, however the legitimacy itself is not. As such, we can see the effects of legitimacy (stability and support) however these are created not through legitimacy but through power-based strategies, for example manipulation, persuasion, seduction, habit, etc.

Complementary to my combined approach to legitimacy, this thesis works with the novel idea of legitimacy as a dynamic issue. A mixture of legitimacy, and legitimacy effects can create a dynamic, positive or negative that leads to the movement in stability or instability. This approach is an expression of my understanding of social reality as a complex picture that does not seem to be working in terms of 'either, or'. Despite 'legitimacy dynamics' risking being rather an abstract notion, it does express that legitimacy and various 'legitimizing effects' based on power are constantly mixing together and shifting, that is why political scientists struggle with their practical use for analysis. My own analysis allows me to consider the extent to which 'legitimacy dynamics' offers better and clearer analysis of the functions of emulation movements in Vietnam.

To sum up, the goal of this thesis is to look at the problem of legitimacy and legitimacy effects in the context of emulation movements in Vietnam to find out, and assess how they affect regime stability in Vietnam.

Emulation movements were imported into Vietnam from the Soviet Union through China in the late 1940s and served multiple purposes. However, their declared functions according to the ruling Communist Parties, accompanied a number of other hidden functions. The new Vietnamese government in the North after 1945 needed support and stability, and this thesis will explore how the emulation movements worked in face of these tasks. This thesis asks what functions these emulation movements fulfilled in Vietnam historically and today and how they have affected regime legitimacy or stability.

### **1. 2. 1. Functions of Emulation Movements**

One of the assumptions of this thesis is about the existence of certain functions that emulation movements have. The problem is that this thesis needs to work with these functions, yet I have not discovered any literature which would help with this topic. Although the wider literature already mentioned points in useful directions, the functions of emulation movements are up to now rather unknown. This thesis thus will have to address this gap. To create a list of the functions of emulation movements in Vietnam, I will have to explore the historical and current emulation movements in Vietnam first (Chapters 3 and 4). Only in Chapter 5 will this thesis then introduce the lists of functions of emulation movements for both historical and current period. These lists will provide a base for the analytical chapter, Chapter 6, which is then complemented by the discussion in Chapter 7, using quite different data, of authority and power in contemporary Vietnam.

The Soviet Union officially declared two functions of emulation movements: to raise production and create ‘new socialist man’. These are concrete goals and if we look at them closer, we can see that ‘to raise production’ (or beating capitalist countries in production) was a practical goal which if successful would very arguably increase the legitimacy of the regime. One group of functions of emulation movements thus will be ‘achieving practical results’. If we consider the second goal as ‘creating a new socialist man’, this leads us to the sphere of ideology and indoctrination. A common peasant or worker was supposed to change their values, behaviors and way of life. Emulation movements can be thus assumed also to fulfill some ideological functions. Considering the importance of values and beliefs for the

problem of legitimacy, this seems also to be an interesting topic to explore. This simple outline will be worked in detail in Chapter 5. Now, it is time to introduce the framing and the concepts this thesis will use.

### **1. 3. Framing: Durability, Stability and Instability of Revolutionary Regimes**

Vietnam is a classic example of a revolutionary regime<sup>17</sup> (Huntington 1968) with a single ruling party (the Communist Party of Vietnam)<sup>18</sup> that adopted Marxist-Leninist doctrine and Soviet Russia's institutional model. This institutional model in the new period of liberalization of economy arguably suffers serious problems: the old rigid Soviet-based institutions do not fit well together with the country's opening economy and society. This thesis asks whether study of historical and current emulation movements can reveal the political strategies deployed by the Vietnamese Communist Party to secure stability and regime survival despite these problems and with less use of the security forces.

#### **1. 3. 1. Levitsky and Way on Durability of Revolutionary Regimes**

As Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way wrote in July 2013, revolutionary regimes are some of the most durable types of non-democratic regimes. They identified four main reasons for this stability: destruction of independent power centers, strong ruling parties, invulnerability to coups and enhanced coercive capacity (Levitsky and Way, 2013, pp. 7-14). This thesis asks whether the common stability and survival of revolutionary regimes in the decades after revolution can be explained solely in terms of their capacity to control their populations. It also engages with the puzzling question of the new strategies for securing stability, given that their techniques for population control were often devised under very

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<sup>17</sup> A regime that emerges out of the revolution, it that with the large mobilisation of society changes existing social and political structure.

<sup>18</sup> An official name of the ruling Party in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Communist Party ('Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam'), it is usually abbreviated as the VCP (Vietnamese Communist Party) but sometimes also CPV (Communist Party of Vietnam). In this thesis I use the 'VCP' abbreviation. The VCP developed from the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) that was established in 1930, this Party came through many changes. In 1945, the ICP was allegedly dissolved and formally re-established in 1951 under the name Vietnamese Workers' Party (VWP) (Duiker 2018). After the unification, the name changed to the current name: the Vietnamese Communist Party.

different conditions, such as the closed-off society and tightly controlled economy of the Soviet Union?

Levitsky and Way suggest three types of new bases of stability which are employed after the end of the ‘revolutionary period’, in other ways after revolutionary leaders die: institutionalized mechanisms of leadership succession, economic growth and renewing of conflict (Levitsky and Way 2013, pp. 14-15). This thesis takes up on their research and acknowledges the strong mechanism of coercion and control, however, it seeks to explore what else can help us understand stability and instability in revolutionary regimes. Clearly, we need to explore stability and instability before we try to explain durability.

Levitsky and Way (2013) base their arguments about revolutionary regimes’ durability in a classic institutional approach. They argue that regimes that came from revolution have usually created institutions that have enabled them to be resistant to the most common dangers that de-stabilize non-democratic regimes: military coups or mass uprisings, economic downturns, self-inflicted chaos, etc. By re-establishing and reconstructing the local state through violent revolution the new revolutionary regimes destroy alternatives, build strong and loyal armies and strong and loyal parties, and often create a siege mentality (Way 2016). This siege mentality was strikingly absent from the VCP external relations policy after the economic opening-up of the early 1990s, focussing upon diverse and varied economic and political relations, epitomised by the joining of ASEAN in 1995 (Thayer 2004).

Levitsky and Way thus point to the strength of institutions to explain regime durability as an outcome.

However, there are other possible approaches that fit with the wider literature, for example to study elites and their behavior to explain the development or social movements approach that try to trace the changes in regimes based on the actions of active/inactive civil society (which would include discussion of values, consent and dynamic aspects of relations between the ruling Party and its context). This thesis indeed argues that the stability and instability of Vietnam’s revolutionary regime cannot be explained solely in terms of strong institutions. The recent affair in Đồng Tâm Village is suggesting that the VCP does not just want to use hard power whenever it needs despite it still does uses it (‘Looking Back at Dong Tam...’, 2017). The Party documents also recently address the problem of ‘inner crisis’ of the Party and threat to legitimacy (Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party).



The approach taken here is that revolutionary regimes develop and the sources of stability and potential instability develop with them. Economic growth certainly contributes to durability, but for example one can argue that the conflict argument does not work so smoothly for Vietnam as the Vietnamese with their experience of conflicts throughout the centuries as well as recently seem to be very hesitant to rush into another one, and suspicious of attempts to get them to do so.

The most problematic part of Levitsky and Way's approach from the perspective of the analysis of this thesis is the problem of the reduction, in their approach, of the reasons behind stability/durability to institutions. This does not mean that the coercive factor is not strong in Vietnam, however, it does not help us to understand more subtle elements, for example what triggers opposition and why. It does not help to explain the particular topics chosen for emulation movements, the acceptance of problems and implied solutions that they publicise, and the resources devoted by the Party to them. If we limit ourselves in this fashion, we exclude reasons that are related to the values, beliefs or international relations, changes in culture, society, etc. that emulation movements engage with.

Instead of focusing its analysis upon an explanation of regime durability in Vietnam, this thesis makes a side step and suggests to first study occasions of what stabilizes and what destabilizes the regime. Emulation movements can reveal what the regime sees as problematic, as potential threats to stability, and offers solutions that are not, by definition, coercive. Only when we have discussed stability and instability can we clarify durability issues.

In the next section I will introduce three concepts which I will work with in this thesis. Although this thesis predominantly works with the concept of legitimacy, concepts of power are used in the sections about legitimacy effect (Chapter 6) and also in the last chapter (Chapter 7), where I will discuss legitimacy in Vietnam in the specific context of a discussion of power and authority. This theoretical chapter thus provides an introduction to the three concepts, and particularly their use in this thesis. I will start the next section with the concept of political authority. Being usually defined as 'legitimate power', it is a concept which brings all three concepts together. After that I will explore the central concept of this thesis, legitimacy. The topic of political power will follow.

## 1. 4. Authority

Political authority is an intriguing concept. Despite many people having entered the discussion about it, mainstream political science usually goes for the answers to the two classics: Max Weber and Hannah Arendt. It is worth here summing up the ideas of the two authors as we will work with their conceptual frameworks. However, before that, it is important to clarify some basic complexities of the concept of authority. At the level of every day speech, when we talk about *authority*, we often relate it to expertise and respect. Authority figures generally have some kind of quality or knowledge that we consider superior. In the sphere of *political authority*, however, the understanding often shifts. On the conversational level, political authority is in the West often associated with the state, institutions or individuals who have been authorized to represent some aspect of the political community. Such a representation can refer to accepted methods of decision-making about the rules that regulate society. In English, the term ‘the authorities’ is often associated with the government or other state offices or bodies. Political scientists have however been trying to elucidate and refine this concept, often relating it to power or legitimacy and these efforts have brought some interesting results.

Some authors, for example Max Weber, categorize authority as a specific type of power: legitimate power (Weber 1921). Authority in this sense is based on control of the means of coercion and has three sources laws, tradition or charisma. This understanding of authority is descriptive in its nature as it does not ask about values behind these resources, it merely describes it. David Beetham’s (1991) criticism of Weber establishes this clearly, pointing to the inclusion of all three dimensions of legitimacy in Weber’s writing. In other words, for Beetham legitimate authority is not only an entity that produces and protects rules but it also embodies the underlying principles and values of a given community, and so for him the community provides consent, and that establishes legitimacy.

Arendt conceives authority in a traditional historical sense. Authority for Arendt was rooted in the foundation of Rome and the perpetuation of that act in future political life, as the authority of founders was transmitted to elders, the Senate or the patres (Arendt 1961, p. 122). Authority in Arendt’s sense is in sharp contrast to power. As Lacey describes this split: “They [some philosophers] argue that the state only has authority of any kind (and not just power) if the citizens generally obey the laws because many or most of them believe it has authority in the normative sense. A state in which citizens obey the law simply because they are too scared to break it does not have authority, only power. Adding this condition still makes

a distinction between descriptive and normative authority – for descriptive authority, the citizens must believe the state is legitimate; for normative authority, the state must be legitimate” (Lacewing 2008, p. 2).

The division is very relevant for Vietnam, for, when translated to legitimacy, we may then refer to a contrast between legitimacy on one side and legitimacy effect (based on power strategies) and force on the other. To be normatively legitimate, the regime must be part of a process that involves managing issues of values and consent.

#### **1. 4. 1. Max Weber and Charisma**

Max Weber is a German social theorist, influenced by the neo-Kantian philosophical school, particularly by Heinrich Rickert and the Baden school. Weber was an advocate of the objectivity of cultural sciences (Oakes 1988, pp. 46-47). This means that Weber and Rickert were convinced that there is something we may call an ‘objectivity of values’ in cultural sciences and therefore we can approach them with the specific assumptions and methods. A good example is Weber’s approach to the state. The basic premise of Weber is that the state IS a factual entity characterized by the legitimate monopoly of violence, in other words, that the state is a fact. This is in contrast for example with normative approaches where the state is perceived as a normative political proposal and facilitator of social cooperation between groups with different perceptions and values (Dunn 2000, pp. 68-69).

This premise structures Weber’s understanding of what is authority and what are the types of authority. We can find Max Weber’s theoretical writings on political authority in multiple of his works, and among the two major sources are: First, his book *Economy and Society* (1978), and second, the essay *Politics as a Vocation* (1921).

Weber’s ‘herrschaft’<sup>19</sup> establishes legitimate authority (people obey the command of commander) up on three pillars: rules (legal-rational), tradition and charisma (Weber 1978, pp. 212-251). Authority in Weber thus translates simply and directly to legitimate power. According to Weber, what constitutes legitimacy is belief (p. 216) in the rightfulness of laws, sanctity of tradition or exceptional personality.

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<sup>19</sup> Herrschaft is understood via the relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled.

This account of authority is in a certain sense amazingly simple and that is perhaps why it is often used for analyses. This simplicity, however, as scholars have remarked, also brings some limitations. One of the most salient critics of Max Weber's approach to authority, David Beetham, summarized his criticism in the 1991 article *Max Weber and the Legitimacy of the Modern State*. As noted above in this chapter (Section 1.5.1.), Beetham concludes that Weber's account is problematic because it is incomplete (Beetham 1991, p. 40). We will have this criticism in mind when we use Weber's notion of charismatic authority in relation to the political activities of the communist government in Vietnam. Despite its apparent limitations, Weber is particularly useful for understanding of the role of charisma in Vietnam.

#### **1. 4. 2. Charismatic Authority in Vietnam**

“It [charisma] arises from collective excitement produced by extraordinary events and from surrender to heroism of any kind” (Weber 1978, p. 1121).

Weber provides a useful and interesting concept of charisma that might shed some light on Vietnamese political reality and especially emulation movements. We suggest that it is beneficial to look at the beginnings of the DRV and emulation movements via Weber's charismatic authority (Chapter 6 below). I am persuaded that Ho Chi Minh's charisma have been a large part of the success of the communist doctrine in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh is in Vietnam popular and even after decades after his death, Ho Chi Minh and Marxism-Leninism is repeatedly put on pedestal to perpetuate charismatic legitimacy. This is well expressed in the contemporary emulation movement ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh's Moral Example’ (see below Chapter 4, Section 4.7.1.).

Charismatic authority as a pure type is according to Weber based on: “devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority)” (Weber 1978, p. 215).

Again, as Emulation movements of their nature rested on the examples offered by exceptional personalities and heroes, and in Vietnam they clearly refer to exemplary characters and Ho Chi Minh that both fit with this description, it is worth exploring this theoretical source in greater detail.

In Weber's writing, charisma is not accessible to ordinary people (p. 241), yet we will see, that in Vietnam this characteristic has some interesting twists (emulation campaign suggest that ordinary people can become heroes, whether in combat or in labor). In any case, Weber assumes that ultimate judgement of the presence or absence of charisma as a quality rests in the presence or absence of its followers (p. 242). He thus does not ask why people follow exceptional personalities but whether there are or are not followers - hence Weber's 'value-free' analysis. Once the proof of success disappears, defined as the presence of followers, charismatic authority likely disappears too (Ibid.). This part of Weber's theory will be interesting when I examine the development of Vietnamese communism after the Revolution of 1945 and after death of Ho Chi Minh in 1969. The point about the decline of charisma is an important part, for, following Weber's definition, ultimately, charismatic authority loses its authority when it loses its followers. Emulation movements can be seen in this way, possibly as a means to preserve followers and so the argument that charisma continues to adhere to what they are said to be following.

Part of Weber's account of charismatic authority is thus related to his idea of 'charismatic community', that is the community organized around the charismatic leader. Individuals in this community are chosen based on their relationship to charisma and, according to Weber do not work for a salary, as they are rather 'on the mission' (Ibid.).

In terms of rules, Weber writes:

"There is no system of formal rules, of abstract legal principles, and hence no process of rational judicial decision oriented to them. But equally, there is no legal wisdom oriented to judicial precedent. Formally concrete judgements are newly created from case to case and are originally regarded as divine judgements and revelations (...) Recognition is a duty" (pp. 243-244).

In this sense Weber distinguishes between rational bureaucracy and irrational charismatic rules which cannot be analysed intellectually. Here Weber specifically emphasizes that charismatic authority refuses the past (or past rules) and therefore is indeed 'revolutionary' (Ibid.). As we will see, this is an important point to follow in Vietnam as Ho Chi Minh's appeal for 'new life' on one hand and his connections to tradition, on the other hand, produce an interesting mix.

Economically, charismatic authority is supported by voluntary gifts and thus is mostly 'anti-economic'. As a part of it, according to Weber it "repudiates any sort of involvement in

everyday routine world (...) What is despised, so long as the genuinely charismatic type is adhered to, is traditional or rational everyday economizing, the attainment of a regular income by continuous economic activity devoted to this end” (pp. 244-245).

One important feature, that Weber lists amongst the attributes of charisma is its ability to change men from inside (Weber calls it ‘from within’). This means that the suffering of people is the cause of their reorientation to charisma. Opposite to this, for Weber, lies reason which works ‘from without’. As those in authority deliver solutions to problems, people change their attitude to this authority (p. 245).

A substantial part of Weber’s chapter on charismatic authority is devoted to what he calls ‘The Routinization of Charisma’. Weber considered charismatic authority to be a purely transitional phenomenon which, because of its nature, has to change, simply because it is not stable (p. 1114). Followers and community require normal and so routinized everyday life in both economic and ideological matters. Routinization for Weber entails multiple problems, of which amongst the most important are the question of succession after the charismatic leader dies, or before that, the adaptation of the charismatic leader and staff (community) to normal conditions with their requirement for functioning political and economic life (pp. 246-254). Charisma, however, needs to stay imprinted in the new order and followers need to stay loyal to the new principles that charismatic leader brought (p. 1122, p. 1146).

Discussing an important part in the routinization process where as he puts it, loyalty changes into discipline, Weber writes: “The bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a mission believed to be embodied in him; this mission has not necessarily and not always been revolutionary, but in its most charismatic forms it has inverted all value hierarchies and overthrown custom, law and tradition” (p. 1117).

Reflecting on how to assess durability of regimes, especially those that are or were revolutionary, this means that loyalty and discipline are usefully seen as offering political strategies that allow them to work ‘in tandem’. When loyalty may be slipping away, discipline can keep things on track as discipline can create habit.

If we get back to Weber’s writing about routinization, we can see what he has to say about the need for preservation and perpetuation of the source of charismatic authority after this source vanishes:

“But after its routinization its very quality as- an extraordinary, supernatural and divine force makes it a suitable source of legitimate authority for the successors of the charismatic hero. Moreover, in this form it is advantageous to all those whose power and property are guaranteed by this authority, that is, dependent upon its perpetuation” (Weber 1978, p. 1147).

Because Ho Chi Minh’s persona shows features of charisma, and is a common aspect of emulation movements in Vietnam, this thesis will consider Weber’s charismatic source of legitimacy in Vietnam.

### **1. 4. 3. Hannah Arendt: Power Versus Authority**

This thesis also works with some selected ideas drawn from Hannah Arendt’s writings on authority to analyse the distinction between power and authority in present-day Vietnam.

Arendt’s philosophy had its origin in Machiavelli’s republicanism which derived from Roman tradition. Unlike Weber, Hannah Arendt did not see the state as an instrument of order but rather a public space created by the community to preserve human achievements and a space which gives this community the sense of stability (Parekh 1981, pp. 30-45).

In Arendt’s writings, a public space is alfa and omega of political community. It is a space for participation and deliberation of citizens, this space originally cannot be organized hierarchically, cannot have centralized authority and cannot be based on command-obedience relationship (Parekh, p. 132). Arendt did accept that political community needs an order and reconciliation of interests. Such an order (laws, institutions, etc.), however, for her has to be set by citizens themselves through deliberation.

Every political community, in Arendt’s view, requires that its territory be thought politically as to have a shared collective identity, memories and history; law in both constitutional and positive sense; and authority, power and force (Parekh 1981, p. 159).

What Arendt means by political authority is explained in her essay *What is Authority?* This text presented her specific outlook on the problem of traditional authority (not the general understanding of authority). She called for the use of concepts based on their historical original distinct meanings to avoid the imprecise and contested usage of the term. That, however, practically erased authority from today’s world (Arendt 1961). In Arendt’s view the specific traditional authority was lost in the crisis, that consequently provided a basis for a totalitarianism which ‘took advantage’ of this situation (Arendt 1961, p. 92). Arendt’s

account of vanished or lost authority (Arendt 1961) thus refers to one specific type of authority that grew from the Roman tradition. In Arendt's view the breakdown of traditional religious authority (that started with the Reformation) led to a situation when modern systems of political parties replaced traditional authorities, leading to a crisis of these traditional authorities, and the frequent disappearance of authority from both political and non-political areas (i.e. family or education). This very context-specific historical understanding of authority makes it rather impractical for my analysis (Vietnamese history is very different). However, Arendt's interesting ideas on the distinction between power and authority are important for Vietnam.

The beginning of her essay on authority starts with an important distinction between authority on one side and power or persuasion on the other. A important confusion, according to Arendt, stems from the fact that whilst both power and authority require obedience, wherever we can track coercion and violence, we cannot and should not talk about authority. Arendt specifically writes: "where force is used, authority itself has failed" (Arendt 1961, p. 93). Arendt also classifies persuasions being in opposition to authority as persuasion requires equality and argumentation while authority requires hierarchical order (Ibid.). What, for her, does authority do? It has a right to make decisions binding upon the entire community. However, an important difference is that: "The law is binding upon them [it's subjects] not because they are persuaded that it is good, nor because they are afraid of undesirable consequences of disobedience, but solely because it is enacted by the legitimate public authority" (...) "public authority demands obedience as a matter of right, not on the basis of rational arguments [persuasion] or threats of punishment [force]" (Parekh 1981, p. 159).

Power is in Arendt's understanding specifically distinct from force or strength. In the vocabulary of her theory of power, Arendt understands power not as 'power over someone', but as 'power to do something'. Power has a character of dynamics and potential, that is why we cannot measure it. Arendt writes: "While strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse" (Arendt 1958, p. 200). Power is thus understood here as a 'creative force' or something that enables action, rather than negative use of coercion or force. This is where Arendt differs again from Weber. Power can for her be destroyed by violence, and that is exactly what happens in tyrannies as "violence of one destroys the power of the many" (Arendt 1990, p. 151). This distinction between power and violence in Arendt's writing was not always accepted. One of the interesting criticism that we respect in this thesis came from



Keith Breen (2007). Based on his article we share the acceptance of the interwoven-ness of violence and power but also emphasize the importance normative ideals of moderation and care (Breen 2007).

Arendt's distinction between authority and power or violence will be important for the Vietnamese case as I use it to analyse some problems of Vietnamese politics today.

#### **1. 4. 4. Political Authority in This Thesis**

In order to be useful in this thesis, where the central task is to analyse the changing functions of emulation movements, legitimate political authority is best thought of conceptually as a derivative of the approach advocated by Beetham with a specific Arendtian feature: a political authority which is clearly differentiated politically from pure coercion or violence. In this sense emulation movements show an evolved political strategy that seeks to avoid coercion or violence but has very limited other measures at its disposal. The problems such campaigns say they seek to address, as stated by their author, the VCP, engage with serious issues such as corruption, environmental degradation and the moral declines threatened by the market economy. But there is little evidence that they solve these issues, and the emulation movements often seem to repeatedly try the same solution and fail. I will contrast what the Vietnamese government currently resorts to too much (resort to control, coercion and violence) with the rhetoric of the emulation campaigns, which imply that would be advantageous for Vietnam. What any Vietnamese government could and should do would be to rely less on power as domination and employ other types of powers, those that would generate legitimacy. These ideas will become clearer in the last chapter.

#### **1. 5. Legitimacy: Weber, Beetham, Lamb**

Legitimacy is a concept in political science that is a part of a triad; Power, authority and legitimacy are closely tied together, and that is why various authors have tried to find out how exactly they are interrelated. A question as to what constitutes political legitimacy goes to the core of our understanding of what is 'political' and what that 'political' serves to do. But that is just the beginning. Authors like Weber or Arendt wrote about the legitimacy of the state, political system or government, however, others, for example Robert D. Lamb called for a more practical approach, pointing to the multiplicity of approaches by posing three basic

questions: “legitimacy of what, legitimacy according to whom, and legitimacy by what criteria?” (Lamb 2014, p. 23).

If we return to Arendt and Weber, we can examine what they say about the state. For Arendt, as we saw, the political is created when people get together to establish political community, the act of creation is of utmost importance and legitimacy is bound to this original act, rather than anything else. Weber, on the other side, is not really interested in *political community* or how it begins, for he is interested in *political order* and the means of preservation of such a political order. When Arendt writes about legitimacy, she goes back to the beginning of political community, where a group of people agreed on the creation of a constitution (which constitutes authority). This agreement and support is what entails legitimacy and creates authority. In sum, Arendt sees legitimacy tied to the values of the new beginnings.

Other authors tried to bring more dimensions and practical suggestions in the theory of legitimacy, and interesting contributions came from the writings of David Beetham and Robert D. Lamb.

### **1. 5. 1. David Beetham**

David Beetham’s writings on legitimacy also start with the premise that authority is a legitimate power, however, ‘legitimate’ here is different from that in Weber’s account. Beetham is critical of Max Weber and at the same time offers some suggestions on how to complete a theory of legitimacy. Beetham postulated that legitimacy has three dimensions rather than then one (as Weber according to him presented). Beetham wrote that “power is legitimate when a) is acquired and exercised in accordance with the some set of rules; b) the rules and laws embody an acknowledged principle of political authority, in terms of which they can be justified [values and norms]; c) there is evidence of express consent to authority on the part of those qualified to give it” (Beetham 1991a, p. 42). In other words, for legitimacy, we need there to be various norms which are actually underpinned by social values; a rightful source of authority qualified to determine who exercises power and the ends of the exercise of power; and the consent of relevant subordinates.

The practical application of his thoughts can be found later in his book. He provides an analysis of communism and its consequent legitimation crisis in 1989 (Beetham 1991b, p.

179). According to Beetham communism derived authority from two sources. The first was that the working class was represented by the Communist Party and second was Marxist-Leninist ideology with its exclusive knowledge on how to get to the communist future. He writes: “It was this doctrine that privileged the working class as the most progressive social class, with its interests identical to those of society as a whole, and the Communist party as the exclusive interpreter and representative of those interests“ (p. 181).

Unlike liberal democracy which derives its authority from popular sovereignty via elections, communist regimes thus mostly relied on authority of Marxist-Leninist doctrine (despite the fact that they would usually claim it was derived primarily from the people).

The process of legitimization according to Beetham included two levels: elite and mass levels but both represented by the Party:

“At the elite level, a life-time’s socialisation into the party’s norms, and the careful filtering out of non-conformists, guaranteed loyalty to the system and ensured the necessary elite cohesion in face of struggles for succession and position, as well as guaranteeing the subordination of the state and military’ apparatus to the party. At the mass level, the party mobilised the grass-roots activity which provided the continuous evidence of popular commitment to its rule, and which served as the surrogate consent of the population as a whole” (p. 182).

Because of the mobilisation of people created ‘surrogate consent’ Communist Parties had to put special efforts into creating the pictures of ‘real consent’ and preserving such pictures:

“(…) any divergent opinions which might challenge the party’s monopoly of representation should not reach the public domain. Unlike in liberal democracies, where public opposition to government policy is validated by the basic rules of free association, in a communist system any public dissent expressed outside the party, especially by the working class, had a delegitimizing consequence for the system as a whole, since it challenged the principle of the party’s leading role and its monopolistic claim on representation” (p. 183).

Marxist-Leninist doctrine was offering a strong monolith of beliefs with multiple principles that were supposed to replace the old plurality of beliefs:

“In the communist model, in contrast, beliefs played a continuously public role. This was not just a question of the status of Marxism—Leninism as the official doctrine, with its

exclusive claim to truth. It was also that society was organised for the pursuit of a collective purpose — the realisation of socialism — and belief in the validity of that purpose was necessary not only to the legitimacy of its rules of power, but to key motivations also, at a number of levels” (p. 185).

Beetham’s three dimensions of legitimacy are well explained in the following table from the *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (Beetham in Badie 2011, p. 1421). The table shows different types of regimes and their ‘legitimizing elements’. In case of communism, the power of political authority is legitimate if it is exercised according to rules based on codified collective will, if these rules are justifiable according to accepted beliefs about Party’s monopoly of truth and representation, if the ends of government are to build a communist future and the form of consent (public affirmation) is mass mobilisation.

Table 1: Legitimizing Elements of Different 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Regime Types

**Table 1** Legitimizing Elements of Different 20th-Century Regime Types

<i>Regime Type</i>	<i>Form of Law</i>	<i>Source of Authority</i>	<i>Ends of Government</i>	<i>Mode of Public Affirmation</i>
Traditional	Custom/precedent	Heredity/the past	Well-being within traditional order	Assembly of social elite
Fascist	Sovereign decisionism	Leadership principle	National purity/expansion	Mass mobilization
Communist	Codification of the collective will	Party monopoly of truth and representation	Building communist future	Mass mobilization
Liberal-democratic	Constitutional rule of law	The people through competitive election	Individual rights protection and advancement	Electoral endorsement
Theocratic	Sacred texts and canons	Divine will interpreted by hierarchy	Purifying society’s moral order	Various of the above
Dictatorial	Decree	None	Restore order and national unity	None

*Source: International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (Beetham in Badie 2011, p. 1421)

This thesis will work primarily with Beetham’s theory of legitimacy to point to the differences between historical and current emulation movements and their success or failure to secure legitimacy.

The issue of the practicality of the concept legitimacy was reinvestigated by the author Robert D. Lamb who re-introduced and further developed the concept as the one which was intended to be suitable for practical analysis. I will briefly introduce Robert Lamb's writing on legitimacy as a whole, but as will become clearer I will only use a small section of his work.

### **1. 5. 2. Robert D. Lamb**

Robert D. Lamb comes from a background in Studies of Conflict and Cooperation. He spent substantial amount of time observing the dynamics of violence in Medellín, Colombia. In the Preface of his 2014 article, *Rethinking Legitimacy and Illegitimacy: A New Approach to Assessing Support and Opposition Across Disciplines*, he wrote:

“Studying these questions was not easy, because much of the best work on legitimacy and governance had been written for scholarly audiences and was not always suitable for use as a tool for policy analysis. Some of that work also assumed that the state was the proper unit of analysis for research on legitimacy and governance. Existing frameworks would therefore need to be adapted for both a nonstate context and a policy audience” (Lamb 2014, p. IV).

As written above, he advocates a more practical approach, pointing to the multi-faceted nature of the problem of legitimacy by posing three basic questions: “legitimacy of what, legitimacy according to whom, and legitimacy by what criteria?” (Lamb 2014, p. 23).

The mainstream writings on political legitimacy put as the centre of attention a rather general entity (political system, state, government) and take this as a key unit of analysis. Lamb (2014) labels the units of analysis ‘conferees’ as legitimacy is conferred on them from those who legitimize them (or not). On the other side of this relationship is a ‘referee’: “A referee is a person or group of people judging the degree to which the conferee is or is not legitimate” (Lamb 2014, p. 24). Yet, as we can see from his own analysis, even after we have identified both conferee and referee there is still a lot of work ahead. The problematic aspect of legitimacy is that everybody judges what is legitimate and what not by different criteria, so there is a need to manage the question of how, when and why referees do or do not confer legitimacy upon conferees.

Robert Lamb came up with a simplified scheme of motives to decide in his analysis why someone considers something legitimate, that is, worthy of support. Five sets of criteria

stood out: predictability (transparency and lack of arbitrariness), justifiability (in accordance with my values), equitability (fair system, inequalities are based on merit, fairly redistributed), accessibility (I have a voice) and respectability (presence of human dignity, absence of disrespectful treatment) (pp. 28-30). Lamb admits that these principles are general (though it could be argued that they are also culturally specific) and require some indicators that represent them so there can be an empirical analysis (p. 30). These indicators (of support or opposition) can be found on the three different levels: individual, group and system but that does not mean we have to search in all three levels, we can for example choose just system level to make our assessment. Alternatively, we can choose bilateral assessment, i.e. based on indicators from both referee and conferee's perspectives; multilevel assessment, at the level of individual, group and system; or comprehensive assessment which starts at bilateral assessment but adds additional layers of sub-groups (Lamb 2014, p. X-XI). These levels of analysis are one of the clues how not to get lost in existing approaches or future research.

While I acknowledge the innovative and interesting look at the problem, there are still many practical problems that arise when thinking about how to apply this theory in Vietnam, primarily because of the limitation on data. His analytical categories are still interesting and stimulating, especially his concept of conferees and referees. In Lamb's terms, this thesis will consider the legitimacy of the Vietnamese Communist Party as a conferee, which thanks to its monopoly of power and the single party system corresponds closely to the government and is the basis of the regime which the Party represents. Who then are the referees? What do emulation campaigns and their possible 'legitimacy effects' do to change the relationships between referees and conferees? The obvious answer to the question thus framed of 'Legitimacy by whom' is 'society' or the Vietnamese people, who are the focus of emulation movements. This can be problematic because of the problem of generalisation. More precise would be to use 'some groups of people in Vietnam' which I often do use in the text, and which is a central part of my typology of movements. In Vietnam, because we cannot ask directly for answers, we can only assume that some voices represent a broader group of people but unfortunately, we cannot tell for sure. In the conclusions, this problem will be acknowledged. In terms of Lamb's criteria, I am not able to provide indicators for Vietnam, yet his research questions are very useful for me.

For us, however, a more crucial contribution of Lamb's article is a section about "What does legitimacy do?" (p. 18). This section serves as a contribution to the topic of why we should study legitimacy in the first place but also, what can to a certain degree 'substitute'

for legitimacy. Lamb writes: “Legitimacy is a worthiness of support (or, in some contexts, of loyalty of imitation), and illegitimacy is a worthiness of opposition. (...) In short, legitimacy induces compliance, encourages participation, and lowers costs, and so achieves stability, while illegitimacy induces disobedience, encourages opposition, and raises costs, and so threatens stability” (p. 18).

Stability is one of the apparent positive results of the presence of legitimacy, however, as Lamb points out, there are other factors which produce stability: seduction, habit, persuasion, compromise, force, coercion, barter and deception (pp. 20-22). This thesis will consider some of these ‘substitutes’ in relation to Vietnam: habit, seduction, persuasion and manipulation.

This thesis borrows from Lamb’s vocabulary and some of his analytical suggestions to drive its analysis towards a more complex picture of legitimacy in Vietnam.

### **1. 5. 3. ‘Legitimacy’ versus ‘Legitimacy Effect’**

This thesis understands legitimacy in politics as one of the key aspects of politics that creates a motivation for a conscious voluntary support. The problem of such an account of legitimacy rests in the question: how do we know support is voluntary and conscious? The central issue here is that we are dealing with a spectrum from active support, through mere compliance to worthiness of opposition (Lamb 2014). How do we differentiate between support based on fear and support based on agreement? Weber’s response to this question would perhaps be that it does not matter why we comply because the result is a stability. That sounds persuasively, however, we are not entirely satisfied with this answer. Stability can be stronger, weaker or quickly change. The stability, instability and their nature are dependent on the values that underpin our beliefs in political authority and what goals should it fulfil. However, for the purpose of political analysis, this is a complicated issue, how do we get data for a ‘real voluntary support’? The answer is we cannot, at least directly.

In countries like Vietnam, this is an impossible task. An idea that a foreign researcher asks the Vietnamese questions about whether they support their government and get genuine answer is unthinkable. This thesis comes with two solutions to this problem. First, it uses the case study of emulation movements by introducing the category of ‘legitimacy effect’ (as opposed to legitimacy based on genuine support). Legitimacy effect is a result of political

strategies. The word strategies here is important as it suggests that there is a conscious effort from the authorities to somehow ‘create’ ‘effect of legitimacy’. If legitimacy brings voluntary compliance and stability, then the question is which other tools create the same effect? This thesis examines emulation movements and looks for patterns of a habit, seduction, persuasion and manipulation. The mixture of legitimacy, legitimacy effect and fear all play an important role in stability, however, this stability is qualitatively different. Second, in Chapter 7, I report results of research into how Vietnamese think Vietnamese words corresponding to ‘authority’ can be explained.

This thesis works with the self-invented term ‘legitimacy effect’ to describe the outcome of tools which have similar effect as legitimacy. This effect in general terms has a stabilizing tendency and creates compliance.

At this point, it is interesting to briefly look to the psychology of habit which can give us some important clues to understand the durability of various regimes through rituals and discipline. In simple terms, we can think about habit as a three-step loop: cue (trigger), routine and reward. Cue triggers a reaction of brain that starts a routine, then, after the routine is done, follows the reward. After a while this cycle becomes automatic and the brain and organism develops anticipation and cravings (Duhigg 2012, p. 19-20). An illustrative passage from the book *Power of Habit* can help to explain this mechanism:

“I had been in Iraq for about two months when I heard about an officer conducting an impromptu habit modification program in Kufa, a small city ninety miles south of the capital. He was an army major who had analysed videotapes of recent riots and had identified a pattern: Violence was usually preceded by a crowd of Iraqis gathering in a plaza or other open space and, over the course of several hours, growing in size. Food vendors would show up, as well as spectators. Then, someone would throw a rock or a bottle and all hell would break loose. When the major met with Kufa’s mayor, he made an odd request: Could they keep food vendors out of the plazas? Sure, the mayor said. A few weeks later, a small crowd gathered near the Masjid al- Kufa, or Great Mosque of Kufa. Throughout the afternoon, it grew in size. Some people started chanting angry slogans. Iraqi police, sensing trouble, radioed the base and asked U.S. troops to stand by. At dusk, the crowd started getting restless and hungry. People looked for the kebab sellers normally filling the plaza, but there were none to be found. The spectators left. The chanters became dispirited. By 8 P.M., everyone was gone. When I visited the base near Kufa, I talked to the major. You wouldn’t necessarily think about



a crowd's dynamics in terms of habits, he told me. But he had spent his entire career getting drilled in the psychology of habit formation" (Duhigg 2012, xviii).

This lengthy story provides a couple of interesting clues for how to look at the legitimizing strategies from a different angle. If we update Weber based on what we know from the neurology and psychology, the routinisation process can be seen as a series of habits, understood as automatic reactions to certain triggers. Once we create a habit, and automatize certain behaviours, we generally stop thinking about them and focus on the next tasks: "(...) the reason the discovery of the habit loop is so important is that it reveals a basic truth: When a habit emerges, the brain stops fully participating in decision making" (p. 20).

Cues can be words, sounds, pictures or others. This thesis will seek for the traces of habit. If nothing else, Vietnamese political reality seems to be deeply routinized and habitual.

Seduction or persuasion is a way to influence other people. Lamb writes: "seduction is the art of 'making other people think it was their idea'" (Lamb 2014, p. 20). Persuasion or seduction in this thesis are put together as they seem to be qualitatively similar strategies of how to gain legitimacy effect. Seduction works because we are convinced that we initiated the idea, followed by the reward that we believe is beneficial for us. Persuasion is more direct version of this principle, usually including "an explicit statement by one party of what action is desired followed by argued reasons why the other party should undertake that action, often involving reference to self-interest or values or good outcomes and so on" (Ibid.). Influence can be based on reason but also on charisma. The persuasion from charismatic personality thus contains some kind of appeal to trust (Wartenberg 1990, pp. 109-110).

Manipulation or deception can serve similar goals as the two strategies presented above: compliance and stability. Wartenberg (1990) distinguishes between cognitive and emotional manipulation (p. 111). Cognitive manipulation means that other person persuades us to do something under the pretext of reasons that are beneficial for us but are in fact thinking about selfish reasons that benefit them. Emotional version of this contains some appeal to our emotions to get us to do something. Lamb uses the expression deception to all kinds of influences that involves lying or manipulation. This thesis will also look for traces of manipulation in emulation movements.

#### **1. 5. 4. Legitimacy and Legitimacy Effect in This Thesis**

The above debates in political science circle around the problem of legitimacy. Weber and his focus on the ‘descriptive legitimacy’ of a system of domination is an attempt to theorize how different social orders maintain themselves, people obey, and they: believe in rules, believe in sanctity of tradition or believe in exceptional personality (or a combination). Beetham was opposed to this claim that a simple belief in norms establishes legitimacy (the norms according to Beetham contain some normative principles to justify them). Beetham then also included belief in rightful source of authority, and proper ends of power and its exercise. And lastly, he emphasized that consent has to be included collectively in any account of legitimacy. This thesis will look at the Vietnamese case from Beetham’s, Weber’s and Lamb’s selected perspectives.

This thesis approached the complicated topic of legitimacy with caution. I used two expressions, ‘legitimacy’ and ‘legitimacy effect’, to point to the problem of differentiating between legitimacy in Beetham’s sense and the power strategies that create similar effects to legitimacy. We saw that in a practical sense, it was often impossible to distinguish between legitimacy and those strategies which create a legitimacy effect, simply because we cannot know the cause and effect. For example some people in Vietnam participated and still participate in emulation movements because they genuinely believe it is a good thing (the movements line up rules they accept based on underlying values, beliefs and real consent), yet many participate and participated because they fear the consequences of non-participation. Empirically it is almost impossible to know who is doing what and why, but we can infer.

This thesis works with multiple theories and concepts of legitimacy and acknowledges that the compliance can be just an effect of some power-related strategies. This thesis does not attempt to judge the different approaches to legitimacy of Weber, Arendt, Beetham and Lamb, but rather treats them as providing for different reasons, useful conceptions and approaches. This thesis does not answer the question whether the consent of people in Vietnam is real or surrogate, but instead tries to show that it is both. Support or opposition in Vietnam IS a combination of things, combination of coercion and control but also believe in values and their preservation, rules tied to them, or acknowledgement of the real positive political outcomes. Practically, what we can do in Vietnam, is to look at the cases of opposition (or support) and try to understand the complexity of issues behind these expressions of dissatisfaction and what the VCP seems to do in response. We are going to look at the combination of legitimacy (in its different meanings) and legitimacy effects as a mixture. I suggest that the combinations of these

factors create a dynamic which can be observed. This dynamic can be seen as tides of the ocean, they change from high to low tide twice a day. High tide in our case means that people actively support Vietnamese leaders and regime, low tide means the presence of opposition. We can find both. In between the tides, there is a situation when it is neither support nor opposition (or they are not expressed) but rather indifference. I acknowledge this multi-approach has many limits but I defend it against the selection and application of one particular theory as it allows us to better understand the complexity of the Vietnamese politics.

## **1. 6. Political Power: Lukes and Wartenberg**

Political power as a concept in political science went through many interesting discussions. The prevalent disagreement can be simplified in the questions: what is power and how do we look at it? Steven Lukes (2005) added another question: can we actually always see it, or is it sometimes hidden? With that, he took us to abstract discussion of values and interests. Luke thus introduced a three-dimensional view of power. The first dimension is the one where we can directly observe conflict, and the most pronounced example of this for him is a behaviourist study of New Haven from Robert Dahl. Dahl was persuaded that empirical political science can bring value-free knowledge (so was Weber). Therefore, he studied political competition in New Haven which led to the pluralistic distribution of power; no one had all of the resources to dominate (Dahl 1961). The second dimension of power can be well illustrated through the problem of agenda setting in politics. Power can be observable if a certain topic gets on the list and is publicly spoken but if a certain topic is prevented from entering the political arena, we would not observe it but power would still affect the result. Various discursive analyses show this dimension. The last dimension is another level below these two. It appears the same as the second one but in addition to conflict and its absence because of non-decision making, there is a third hidden sphere where power operates: in the minds of people, by changing people's understanding of their 'real interests' for then there will be no space for certain agenda to emerge at all (Lukes 2005).

This three-dimensional view was suggested for power with the meaning 'power-over' or power thought as domination but there are also numerous studies on 'power to' with the meaning of power to do something, or power as capacity. Wartenberg also made an important distinction within the category of power over when he differentiated between two different uses of power domination as negative types of power and transformation as positive types. On the

domination side he differentiated between force, coercive power, influence and its subtypes (rational persuasion, personal persuasion, expertise) and manipulation (Wartenberg 1990, pp. 93-114). On the positive side, he divided between paternalism and transformation.

Wartenberg in his book suggested another approach to power: dynamic. Thomas Wartenberg wrote on this topic:

“The assumption that power is static is not the one explicitly stated in the conceptions of power put forward in the power debate. Nonetheless, it is one that is involved in treating power as some-Thing that can be possessed by a social agent. If power is a Thing that is possessable by a social agent and if such possession is treated as an objective fact about that agent, then power is conceptualized in an essentially static manner. But power needs to be conceptualized as *dynamic* phenomenon, one that has temporal as well as static to its existence and is therefore always “in motion” (...) A dynamic conception of power acknowledges that power is a particular type of ongoing social process, not simply a static social distribution” (Wartenberg 1990, p. 164).

In sum, this brief sketch only surfaces the complex discussions of political science but provides a basic overview suited to this thesis. I tried to convey the idea, that it is of utmost importance to delimitate the grounds when we write about political power (and other concepts). To prevent misunderstandings, it is important to specify our approach and goals.

### **1. 6. 1. ‘Political Power’ in This Thesis**

This thesis acknowledges that power can have different dimensions and we will point to the respective dimensions where it is necessary. For simplification, however, this thesis will primarily refer to power as domination, that is in its general understanding as power over someone. Such an understanding corresponds with Joseph Nye’s notion of hard power, or Wartenberg’s negative power expressed as violence or coercion. Understanding power as domination (coercion, force) is derived from the specific Vietnamese distinctions that came out from the interviews conducted in Hanoi (see Chapter 7). However, I advocate an open and eclectic approach, that means that different dimensions of power will be pointed to throughout the thesis.

In the Chapter 7, I will point to the Vietnamese equivalent to the word ‘rule’ as an expression of dominating power and compare it to ‘governing’ which arguably requires some additional

quality. For Vietnam this distinction is very useful as it goes to the core of present problems and throws light upon the changing nature of emulation campaigns.

This chapter introduced and discussed various assumptions, theoretical tenets and concepts that I will work with throughout the thesis. In the following chapters, I will explore the emulation movements in Vietnam, the USSR and China so I can then later derive the apparent functions of emulation movements and consider them in the light of legitimacy and legitimacy effect, stability and instability. Before that, however, we have first to have some understanding of the origin, history and current shape of emulation movements in Vietnam. That will be the subject of the following three chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 4). The next chapter will now provide a historical account of emulation movements in the USSR and China.

## **2. Socialist Emulation: USSR and China**

This chapter is divided in the two main parts: Emulation in Soviet Russia; and Emulation in China. It provides a brief historical overview of the origin of socialist emulation with its roots in Lenin's Soviet Russia where Marxist principle of 'competition without profit' became a widespread propaganda tool for mobilizing the masses and lifting economic production. The same principle of emulation was also adopted in both China and Vietnam but it was adapted there to local cultures and conditions. The next chapter (Chapter 3) is devoted to the topic of the history of emulation in Vietnam.

### **2. 1. Competition versus Emulation (Proudhon, Marx, Lenin)**

Historical discussions on social emulation can be tracked down to the 19th century when socialist emulation was often contrasted to capitalist competition. As Isaac Deutscher, a Polish journalist and commentator on Soviet affairs wrote, the question whether socialism itself is compatible with any form of competition was debated by many socialist schools. According to him, perhaps the most crucial theoretical controversy took part between Marcel Proudhon and Karl Marx:

“Proudhon saw socialism essentially as a ‘free association’ of small property-owners, of independent producers owning their means of production. It was natural for him to envisage the economic activity of such a society in terms of competition. The evil of capitalism, Proudhon argued, was that it gave the banker and the industrialist a monopoly on the means of production and thus degraded the small artisan and peasant into wage-slaves. Under such conditions, genuine competition, which presupposed the equality and the freedom of those taking part in it, was impossible” (Deutscher 1952).

Competition was for Proudhon natural and would certainly play an important role in socialism. On the other hand, Marx argued, that historically, competition is not a part of pre-capitalist societies and also that competition should not be equated to emulation:

“Marx did not question the assumption that the urge for emulation was inherent in human nature. He merely insisted that this urge ought not to be confused, let alone identified, with economic competitiveness. ‘Competition is emulation for profit’” (Ibid.).

Marx's argument corresponded with those visions of communist society that see it as free from wages or profit. Soviet writings after the establishment of the USSR revisited the topic of emulation and considered it a specific type of organization of competition, in sharp opposition to capitalist competition. In December 1917 Vladimir I. Lenin wrote *How to Organise Competition?* which was later published as an article in newspaper *Pravda*<sup>20</sup>.

Lenin's 'emulation' was also a reaction to capitalist competition as he defined it, (which he called 'bourgeois competition'):

“Under *such* capitalism, competition means the incredibly brutal suppression of the enterprise, energy and bold initiative of the *mass* of the population, of its overwhelming majority, of ninety-nine out of every hundred toilers; it also means that competition is replaced by financial fraud, nepotism, servility on the upper rungs of the social ladder” (Lenin 1929).

Lenin was persuaded that socialist production can, without such a brutal competition, beat capitalist production. In his thought, it was a myth that workers and peasants were not able to be in control of production and distribution. He thus called for a large-scale movement that would take this control. In other words, it is a matter of competition who gets the position of control. In Soviet Russia, Soviets, modelled according to Paris Commune, were supposed to be the places of such competition and expected success:

“Our Soviets are following the same road [as the Paris Commune]. But they are still "timid"; they have not yet got into their stride, have not yet "bitten into" their new, great, creative task of building the socialist system. The Soviets must set to work more boldly and display greater initiative. All "communes"—factories, villages, consumers' societies, and committees of supplies—must *compete* with each other as practical organisers of accounting and control of labour and distribution of products. The programme of this accounting and control is simple, clear and intelligible to all—everyone to have bread; everyone to have sound footwear and good clothing; everyone to have warm dwellings; (...)” (Lenin 1929).

Following Marx, Lenin thus laid an ideological foundation for the emulation movements that perhaps all communist regimes adopted in some form. In Lenin's writing, the basic principles of socialist emulation are: building of a large-scale movement (everyone has to participate); outcomes where the talented will stand out in a competition and get the reins in their hands which will in turn raise productivity; enthusiasm, an important part of the

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<sup>20</sup> Pravda No. 17, January 20, 1929.

movement; and the intended result that the basic needs of everyone who works are covered (Lenin 1929). In sum, the central purpose of the competition as characterized by Lenin was thus through a popular mobilisation organised by the Party to raise the productivity of labor to secure greater welfare for the people. However, this ideological goal saw slightly different practices and uses from all three countries, Soviet Union, China and Vietnam, as I now discuss.

## **2. 2. Emulation in Soviet Russia**

### **2. 2. 1. Beginnings of Emulation in Lenin's era: Communist Saturdays**

An Emulation Hero was the prototype of the 'new Soviet man' promoted by the Soviet authorities after the October Revolution. The earliest examples of the new productive workers were shock workers ('udarniki'), usually a group of people performing particularly urgent tasks during the Civil War. But the meaning shifted during the late 1920s when groups of young people, particularly from the Party-controlled Komsomol<sup>21</sup>, organized working over-time and above their formal assignments (Siegelbaum 1988, p. 40).

The first initiatives to raise productivity were introduced in 1919 and gained the name 'Communist Saturday' ('Subbotnik'). Sunday ('Voskresnik') also became a volunteering working day.

In the text *Great Initiative* Lenin writes about the beginnings of 'Communist Saturday movement':

"(...) we can say that the first Communist Saturday instituted by the workers of the Moscow-Kasan Railway on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1919, is of greater historical importance than any of the victories of Hindenberg or Foch or the English during Imperialist war of 1914-18. (...) The Communist Saturday of the Moscow-Kasan railwaymen is a germ-cell of the new Socialist society (...) On May 31<sup>st</sup> the first Communist Saturday was observed at Twer. One hundred and twentyeight Communists worked on the railway. In 31 hours 14 wagons were loaded, 3 locomotives repaired, 10 klafter<sup>22</sup> of wood sawn, and other work done. The output of the Communist workers was about thirteen times greater than the usual" (Lenin 1919, pp. 12-13).

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<sup>21</sup> Soviet Youth Organisation.

<sup>22</sup> Klafter is a cubic measure, generally pile three ells [an old measurement long approximately as an elbow] long, three ells high, and usually three feet broad. (Ibid.)



Lenin in his book emphasized that Communist Saturdays were a “spontaneous initiative of the workers” (p. 18), or elsewhere that “The Communist Saturdays are of great importance because they have been introduced by the workers themselves, and under very unfavourable conditions” (p. 21). This principle was important as it aimed at persuading society that ‘it was their idea’. Robert Lamb writing about seduction wrote: “seduction is the art of making other people think it was their idea” (Lamb 2014, p. 20). Given the Leninist doctrine requiring Party political control over popular organisations such as the Komsomol, and the Soviets themselves, we cannot take Lenin’s statements about popular initiatives at face value.

In terms of goals and how to achieve them, Lenin wrote about fair distribution, and the need to tackle poverty and secure a healthy environment. For that purpose, the accounts of ‘Communist Saturdays’ had to be propagandised:

“A well-organised system of production, carefully arranged “Saturdays,” meticulous care and conscientiousness in the winning and distribution of every ounce of bread, model restaurants, extreme cleanliness of workers’ houses and of streets – all these must receive much more attention in the future than they do now, not only from Press, but also from the workers’ and peasants’ organisations. All such measures are shoots of Communism, and the care of these shoots is our first and principal task” (Lenin 1919, p. 26).

In Lenin’s picture dissemination of those positive examples is of great importance. The ‘spontaneous’ action thus had to be encouraged and helped by the authorities through propaganda.

In another passage, we can read about an additional goal that Lenin prescribed for the initiative:

“The great initiative of the Communist Saturdays must be utilised also in another direction – that of purifying the party (...) A decrease of this kind in the number of party members really means an increase of power and authority. We should continue the purifying process while utilising to the full the initiative of the “Communist Saturdays”. Admission to the party should follow a half-year of “testing time” which should be spent in “revolutionary work” (pp. 28-29).

Thus, if someone wanted to deserve to be in the Party, he or she had to be active contributor to authorised work for the common purpose. According to Lenin, this was

supposed to secure that the new Party members are devoted people and that in turn was to secure authority of the Party.

To sum up, 1919 was the year when Communist Saturdays modelled by the railway Soviet workers started the emulation movement in Lenin's era. The workers from Moscow-Kasan railway were considered an avant-garde and a model for later movements to emulate. At this point, however, the emulation model workers were portrayed as groups of workers rather than individuals. That changed during the Stalin period.

### **2. 2. 2. Emulation under Stalin: Stakhanovite Movement**

Under Stalin's leadership, a continuation of the previous emulation efforts was amplified in the so called 'Stakhanovite movement'. Due to the very high levels of investment during the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932), the USSR experienced a severe economic crisis, manifest in the forced collectivisation of agriculture and extreme controls over the population. This crisis was overcome in the Second Five Year Plan (1933-1937) when the security apparatus was employed particularly severely, as continued up until Stalin's death in 1953. One of the strategies employed was Stakhanovism, although, Davies and Khlevnyuk (2002) argued in their article that Stakhanovism did not really contribute to the success. Irrespective of that, it was very well used in Soviet propaganda.

The movement started in 1930s and carried the name of the worker Alexey Stakhanov (1906-1977), who worked in the coal mine in Donbass, Ukraine. Stakhanov became an exemplary worker who worked in the mine to reach output levels far past his quotas. In a single night, in August 1935, he allegedly extracted 102 tonnes of coal which was fourteen times over the norm. Later, his enthusiasm and 'heroism' was used by Stalin's regime as an exemplary model for other workers to attempt to raise productivity in competition with the capitalist West. His personality gained both overwhelming attention in the Soviet Union and large amount of international attention too, as his story was covered in Time magazine in 1935 and in The New York Times in 1985. Alexei Stakhanov was portrayed as a prototype of a new socialist man as pictured by Stalin, not only as a zealous worker but also clever (innovative) and cultured:

“What Stalin meant by culture ('kul'turnost') was not simply literacy but also taking part in cultural activities, such as reading classic literature and going to concerts and theatres.

This was highly infused with the values of the middle class. Ideally Stakhanovites did not live in the factories; they had familial and cultural lives which were as important as their work. They should take advantage of the good things in life that the Soviet regime could offer. Working to exhaustion was associated not with communist zeal but with backwardness. An ideal life for Stakhanovites was someone who worked “at the factory exactly seven hours, since Soviet power does not permit anyone to work more, who regularly goes to the cinema, visits others, engages in sports and at the same time fulfils all production tasks. . . . They must not only dress beautifully and cleanly—not in the style of workers, but also speak cleanly and not swear” (Fitzpatrick 1999 cited in Yu, 2010, p. 233).

The secondary literature has been interested in different aspects of the Stakhanovite movement. Some writings depict the Stakhanovite movement as a part of the Great Terror in factories between 1935 and 1938 (Thurston 2002). In his description Stakhanovism exacerbated all of the numerous problems that Soviet industry suffered in the mid-1930s, especially the tensions between workers and managers. Workers in the Soviet Union became portrayed as what Lenin had earlier called for, with Party-controlled ‘worker’s control’, a reworking of the structure of production and a continuous expansion their demands towards their managers (Thurston 2002, p. 145). Such tensions were part of the massive forces that drove the rapid industrialisation of the Five Year Plans before the Second World War. Workers who started to compete under the heading of the Stakhanovite movement were publicised, rewarded and celebrated by the Party and State. In Lenin’s era the deeds which were rewarded had mainly simply influenced the speed of production. Later in Stalin’s period and after his death, innovations could take the form of collective methods, instruction of workers, increases in quality, and economy and thrift<sup>23</sup> (Kaple 1994, p. 37-39).

Success in emulation in the Soviet Union conferred not only substantial material rewards but also upward social mobility and party membership:

“Work collectives that win socialist emulation campaigns receive challenge red banners and bonuses. Aviation workers who do excellent work are encouraged by valuable gifts and free accommodation at health resort centres and holiday homes” (Zuyev 1984, p. 25).

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<sup>23</sup> For examples, see the original.

This system of rewards and opportunities was very similarly applied in China and Vietnam. Miin-ling Yu describes this in chapter 9, of the book *China Learns from the Soviet Union*:

“Still, the most attractive rewards for the ordinary people were material, in the form of livestock, agricultural tools and money. Other material rewards were to send model workers to study at professional schools, to train them to become cadres or to award them political positions. (...) In addition, three kinds of awards did not exist in Yan’an period, but were highly publicized after 1949, based on Soviet practices. One was sending model workers to vacation or relax in scenic resorts, such as West Lake, Lu Mountain, Qingdao, Beidaihe and so on to demonstrate that the CCP cared about workers’ health. The second one was to organize some star model laborers to visit the Soviet Union to learn from their “progressive production and methods” (People’s Daily cited in Yu 2010, p. 241). However, as we will see, material rewards in China were abolished during 1960s, and the similar contemporary shift can be seen in North Vietnam which illustrates the connection between the two nations.

Vladimir Shlapentokh in his 1988 article compares several editions of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia to track the changes in portrayal of the Stakhanovite movement:

“The most notable change is in the length of the articles on the movement: in the 1947 edition, the article on the Stakhanovites covered eleven columns, while it shrank to only three columns in 1957 and to two in 1976” (Shlapentokh 1988, p. 263).

And,

“(The first edition contended that it was Stalin's speech in May 1935 which pushed Stakhanov to initiate his efforts.)<sup>7</sup> In addition, the 1947 edition presented the movement in a very bombastic style: 'The Stakhanov movement is of world importance for it opened up the possibility for the achievement of productivity necessary for the transition from socialism to communism' and 'for surpassing the capitalist countries in productivity'. Yet in the next edition, the importance of the movement was radically downgraded, and by the third edition there was no mention at all of the successes of the Stakhanovites in surpassing western standards of productivity” (pp. 263-264).

In the Stalin era, dissemination of results of emulation was considered as important as during Lenin’s rule. Deborah A. Kaple gives examples of competitions in the USSR after the

Second World War and depicts how media played the crucial role in dissemination of the competitions. Many of competitions took the form of ‘challenges’:

“The third challenge during this period came from Leningrad. In February 1947, collectives of fifteen Leningrad enterprises published their challenge to all others in a Leningrad newspaper. They appealed for all workers to fulfil the second year of the plan by November 7, 1947, which was thirtieth Anniversary of the October Revolution” (Kaple 1944, p. 36).

In sum, the Stakhanovite movement was another incarnation of the emulation principle started by Lenin. Profiting from his cult of personality Stalin resorted to the extreme use of security apparatus to achieve the promised goal of economic surpassing of the West. Stakhanovism, was the primary tool serving the functions of control and propaganda to support this goal. Stalin’s Emulation Hero was a cultured worker who was completely devoted to the communist future. However short lived in the USSR, Stakhanovism was the model for similar movements in other countries, most notably China. We will see that Vietnam avoided this version of emulation movement.

### **2. 2. 3. From Stakhanovism Back to Emulation: Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev**

The decline of Stakhanovism came shortly after the movement begun. According to R. W. Davies and Oleg Khlevniuk: “its economic significance already began to decline in 1936, and in 1937-38 it was submerged by large-scale repression in industry” (Davies and Khlevnyuk 2002, p. 898).

According to another account, the term ‘Stakhanovism’ itself was erased from the Soviet political vocabulary later, after Khrushchev’s criticism of Stalin:

“‘Stakhanovism,’ stopped being used after the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 because it was too closely associated with the cult of personality. Due to the economic crisis in the 1980s, there were discussions again about the revival of Stakhanovism” (Yu 2010, p. 233).

Not unexpectedly, a personality that criticised Stalin at Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of USSR and thus cause degradation of Stakhanovism was the same person who in the mid-1930s had enthusiastically supported Stakhanovite movement:

“Khrushchev was never much of a ‘specialist eater’ as such, but his view on Stakhanovism placed him on the side of those who would soon engineer the wholesale slaughter [of] the

country's managers and technician specialists. He called for the work of party organs in Moscow to be evaluated according to their support for the Stakhanovite movement" (Tompson 1997, p. 52).

In the English language literature, including Khrushchev's translated memoirs, we do not find detailed information on the topic of socialist competition under Khrushchev. Emulation as a principle of socialist competition existed as we know that Khrushchev had a speech at the USSR Conference of Leaders in the Emulation Movement of Communist Work Teams and Shock Workers in 1960. However, information on the details of the campaigns are not available in English to my knowledge. More information on emulation can be found in Brezhnev's writings.

During the Brezhnev period (1964-1982), the purpose of emulation shifted and seems to have been influenced by the personal views of the Soviet leader.

One of them was all-union socialist competition which was started in 1973 and extended emulation mechanisms to the union level Brezhnev wrote: "As you see the development of Western Siberia can also be helped by those who are working elsewhere. For this, those, who are filling Tyumen orders – whether in Ukraine, Azerbaijan, the Volga lands, Moscow, or any other part of the country – should assume Komsomol stewardship over them and help develop the spaces and mineral resources of Tyumen with the minimum manpower" (Brezhnev 1980, p. 227).

Brezhnev also put additional emphasis on the use of emulation as a measure for ideological indoctrination of society. He said: "The current upswing in socialist emulation is a graphic result of the close combination of political and labour education . . . We are all happy to see how deeply the Leninist ideas of socialist emulation have taken hold. We take pride in the fact that the Communists are in the forefront of the emulation, which exerts profound influence on economic practice, on the country's socio-political life and on the moral atmosphere. Our common militant slogan is to do our utmost to develop still further socialist emulation and the movement for a communist attitude to work" (p. 121).

Brezhnev talked extensively about emulation in his speech at the 16th Congress of Trade Unions of the USSR on 21 March 1977. There he emphasised that emulation is "inseparable from the current scientific and technological revolution" and "it increasingly centres around the problem of efficiency and quality" (p. 146). In the same speech, we can

also read indirect criticism of previous emulation efforts: “All this makes the organisation of emulation a complex matter which must not follow beaten paths” (p. 146).

It is striking that the education of the new socialist man and promotion of his political growth and moral development stops being the primary purpose of emulation. Instead the emphasis is on economic performance whilst educational value comes with the quality of guidance and practical support from trade unions, economic executives and factory management. In other words, people do not learn from emulation itself but from trade unions and economic managers. That is a substantive shift from Lenin’s principle of ‘workers should emulate to gain control of production’. Brezhnev also in his text warns against common problems of emulation, ‘formalism, red tape, and eye wash’. We will see later that all these expressions (and others) are also present in the Vietnamese ‘emulation vocabulary’.

During the Brezhnev leadership emulation was not tied to Stakhanovism, so it may seem surprising that it was Vladimir Gorbachev whose leadership of the USSR started with the appraisal of Stakhanovism as a positive example of emulation (Shlapentokh 1990, p. 229; Shlapentokh 2001, p. 191). This, however, as we know, did not last for long.

#### **2. 2. 4. Soviet Emulation: Summary**

According to Soviet ideologues, emulation in the USSR at the beginning of its existence served two main goals. First was the economic purpose of raising production but the second was perhaps even more important: the ideological appeal for creation of a new socialist moral man, a selfless worker hero loyal to the Party and devoted to the communist future.

Central planning in the USSR and its unrealistic goals created a demand for better and better performance from both collectives and individual workers. In order to generate broad-based enthusiasm for work, Soviet leaders universally promoted and encouraged emulation in hope of better economic performance. However, even in the time of the most intensive socialist competition during the mid-1930s, the evidence talks against the positive effect of the Stakhanovite movement on economic performance (Davies and Khlevnyuk 2002). Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any comparative study on the economic effects of emulation during the important periods of its existence in the USSR.

When it comes to ideological function of emulation, literature becomes richer. From the different accounts written on various aspects of emulation in different Soviet periods, we can draw some interesting observations.

Firstly, Lenin put an emphasis on the *spontaneous origins* of emulation in the Soviet Union. Why was that important? For Lenin, social change was a necessary precondition for successful communist transformation. Self-motivation of workers was perhaps the best way to achieve the result in a shortest possible time – by motivating others to think similarly and become equally ‘self-motivated’. The Party was to play its vanguard role in supporting and organising emulation, as throughout the Soviet state. However, it has to be said that it is not certain whether the spontaneity of workers was always real. As Soviet sources suggest, Stakhanov was inspired by Stalin’s speech (Slapenktoh 1988).

Secondly, another feature that Lenin emphasized in his writings was the need for a *mass movement*. For that purpose, propaganda of different types served as a vehicle for spreading the movement. Publicity of the achievements of the workers participating in emulation was therefore of the utmost importance and received considerable attention from the political leadership. Such a publicity was achieved through different channels, starting from the newspaper and publications, through the Mass Organisations (Komsomol and Labor Union, Peasant’s organisations) to the congresses of Emulation Fighters and Shock Workers. The most efficient was perhaps the flow of information in the factories which as (Kaple 1994, p. 38) reports had a form of broadcasting on the factory intercom system and by distributing booklets as well as through meetings and activities of the Party cells. Last but certainly not least, Soviet leaders themselves included emulation often in their speeches to show to the nation ‘positive examples’ to be emulated. Connection to famous personalities as we will see has remained very important in Vietnam.

Thirdly, as we have seen already, Lenin wrote in 1919 that emulation in the form of Communist Saturdays should serve the goal of ‘*purification of the Party*’ (Lenin 1919). In practice that meant that people had to ‘deserve’ to be admitted to the Party and the best way how to ‘deserve’ such a privilege was to show others that they are prepared to work hard for the common goal in emulation movements. In such a message, we can read between the lines, success in emulation actually leads to individual promotion. Indeed, that was the case in the Soviet Union under both Lenin and Stalin as award of the title of ‘labour hero’ led to substantial progress in personal career and wealth. Incentives for the workers had many shapes and formed a motivation for the workers to get fully involved in emulation. Non-



participation could also be risky as it could be interpreted to mean lack of full enthusiasm for the Soviet state and the Party.

Fourthly, the features above all together added to the regime's ability to meet a variety of ideological goals. Soviet leaders tried to show to both their adherents and common people in the Soviet Union that the *system they try to create will work better* than its Western counterpart. Not only was the national economy supposed to be performing better, but the whole nation could be portrayed, through enthusiastic participation in emulation movements, as in unity and together pushing to secure happiness for the future. For that, they needed to transform the minds of people into reliable indoctrinated citizens.

Many features of Soviet emulation inspired other aspiring communist countries to take the model and apply it to their domestic conditions. Vietnam was no exception however, Vietnamese communism was at the beginning learning from both the Soviet Union and China. Therefore, it is worth exploring how emulation developed in Chinese conditions.

### **2. 3. Emulation in China**

There is no doubt that China is culturally closer to Vietnam and therefore we can expect some similarities, both historically given ones and present-day ones. One important point of cultural similarity is a tradition of Confucianism in which exceptionality is looked at through a prism of moral and intellectual superiority and related position in society (Woodside 1988). The traditional Confucian hierarchical picture of society meant in practice that only higher standing, educated and virtuous people should become a model that other people would respect. In China and Vietnam being a government official, village elder, teacher or parent was connected to a moral duty of modelling proper social behaviour according to the status, a general principle that is called 'li' in Confucianism (Gillespie 2001). For everyone in the hierarchy the obligation was based on filial piety and loyalty. As Sheridan (1968) notes, filial children, great emperors, generals and talented poets all have their stories written in ways that present them as an example for emulation by others. As David Marr shown, these principles were also used by French in Vietnam who very often used filial piety and loyalty to emperor to strengthen their own power (Marr 1981).

In the new communist narratives about emulation models the principles of obligation and loyalty stay at the centre of importance despite the objects of the loyalty changing from the emperor to the country or in general, everyone loyal to the Communist Party, or its leader.

The emulation movement in China was undeniably inspired by the Soviet model. Lenin's *Great Initiative, Including the Story of "Communist Saturday"* from 1919 was translated into Chinese by Wang Jing as early as 1922<sup>24</sup> (Ishikawa 2013, p. 336). However, the character of the Chinese emulation changed over time. Since the 1940s when emulation campaigns<sup>25</sup> started in China, it had different characteristics than later, especially in the 1960s under the leadership of Mao Zedong. His politics, that started with a more traditional Soviet-style ideological premise of industrialisation leading into proletarianization shifted in 1958 towards the Leap Forward when this basic logic reversed: "Now proletarianisation, meaning a change in people's outlook, would lead to industrialisation" (Sheridan 1968, p. 48). This ideological shift was reflected in a massive extension of propaganda and mass mobilisation during the Cultural Revolution.

The early beginnings of emulation campaigning in China are dated in 1940s (Yu 2010). Sheridan (1968) divides traditional Chinese emulation heroism into two main periods: celebrating of fighter heroes from the anti-Japanese and civil war periods and Yen'an<sup>26</sup> heroes. Later heroism, from 1963-1967, was of a new type, however, she argues, cannot be separated from the older heroic traditions (Sheridan 1968, p. 49). In the Yen'an period heroes were predominantly portrayed as Stakhanov-type workers while old time heroes, fighters and martyrs were primarily used as models in literature (Ibid.).

Rachel Funari and Bernard Mees also point to the Stakhanovism seen in China in their 2013 article: *Socialist emulation in China: Worker Heroes Yesterday and Today*:

"After all, the Yan'an period of 1937 – 1945 was not only one of intense Soviet ideological influence on China, but it is also the period of the rise of the famous Russian tradition of

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<sup>24</sup> Gongchandang libailiu (Communist Saturday), Lening (Lenin), auth.: Wang Jinag, trans.; Renmin chubanshe, January 1922.

<sup>25</sup> I use emulation movement and campaign interchangeably. 'Emulation movement' is usually used in singular to express broader idea of one large movement in the socialist world, a kind of principle. However, we can also often read about 'emulation movements' in plural form, which expresses the existence of multiple emulation movements within one country. Another expression 'emulation campaign' is in Vietnamese resources often interchanged for 'emulation movement', however, sometimes it is used more narrowly for a smaller-scope targeted campaign which is a part of a broader movement.

<sup>26</sup> Yen'an period is a time period between 1942 and 1944. This period is known for so called 'Rectification Movement', a movement launched by the Chinese Communist Party to strengthen its ideology and create the cult of Mao Zedong (Selden 1995).

worker heroes, most prominently that of Aleksei Stakhanov (1906 – 1977)” (Funari and Mees 2013, p. 243).

Chinese were learning from the Soviet Union in the Yen’an (Yan’an) period but official relations were not established until 1949. Until 1953 China’s influences came through the period of Stalinisation whilst the years 1953-1956 were ‘the golden years’ between China and Soviet Union. China and Soviet Union shared at the start the ideology and enemy, however, that changed in the mid-1960s. The relationship started to slowly deteriorate under the leadership of Khrushchev and his program of de-Stalinisation and policy of Peaceful Coexistence with the US. Mao’s final radical rejection of these policies led to the sharp turn in the once friendly relationship and his proclamation of China’s goal of surpassing Soviet Union in the construction of communism (Lüthi 2010, pp. 28-34).

In the long period of rather friendly relations, China was learning about emulation heroism and emulation movements from the Soviet Union and the Soviet Party. As Kaple writes in her book:

“The Chinese communists paid a great deal of attention to the summaries of Soviet socialist competitions, whose details later appeared in the Chinese press. (...) Chinese communists were attracted to the Soviet model because it was both economic and political: The most important point is that the Soviet Union presented a viable model calling for strong political control by the Communist Party, and it provided rationale for large-scale political indoctrination (in course of socialist competitions and other campaigns)” (Kaple 1994, pp. 35, 40).

Given these fundamental points of agreement, contrasts between Chinese and Soviet emulation arose due to several factors. The main point of difference lay in contemporary socio-economic differences between the two countries. While the Soviet Union went through a period of rapid industrialisation between the two world wars, upon which post-war reconstruction after 1945 would build, in the 1960s China was still predominantly an agrarian country with a very weak urban and industrial working class. Therefore, while Soviet heroes were typically industrial workers who allegedly spontaneously started a revolution ‘from below’, Chinese heroes were created ‘from above’ to serve as “propagandists for Mao’s regime in the countryside” (Funari and Mees 2013, p. 244). Obviously, the initially largely agrarian organisation of Chinese society is a feature that connects the Chinese and Vietnamese cases. Although, with rapid economic growth with their common use of market

economies from the late 1980s both have seen their economies become far less agrarian. As we will see later, Vietnam, for a long period of time, focused primarily on emulation in agriculture (next to the military area).

Yu (2010) also brought out the differences between Chinese and Soviet versions of socialist emulation. She stressed that while in Soviet Russia the main goal was raising productivity, in China the emphasis was on material and cost savings due to shortage of materials (p. 237). As we will see, this was also the case in Vietnam. Another point of difference between the USSR and China was the greater focus on the role of technology in increasing of production in Soviet Union as opposed to overpopulated China where new technology was dismissed by the leaders in the 1950s because of its potential effect on unemployment and consequentially the legitimacy of the regime (p. 244). This differs from Vietnam as Ho Chi Minh promoted science and technology since 1960, this difference corresponds with the Vietnamese diversion from China, making use of the situation after Sino-Soviet split (Lüthi 2008).<sup>27</sup>

Some differences were subtle. For example, while China also used a system of incentives and rewards to motivate workers to become Emulation Heroes, in the later period this system changed towards more idealised forms of rewards like prestige and moral respect. In the 1960s starting with the famous campaign Lei Feng<sup>28</sup>, Mao used propaganda in the form of diaries, stories, songs and films about individual heroes and shifted the content of campaigns towards messages about moral education, unquestionable patriotism and love for the Party and Mao Zedong. Chinese Emulation Heroes from 1960s are thus dreaming about Chairman Mao, are grateful to him and the Party-their mother, they do anything possible to work and improve work rather than going out, they are reading Chairman Mao's writings and they are happy when they can have the status of 'nameless hero' (Sheridan 1968, pp. 50-54). By contrast Soviet emulation campaigns of the period are far less intense in their ideological pressure.

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<sup>27</sup> Sino-Soviet split was a series of ideological disagreements between the USSR (Khrushchev's Peaceful Coexistence) and China.

<sup>28</sup> Lei Feng was an important hero figure, a PLA sub-lieutenant who died in an accident when he was just 22 years old. He was characterized by his good deeds and loyalty to the Party. The regime emphasized his moral qualities and patriotism (Funari and Mees 2013, p. 248).

Funari and Mees also acknowledged that Emulation Heroes remained a part in propaganda but the focus had shifted to stress their role as ethical personalities. They still play this role today:

“They [Emulation Heroes] seem to have proved particularly resilient features of Chinese culture especially because of their moral standing, their remaining contemporary appeal often reflecting a criticism of some of the less-edifying aspects of life in present-day Chinese society” (Funari and Mees 2013, p. 251).

This emphasis on morality that is typical for Chinese and Vietnamese emulation movements will be elaborated later.

### **2. 3. 1. Emulation in China: Summary**

The beginnings of Chinese emulation date back to the 1940s Yunan rectification campaign, however the new emulation heroism takes up on the older heroic fighter traditions of the civil war and anti-Japanese war. Some authors go as far back as to Confucianism to search for the roots of heroism. Chinese emulation heroism was copied from the USSR but had been changing and later in the 1960s substantially changed with Mao Zedong’s efforts to depart from Soviet style communism, related to the Great Leap forward and creation of Mao’s own version of Chinese communism. Chinese conditions were characterized by the absence of industry and a strong working class, and had to be, in Mao’s eyes, changed and one way to do it was with the help of highly-ideological emulation heroism. That had several consequences that distinguished Chinese emulation movements from those in the Soviet Union. Unlike the Soviet focus upon the value of the ‘cultured worker’, Mao Zedong aimed at transforming ‘illiterate peasants’ into ‘literate proletarians’, and later into devoted ‘moral proletarians’. The powerful material incentives so common in the Soviet Union disappeared from China after 1960 and changed into more idealised forms of motivation. In diaries and films, Chinese Emulation Heroes targeted at the emotions of the Chinese people and motivated them to try to match their heroic actions and affection for Mao’s China. Emulation in China thus did serve a broader ideological and mobilizational purpose, as model heroes were sent to the Chinese villages to teach about Maoism. However, with different conditions and political goals the content of emulation movements, and their goals, were clearly different in the Soviet Union and in China.

In a broader perspective, we can say that Chinese emulation at its beginning was inspired by the Soviet one but then changed because conditions in China were different. Later, Mao Zedong abandoned the path on which 'China learns from the Soviet Russia' and started his own project. He insisted on continuation of more intense and Stalinist style of emulation movements with the purpose of enhancing his personal authority and power and beating the Soviet Union in the communist project. With this change, emulation became somehow automatically required of the population without any expectation of material reward. Mao's heroes were trained in Mao's thoughts and that is where their exemplar qualities lay. Stakhanov was raising Soviet production but in reality, also served as an object through which Soviet Union leaders controlled their population and set their own rules. After Stalin's death, under Khrushchev and then Brezhnev the shift away from the cult of personality in the Soviet Union was reflected in the more technological flavour of Soviet emulation campaigns.

In the next chapter, we will get to the topic of the beginnings of emulation in Vietnam. After the tracing of the roots of emulation, we will focus on how China and the USSR influenced Vietnamese emulation and look at emulation in Vietnam from its beginnings in 1948 to 1975 when the Second Indochina Conflict ended.

### **3. A History of Emulation in Vietnam (1948-1975)**

This chapter provides a historical overview of emulation movements in Vietnam which is important for two main reasons.

First, many existing emulation movements in Vietnam today have their roots in historical movements, often using the same images. Much of this language stresses a continuity in the leadership of the nation by the VCP, going back to anti-French struggles before the Second World War, through the two Indochina Wars and up to today's international tensions over the South China Sea (the Western Sea as the Vietnamese call it). Without a historical understanding of the roots, organisation and evolution of emulation in Vietnam, it would be impossible to capture the changes over time and in the period after *Đổi Mới* (1986) until now. A history of emulation thus not only provides the needed context for what is the focus of this thesis, but it also contributes to our understanding of changes in Vietnamese politics. This chapter provides basic terminology and ideas, as well as a basis for the list of functions of emulation movements that will be introduced in Chapter 5. One idea behind the research into the historical roots of emulation in Vietnam is that it will reveal the anachronistic nature of current Vietnamese emulation movements and it will also allow us to look at legitimacy and legitimizing strategies at the beginnings of the Vietnamese communist regime which we will compare later with the legitimacy and legitimacy strategies of the current leadership.

Second, as it was written in the introduction, there is a serious lack of English language secondary resources specifically devoted to emulation movements in Vietnam. While there are some English-language materials written on emulation movements in the Soviet Union or China, scholars on Vietnam are substantially behind. This thesis tracks historical emulation movements in Vietnamese resources and starts to fill this gap.

This section will explore the period from 1948 when Ho Cho Minh called for 'patriotic emulation', observe the changes during 1950s and 1960s and finish in 1975 when the last American troops withdrew from Vietnam. This period was selected purposely as it captures the beginnings of emulation, the first emulation movements and the major changes of the 1960s. The period from the end of the Second Indochina War (1975) to the official launch of economic reforms *Đổi Mới* (1986) was omitted for two reasons: it does not include any major changes; and emulation was at that period largely dormant, therefore it does not provide

additional relevant input. I discuss later the ‘revival’ of emulation in the late 1990s by the regime after the Thái Bình protests of 1997.

### **3. 1. Ho Chi Minh’s Emotional Power in Vietnam**

The most frequently used name for Ho Chi Minh is ‘Bác Hồ’ (Uncle Ho) and while ‘Bác’ is a pronoun that is normally used for all men and women around 55 deemed to be socially equivalent to one’s parents’ elder siblings, ‘Bác’ in Ho Chi Minh’s case seem to have specific meaning, expressing symbolic family relationship (a friendly but superior uncle). Another example of Ho Chi Minh’s importance can be observed in the written texts. When Vietnamese authors write about Ho Chi Minh, they often use word ‘Person/Human’ (‘Người’), capitalised ‘N’ expresses the greatness of a person (perhaps equivalent to capitalisation of references to ‘God’ amongst Christians). Many Vietnamese people from far away travel to see Ho Chi Minh’s embalmed body in the Mausoleum, his tomb in Ba Đình Square in central Hanoi. For many Vietnamese, especially from remote rural areas, it is an unrepeated special occasion that comes once in a lifetime. The ever-present queue moves rather fast and the visiting rules are strict: no short sleeves or trousers, no talking, no coughing, no laughing and no dawdling. In the dark room, Ho Chi Minh’s body rests in a glass and lit coffin and most visitors move forward in an atmosphere that is describable in terms of awe, even for foreigners. Vietnam celebrates many anniversaries connected with Ho Chi Minh’s life, values and actions. His busts are present in many official places, such as classrooms, meeting rooms, and spaces for official events. Ho Chi Minh, in the propaganda billboards, explains the basic rules of good life to society. His sayings are widely quoted amongst people and in the media and books. Boards or billboards with his pictures and quotes are exposed in public spaces and on the majority of the Vietnamese governmental or other websites. The VCP constantly repeats stories about Ho Chi Minh’s deeds and reminds people about Ho Chi Minh’s thoughts and words.

From the Western point of view, it would be easy to dismiss this affection and claim it to be a plain propaganda of the VCP, and indeed, Ho Chi Minh serves this purpose well, but this conclusion is too simplistic as it is in contrast with the genuine admiration for Ho Chi Minh’s strong moral values, modest way of life and sacrifice for the country, which has been positively influencing many generations of Vietnamese. Even Western scholars often find that



understanding Ho Chi Minh is not ‘black and white’. Historian Stanley Karnow expresses the positive sentiment in the biographical documentary about Ho Chi Minh:

“We had this idiotic idea that communism was a model and all communists are the same and Ho was a part of that model but there is a lot of evidence that he was not. If only we had come to the point that we say: Ok, he is a communist but he is our communist” (‘Documentary Ho Chi Minh...’ [Online], min. 37:20).

What Carnow tries to express is that Ho Chi Minh was not a ‘standard’ Moscow-Beijing puppet Communist despite he was often depicted like that. Writing in the similar tone, Sophie Quinn-Judge, author of Ho Chi Minh’s biography, noted:

“Some writers describe him as a prisoner of the system he created. He was in many respects a prisoner, but it is difficult to say that he created the system. It may be more accurate to say that he was a captive of his need for Communist support to win independence. This seriously restricted Ho’s political options throughout his career” (Quinn-Judge 2002, p. 389).

In sum, Ho Chi Minh’s emotional power is real in Vietnam. This has to be considered before I introduce the beginnings of emulation movements in Vietnam.

### **3. 2. Introduction to the History of Emulation in Vietnam**

Ho Chi Minh’s writing on the ‘emulation movement’ (‘phong trào thi đua’) can be tracked in his *Selected Writings* (‘Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập’). The call for ‘patriotic emulation’ (‘thi đua ái quốc’ or ‘thi đua yêu nước’) is recorded in Volume 5, and dates back to 1948. However, prior to that, in the same volume referring to the year 1947, Ho Chi Minh mentions ‘emulation’ as a principle that can, he writes, help in many areas of the Vietnamese new development (Ho Chi Minh 2000, pp. 338-339).

Emulation movements started in Vietnam during the First Indochina War (1946-1954) and had many cultural and pragmatic features, including the sustaining and building of the newly independent nation out of poverty alongside preserving its independence in a renewed conflict with France and its connection with older traditions. Therefore, rather than ‘lifting socialist economy’ in the process of industrialisation (the focus of Soviet emulation movements at that time), Vietnam had different goals: ‘Eliminate hunger, ignorance and foreign invaders’ (‘Diệt giặc đói, diệt giặc dốt, diệt giặc ngoại xâm’) (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 913). Vietnam was a largely agrarian country with almost no industry and at war, so

increasing industrial production and the concept of industrial ‘labour heroes’ was not only premature in the Vietnamese context. The main focus was upon the war and state-building. A majority of Vietnamese society at the time was illiterate and the main problem was France trying to re-establish its influence in Vietnam.

Also, the lack of interest from other communist countries contributed to the specific shape of early emulation practices in Vietnam. Whilst socialist emulation in other countries prior to the existence and at the beginning of the DRV drew heavily upon Stalin’s Stakhanovism (in both USSR and China), this however does not seem to have been the case in Vietnam. Vietnam’s rather late introduction of emulation and its slower implementation in comparison to China was related to the issues above. Whilst this shows how Vietnamese Communist practices deviated from their original models, the central cause seems to have been that Vietnam was simply in a very different situation than the Soviet Union or China. After the 1945 August Revolution, Vietnam struggled to gain international recognition from the important powers, especially the communist world, and was trapped in a constant renewal of armed conflicts that lasted until the mid-1970s<sup>29</sup>.

This chapter will explore specific Vietnamese experience and culture contributed to the smooth acceptance of emulation. It will also address the problem of the Soviet and Chinese influence. The next part will explore Ho Chi Minh’s writings and decrees concerning emulation. After that, I will introduce the first three emulation campaigns in Vietnam, based on Ho Chi Minh’s slogan: ‘Eliminate hunger, ignorance and foreign Invaders’, followed by four major emulation movements of the early 1960s and two main movements which were launched after 1964.

### **3. 3. Roots of Emulation in Vietnam**

Introduction of emulation movements in Vietnam, however gradual, seemed to be rather natural and smooth. There are a number of plausible reasons for this. Firstly, Confucianism offered many concepts that were in tune with the principles of emulation. Secondly, in 1945 and even prior to 1940s, Vietnam had gained experience with different types of large-scale social movements. Thirdly, Vietnamese traditional cults of heroism, often lauding important leaders in armed conflicts against foreign invaders (such as Lê Lợi, Trần

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<sup>29</sup> First, Second and Third Indochina Conflict.

Hung Đạo and many others) found a continuation in the new form of emulation heroism. Fourthly, emulation in Vietnam was related to patriotism and the war of resistance against France rather than to the newly imported ideological doctrine.

Unprecedentedly the largest collective action was the 1945 August Revolution. David Marr identifies three main mobilizational patterns of 1945-1946 that later can also be seen in emulation movements, or at least in their initial phases. The first one was spreading the readiness of people to sacrifice themselves for the country. The second was the efforts to organize citizens (which gave them functions) in the name of the greater good. This greater good was defined as a modern ‘new life’. The third was aimed at encouraging acceptance of different interests of people (defined in vaguely Marxist class categories<sup>30</sup>) to organize them in collective action (Marr 2013, p. 499). However, even before the 1945 August Revolution the Vietnamese had gained experience with mobilisation, often but not always under communist leadership.

During the French colonial period Vietnam experienced several large movements (‘phong trào’). One of the largest was the National Liberation Movement of Vietnam (‘Phong trào giải phóng dân tộc Việt Nam’) which was aimed at cessation of French colonialism in Vietnam. This broad anti-French movement served as an umbrella for other smaller movements, for example in 1880s Loyalty to the King movement (‘Cần Vương’), or in early 1900s Eastern study movement (‘Đông Du’) (Marr 1971).

The Cần Vương movement started in 1885 and marked the beginning of anti-French resistance. Vietnamese regent Tôn Thất Thuyết attacked French garrisons and when not successful, he escorted the king, Hàm Nghi, from the capital Hue to the mountains. This move was significant as it symbolized the ‘approval’ of anti-French resistance from the highest Vietnamese authority. As a result, many mandarins and peasants shifted their political stance to protecting the king and the country instead of their Confucian obligation to protect family tombs or elderly parents. Hàm Nghi issued the Edict ‘Cần Vương’ (Loyalty to the King) in which he calls for selfless resistance and as Marr puts it: “The major accomplishment up to that point lay in the promulgation and distribution to all corners of Vietnam of the Cần Vương” (Marr 1971, pp. 47-49). The legacy of this movement can serve as an example of several of the characteristics shared with present day emulation movements, such as: mass reaction, fast mobilisation, selfless behaviour and “(...) glorification of death in service to a

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<sup>30</sup> As opposed to traditional Confucian categories scholars, farmers, workers and merchants (Marr 2013).

principle” (Marr 1971, p. 52). Loyalty to the king was one of the movements that initiated the modern patriotic tradition, and patriotic emulation movements under the communist regimes drew from this experience.

To a lesser degree, Đông Du (Eastern Study) was another movement which shows similar aspects to later emulation movements. The movement was initiated by Phan Bội Châu, an educated scholar from Nghệ An Province. Phan Bội Châu made contact with Japanese scholars and sent dozens of Vietnamese students to learn from Japan. In the words of D. Marr again: “Japan had succeeded, Phan believed, because the Japanese people knew how to show compassion for each other, to live and die for common effort” (Marr 1971, p. 122). Vietnamese students were supposed to emulate Japan, and to later return to Vietnam with their know-how and to organize anti-French resistance. Consider the following passage:

“Phan and other sixty young men studying for the exams organized a ‘candidates’ corps’ (Thi-sinh-quan), sought out an older cu-nhan graduate as commander, and had just reached the point of collecting money and materials for weapons when a French patrol arrived and blasted the village” (Marr 1971, p. 84). Collection of money and materials is a typical feature of emulation movements in contemporary Vietnam. The emphasis on education is also.

Perhaps the movement closest to present day emulation movements was the late 1945 Popular Education movement. Soon after the August Revolution, Ho Chi Minh was persuaded that one of the main reasons France could rule over the Vietnamese was ignorance (‘dốt’), as 95%<sup>31</sup> of the nation could not write or read. In September 1945, the Ho Chi Minh government launched the Popular Education movement, largely based on mutual help, volunteering and other principles that are typical for present day emulation movements. Later in 1948, the Popular Education Movement was re-organised as large and more formally organised emulation movement.<sup>32</sup>

Vietnam thus did not start its emulation movement without previous experience in large-scale mobilisation, quite the opposite: Vietnam’s ever-present fight (armed or unarmed) for independence created a specific environment which was more than familiar with

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<sup>31</sup> Phạm Hải Yến. (2009a) ‘President Ho Chi Minh and People’s Education Movement’. (‘Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với phong trào Bình dân học vụ’). [Online]. Available at: <http://www.archives.gov.vn/Pages/Tin%20chi%20ti%E1%BA%BFt.aspx?itemid=99&listId=c2d480fb-e285-4961-b9cd-b018b58b22d0&ws=content/>.

<sup>32</sup> I will focus on this movement in the next section of this chapter.

mobilisation, mutual help, and the setting up of model heroes and sacrifice. The Việt Minh resistance movement against France after 1945 just cleverly adopted a new strategy, a strategy of socialist emulation.

Similarly, as in China, another aspect that made the introduction of emulation to Vietnam easier was one of the Vietnamese cultural features: the cult of heroism. Heroism as a phenomenon has long history in Vietnam and the phenomenon of exemplary personalities in emulation movements fitted in with this tradition. For example, the famous Vietnamese general Trần Hưng Đạo from the 13<sup>th</sup> century who stopped three major Mongolian invasions, was used to directly connect well-known (to Vietnamese) historical events and personalities to the beginnings of emulation in Vietnam. In the book *Appeals of the President Ho Chi Minh* (*Nhung loi keu goi cua Ho Chu tich*), republished in volume 5 of his *Selected Writings*, Ho Chi Minh writes to young people and children (February 1948). He calls for the formation of groups named after Trần Quốc Toản, grandchild of the national hero, general Trần Hưng Đạo. Despite that Trần Quốc Toản was only 15, then 16 years old, he fought against the aggressors. In Ho Chi Minh's account, young people should not directly 'fight' but help in different ways, for example: "To sweep the house, carry the water, pile the wood, thrash out the rice, help little children, teach national script" (Ho Chi Minh 2000, pp. 855-6). Ho Chi Minh mentions directly the principle of 'emulation' and rewards. Children grouped together are supposed to compete with other groups. Whichever group becomes the best will be rewarded by diploma ('giấy khen') sent by Ho Chi Minh. (Ibid.).

The anti-French resistance movement also had its own contemporary heroes<sup>33</sup>, the same type of heroes would become later 'Emulation Heroes' and would be widely celebrated and promoted as embodying a model of correct behaviour. One such pre-Emulation Hero and national martyr is Võ Thị Sáu, a young girl from Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu Province, who joined the anti-French resistance as young as 12 years old. She was arrested in 1950 while attempting to throw a grenade at French soldiers. Later in 1952, she was sentenced to death in Côn Sơn Island. Her life was and is still widely cited in Vietnamese media and her actions are part of school curricula, especially history and literature.<sup>34</sup> Schools perform plays based on her life and pupils learn poems about the last minutes of her life, for example *Excerpts from Côn Sơn Island* written by Phan Thị Thanh Nhân. Võ Thị Sáu carries the title of Hero of the People's

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<sup>33</sup> For example: Tôn Đức Thắng, Lê Văn Tám, Võ Thị Sáu.

<sup>34</sup> See Nguyễn Đình Thống. (2012) *Võ Thị Sáu-Person and Legend (Võ Thị Sáu-con người và huyền thoại)*. Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà xuất bản Tổng hợp TP. HCM.

Armed Forces and serves as an example for many young people. This history is contested, however. Vietnamese members of the Students for Human Rights Association in one article compare Võ Thị Sáu with Chinese Lei Feng and Soviet Pavlik Morozov. The author Trần Trung Đạo calls these ‘heroes’ ‘victims of heroism’ and is persuaded, that the stories are fabricated<sup>35</sup> for propaganda purposes (Trần Trung Đạo 2017). Nevertheless, similar types of stories are prominent in Vietnamese emulation movements. For example, the first female Emulation Hero Nguyễn Thị Chiên had a similar story, which says that she joined the guerrillas at 16 and received award for bravery. Unlike Võ Thị Sáu, however, she did not die in the resistance, and lived until June 2016.<sup>36</sup>

Traditional heroism and the new heroism that developed later were connected by the ways in which the new DRV government designed and organised emulation movements to create for Vietnamese a bridge and continuity with the past. This was suggestively a way to receive legitimacy, and to win the war. This connection was retained after 1954 and the end of the First Indochina War and was especially emphasized in the 1960s:

“The history of Vietnam is the history of a heroic nation, the patriotic emulation movement has promoted the heroic traditions of our nation, has trained more and more elite children of our nation, new heroes. It is labour heroes and the emulation fighters who are present at this Congress and more than twenty thousand people everywhere” (Lê Thanh Nghị, Speech at the Third National Patriotic Emulation Congress, 1962).<sup>37</sup>

During wartime in Vietnam people developed a strong admiration for personal sacrifice for the nation. The emulation movements and propaganda played important roles in this process. They also learnt how to improvise and follow examples that seemed simply to work. Despite China also using (and in fact is still using at present) ‘patriotic emulation’ as a strong appeal to nationalism, in the Vietnamese case this ‘patriotism’ had even stronger meaning given the specific long lasting national fight for independence, not only from French colonialism. The general dream of national independence and subsequent nation-building was a strong motivation for many groups of Vietnamese society, not only the communist adherents around Ho Chi Minh. Because of the prevailing conflict in Vietnam, emulation

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<sup>35</sup> Dao questions particularly the parts of the stories where Võ Thị Sáu is allowed to walk freely and put flower in her hair and ‘sunbathing’ before her sentence.

<sup>36</sup> The story of Nguyễn Thị Chiên is provided in Chapter 4, Section 3.8.4)

<sup>37</sup> Original: ‘Lịch sử Việt Nam là lịch sử của một dân tộc anh hùng, phong trào thi đua yêu nước đã phát huy truyền thống anh hùng của dân tộc ta, đã đào tạo ngày càng nhiều người con ưu tú của tổ quốc, những người có tư tưởng của chủ nghĩa anh hùng mới. Đó là những anh hùng lao động và chiến sĩ thi đua, đó là những người có mặt ở đại hội này và hơn hai vạn người nữa ở khắp mọi nơi’.

developed rather slowly, however previous experience and specific Vietnamese culture contributed to smooth and furtive implementation of this form of competition.

### **3. 4. Historical Context of the Beginning of Emulation in Vietnam**

For explaining the timing (1948) and rather gradual introduction of emulation movements in Vietnam, it is crucial to look at the historical context.

Firstly, the Indochinese Communist Party was established in 1930 in Hong Kong but at that time Vietnam was firmly under French colonial influence. The Vietnamese August Revolution in 1945 marks the beginnings of the DRV with the attempts of Ho Chi Minh and Việt Minh to defeat French colonialism and establish a state with communist ideology. However, the conflict between Vietnam and France was renewed in 1946. The French fought for their colonies until their defeat in Điện Biên Phủ in 1954.<sup>38</sup> In the beginnings of emulation, Vietnam thus was preoccupied with armed conflict.

Secondly, when Ho Chi Minh called for emulation movements, the relationship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union was still being negotiated, and in fact, through 1947-1948 was still rather cold. David Marr notes that in 1945 the Indochinese Communist Party criticized Stalin but by 1946 the ICP began openly to campaign for the DRV to align itself with the Soviet Union, and in 1947-1948 DRV representatives would “make contact with Soviet diplomats in several European and Southeast Asian capitals (...)” (Marr 2013, pp. 309-310).

Another author, Marie Olsen, argues that the main effort of the DRV was to secure allies for the fight against the French and initially looked for support from the US, the Soviet Union and China, but all three countries were reluctant. The Soviet Union had other interests than Indochina:

“Thus, by the end of 1948 the Vietnamese Communists had to realize that their attempts to secure Soviet support in their war against the French had failed. Repeated requests and pleas to the Soviets both in Bangkok and Moscow had led to moral support at most. Europe was still the major target of Soviet foreign policy, and Stalin was not willing to risk that over support for the Vietnamese” (Olsen 2006, p. 12).

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<sup>38</sup> Geneva Agreements, end of the First Indochina War (Duiker 2000).

This situation can be explained from several possible perspectives. Despite their shared ideologies, both China and Soviet Union were hesitant to accept Vietnam as an ally because they did not want to antagonize France, and the US was cautious because of the Vietnamese communist tendencies. Both countries on the path to communism, Soviet Union and China, struggled with their own domestic problems and lack of resources. Thus until 1950, it is less likely that Ho Chi Minh was given any *practical* assistance with emulation techniques from either of them. It is more than likely that Ho Chi Minh had learnt about emulation from Soviet writings and direct observation from his years spent in Moscow. However, from 1950 China sent advisers to Vietnam and Vietnamese Communists became a recipient of ‘emulation advice’.

Thirdly, one important aspects of the domestic situation before 1948 is important for understanding of the beginnings of emulation movements in Vietnam. In 1945, not many people knew who Ho Chi Minh was, what communism was or understood class struggle. The Vietnamese Nationalist Party<sup>39</sup> was openly against Ho Chi Minh and overall support of Viet Minh (and the government) was still rather weak. Yet, people were slowly learning how to use new political terms and people were taking part in meetings and revolutionary groups often to avoid problems:

“Whatever one’s inner feelings, it was unwise to be absent from public meetings, or to refuse to donate resources or time to the cause. Some citizens volunteered without being asked, others waited until approached. (...) Ideology played only a limited role in determining personal behaviour during 1945-64” (Marr 2013, p. 566).

In 1945 people in Vietnam were experiencing turbulent transitional times and many behaviours were shaped by negative feelings towards French. That made the acceptance of a completely new ideology and related emulation movements somewhat feasible. On the other hand, they offered to Communist leaders ways of engaging with the population and developing organisational capacity and loyal Party members.

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<sup>39</sup> Nationalist Party was an anti-French moderate socialist party in Vietnam, modelled after Kuomintang in China. It emerged in 1920s, later was cooperating with Ho Chi Minh’s Communists but after 1954 many members fled to the South. Today it exists only outside Vietnam as the Vietnamese Communist Party has a monopoly of power.



### 3. 5. Tracing Emulation Influences in Vietnam: Soviet Union and China

Emulation movements in Vietnam officially started in 1948. Despite this, the VCP does not tend to emphasize Soviet or Chinese inspiration in Vietnamese emulation movements, though it is more than obvious that the new Vietnamese leadership learned to some extent from these two countries. For example, at the First Patriotic Emulation Congress in 1952 Ho Chi Minh started his speech with reference to the emulation models from Soviet Union and China:

“It is thanks to the emulation of production and [principle of] saving that the Soviet Union is building Communism, it is thanks to the emulation of production and saving that the countries of Eastern Europe is building socialism and China is building new democratism. Our people emulate the production and saving to improve the spiritual and material life of our army and people, to secure sufficient resistance, destroy enemy forces, achieve final victory, complete new democracy and advance to socialism” (Ho Chi Minh’s Speech at The First National Patriotic Emulation Congress, 1952).

In another passage in the same speech Ho Chi Minh mentions emulation inspiration from China and Soviet Union again:

“Emulation is an international spirit: People of Soviet Union, China and other countries gave us a lot of emulation experience. We learn a lot from emulation experiences in our friend’s countries and we will try to emulate other countries to improve ourselves. (...) One example: a group of Chinese cotton farmers came to the weavers in cotton factory and happily said: ‘We are working hard to emulate cotton growing so that you, comrades, who weave the cotton, can weave a lot of fabric for our Chinese compatriots and to help our Korean and Vietnamese brothers and sisters’. And again, ‘from our Chinese emulation fighters, comrade Voòng Dùm Hính is an exemplary soldier, always competing, always emulating resistance’” (Ibid.).

As we will see later, it is not an accident these two examples come from China rather than Soviet Union.

The following section will put the beginnings of Vietnamese emulation in the context of historical events. It will ask about the Soviet and Chinese influences on emulation in Vietnam throughout the crucial years of the 1920s to the 1950s.

### 3. 5. 1. Soviet Writings and Studies

Vietnamese writings and articles on emulation movements emphasise the role of Ho Chi Minh in the creation of patriotic emulation in 1948. In practice, Vietnamese articles generally do not usually mention any Soviet origin of, or Chinese influence on, Vietnamese emulation movements and put Ho Chi Minh at the beginning of the Vietnamese ‘emulation story’. However, the VCP officially acknowledges that emulation originally comes from Soviet Union, for example, stating that Ho Chi Minh “took the Soviet example and creatively reshaped it for Vietnamese specific conditions” (Nguyễn Thế Thắng 2012). Thus, the difference between ‘socialist emulation’ of the USSR and initial ‘patriotic emulation’ of Vietnam in the Vietnamese eyes is critical to the VCP official narrative. There are indeed differences in Vietnamese, Soviet and Chinese versions of emulation movements which will be analysed later. For now, I focus primarily on the possible origins of emulation movements’ practice and theory in Vietnam.

From Ho Chi Minh’s biographies, we know that Ho Chi Minh stayed in Moscow for longer periods twice. (Quinn Judge 2002; Duiker 2000). He first arrived in Moscow in June 1923 and stayed until 1924 to participate at Fifth Comintern Congress. Ho Chi Minh stayed again in Soviet Union between 1933-1938 during that time he studied at both International Lenin School and Stalin School. Quian Zhai writes in his book on Vietnam-China relations that Ho spent five years studying Lenin’s writings (Zhai 2000, p. 11). So far, we do not have specific information about this period relating to emulation movements, but it would be more than unlikely that during either of his time in Moscow Ho would not come across emulation at some form, especially as the second four-year period when Stakhanovism was prominent directly coincided with Ho’s stay in the capital of Soviet Union<sup>40</sup>.

The Stachanovite movement was mentioned only indirectly in Sophie Quinn-Judge’s biography of Ho Chi Minh. One of Ho’s students, ‘Van-Tan’ complained that Comrade Lin was putting him [Ho Chi Minh] through a ‘Stakhanovite’ course of study – in one month he had had to complete a course on history of the Soviet communist party, and as there was no literature available, he had to memorize everything (Quinn-Judge 2002, pp. 201-217).

Despite the lack of information, we can also assume that Ho Chi Minh did read about emulation movement in Lenin’s books. In Vietnamese official writings, the Soviet origin of

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<sup>40</sup> The Stakhanovite movement started in 1935.

the emulation movements is admitted. For example, Professor Nguyễn Xuân Phong puts it in his article as follows:

“Ho Chi Minh as an excellent student of V. I. Lenin recognized profound role and importance of emulation, from which he creatively applied it to the Vietnamese conditions. To promote the strength of social classes, on 11 June 1948, Ho Chi Minh called for Patriotic emulation”<sup>41</sup> (Nguyễn Xuân Phong 2013).

In 2012, the official journal of the VCP, *Communist Review*, printed an article with the name: ‘*Some fundamental views of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh and our Party on emulation and rewards*’. Marx is acknowledged as a person who differentiated between capitalist competition and socialist emulation (Nguyễn Thế Thắng 2012). Lenin continued this stream of thought emphasizing the goal of raising economic performance in a strive to become a world power. According to the author, Prof. Nguyễn Thế Thắng: “Ho Chi Minh's idea of patriotic emulation and commendation was a creative use of these fundamental views” (Ibid.). Despite the evidence that the Vietnamese Communist Party does acknowledge the Soviet origin of emulation movements, there is an apparent effort to dissociate it from the original and emphasize the particular Vietnamese version of it as adopted in Vietnam. The Vietnamese emulation movement in the Vietnamese narrative is simply its own. And, as we will see, to a certain extent, it is plausible that Ho Chi Minh shaped many aspects of emulation in Vietnam to suit local conditions and his own political goals.

### **3. 5. 2. Chinese Influence and Chinese Advisers in Vietnam**

When Stalin met with Mao in 1949, he stated that he considered Vietnam to be China’s responsibility (Olsen 2006, p. 13). Thus, the country that actually brought practical know-how to Vietnamese emulation movements was at the start China rather than the Soviet Union, however it has to be clarified that China in a large extent learnt emulation from the Soviet Union and was at a time under Soviet influence. It is written above that China started with emulation in early 1940s, that means that by the time the first Chinese advisors arrived in Vietnam, in 1950 China had already had eight years practical experience with ‘emulation heroism’.

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<sup>41</sup> Original: ‘Là học trò xuất sắc của V. I. Lênin, Hồ Chí Minh đã nhận thức sâu sắc vai trò to lớn cũng như ý nghĩa quan trọng của hoạt động thi đua, từ đó vận dụng một cách sáng tạo vào điều kiện Việt Nam. Để phát huy sức mạnh của các tầng lớp xã hội, ngày 11.6 1948, Hồ Chí Minh đã ra lời kêu gọi Thi đua ái quốc’.

Prior to that, between the First and Second World Wars, Ho Chi Minh had at least two extended periods in China. He spent three years in China (1924-1927), when he was “sent from Moscow by the Communist International to help the new Chinese revolutionary government led by Kuomintang but left China because of Chiang Kai-shek’s break with the Chinese Communists in 1927 and a shift in the ideological line of the Comintern” (Zhai 2000, pp. 10-12). On another occasion, Ho spent four years in China (between 1938-1941) mostly “setting up liaison offices in Kuomintang-occupied areas and restoring contact with Indochinese Communist Party elements” (Ibid.). However, Qiang Zhai notes that “the connection between the two Communist Parties between 1945 and 1949 remained limited”<sup>42</sup> (Ibid.).

The relationship between the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist Parties warmed up in 1950, when China became the first country to diplomatically recognize the DRV and sent Chinese advisors to Vietnam. Chinese ‘patriotic emulation’ was a model that provided for the DRV exemplary “rich experiences” (Chen 1969, p. 257). In addition to requesting China to send aid and a military advisory group to Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh also proposed their sending a senior military advisor to coordinate the border campaign. At the time, China nominated famous general Chen Canh (Trần Canh) (1903-1961) to Vietnam July 7, 1950. Chen Canh advised Ho Chi Minh and general Võ Nguyên Giáp: “offering suggestions for improving the force, including things like rewarding officers and prisoners of war. Chen Canh asked the Viet Minh leaders to hold celebrations to promote their success, highlighting the importance of selecting and rewarding heroic examples. According to Tran Canh's diary, Ho and Giáp 'cheerfully' accepted the proposals” (Zhai 2000, pp. 32-33).

Through official reports of emulation movements, we can observe the principles of emulation used in 1950 when People’s Army of Viet Nam (PAVN) together with China cleared the border of French-occupied positions. These principles were similar to the Chinese version of emulation and were clearly dictated from above:

“Chen’s advice about the celebration of victories, the selection of role models, and the treatment of POWS was based on similar Chinese practices during the anti-Japanese war and the civil war. By spreading such Maoist rituals as commemorations and celebrating role models in Vietnam, Chen helped introduce a highly important process, through which the Viet Minh members came to bond together” (Ibid.).

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<sup>42</sup> Technically, the Communist Party between 1945 and 1954 in Vietnam did not exist.

In 1950, Vietnam was reported as dealing with many issues that the Chinese Political Advisory Group (CPAG) helped with:

“The group was divided into sections dealing with military affairs, finance and economy, public security, culture and education, united front, party consolidation, and land reform. The group included over one hundred advisers. Throughout the year, the CPAG was busy helping Ho make laws and policies concerning finances, taxation, grain requisition, suppression of counterrevolutionary elements, newspaper and radio management, relations with non-Communist parties and groups, and treatment of minorities” (Zhai 2000, p. 35).

A large part of Chinese advice was directed towards an ideological reshaping of Vietnamese communism and emulation was an important part of how this was to be done. In the future, the Vietnamese were supposed to learn about emulation practices from China. What were the concrete changes? Immediately at the beginning, Chinese advisors aimed at the development of the Leninist Mass Organisations who were to be responsible for emulation activities, mainly those Mass Organisations targeting Vietnamese peasants (Associated Union of Vietnamese Collective Farmers the Farmers’ Union the ‘Hội Liên hiệp Nông dân tập thể Việt Nam’, in 1991 changed into the Farmers Union ‘Hội Nông dân Việt Nam’) and youth (the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union ‘Đoàn Thanh niên Cộng sản Hồ Chí Minh’). Chinese advisors recommended intensifying the emulation campaigns, extending them in three instead of previous two periods<sup>43</sup> which covered the whole year without a break. Based on detailed evaluation (from the central to local offices) they also completely reorganized emulation campaigns according to various categories (agriculture, industry, military, culture). Last but not least, Chinese advisors were sitting in every emulation department in each ministry (Tréglodé 2012, pp. 60-64).

Chinese advisors became an inseparable part of Vietnamese emulation practices from 1950. From that date, we can talk about another stage of Vietnamese emulation due to the deep changes that Chinese advisors brought with them. In 1951 Ho Chi Minh published an article in the Party newspaper Nhan Dan which elevated the Chinese example. The article is devoted to the topic of unfavourable natural conditions and the value of Chinese emulation. He wrote: “To fight drought, peasants emulated digging wells, ditches and ploughed early, during the drought, they watered the soil as much as they could. To fight floods, they

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<sup>43</sup> As Tréglodé (2012) explains, the emulation movements in Vietnam before Chinese advice had two large-scale campaigns per year (February-May and June-December), Chinese advisors recommended three sessions which covered the whole year (Tréglodé 2012, pp. 63-64).

emulated digging dykes, repairing and sustaining them while taking care of forests. To get rid of pests, they organised emulation in killing pests” (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 354).

There is a question mark over the extent of Chinese influence on emulation during the era of the Vietnamese Land Reform (1953-1956), in which Vietnam experienced perhaps the most perverse use of emulation practices. The history of the Land Reform is highly contested.<sup>44</sup> Land Reform in Vietnam, it appears, was heavily influenced by the Chinese advisors but ultimately, decisions were made by the Vietnamese Communist Party (Vietnamese Worker’s Party at that time) who in 1952 decided to proceed towards reforms. To create ‘new men’ and mobilize peasants for the support of the War with the French, the Vietnamese leadership encouraged class struggle with the reward of land (Zhai 2000, p. 35). Clearly, good work for the Party in the Land Reform would enhance career opportunities and construct a local cadre base loyal to the Party. Class struggle was a concept that was promoted by the Chinese advisors, however it did not sit very well with Ho Chi Minh’s persuasion that a broad front composed of a majority of society was needed to defeat the French. As seen in the process of the Land Reform in Vietnam, the push from Chinese advisors was to ensure that Land Reform in Vietnam was executed in terms of class struggle. In practice it meant exposure of landlords or in a worse case killing. Not only feudal lords, often French but also Viet Minh members whose families owned land were persecuted, leading to major tensions within the anti-French forces and in the Party itself. Despite the fact that the Law on Land Reform forbid violence, it was widely used.<sup>45</sup> An extreme example of emulation during Land Reform was emulation of landlords to be killed in Vietnamese communes. Nguyễn Minh Cần<sup>46</sup> who was appointed at a time by the Hanoi Party Committee to correct ‘wrongdoings’ of the Land Reform in areas outside Hanoi, pointed to the practices during the reform in his 2002 article *Please do not forget the lesson from the Land Reform of the last half century* (‘*Xin đừng quên bài học CCRĐ nửa thế kỷ trước*’).<sup>47</sup> He mentions the Land Reform period motto ‘Emulate performance to beat feudalism’. He writes that in the Land Reform campaign, five percent of landlords had to be killed in each commune, the more landlords killed the more

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<sup>44</sup> For details see Duiker (2018), Moïse (1983) or Zhai (2000).

<sup>45</sup> For details see Duiker (2018) and Moïse (1976).

<sup>46</sup> Nguyễn Minh Cần had a striking personal history: from being a patriotic fighter and later Party member (1946) with important political positions, he became a political activist who lived in Moscow from the early 1960s. From the exile in Moscow he wrote several critical works concerning Vietnamese communist development. He passed away in Moscow in 2016 (‘Nguyễn Minh Cần...’, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> The article was written in 2002 and published in 2003 in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, author of the thesis did not find original publication, however article was reprinted online at: <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com.au/2014/09/xin-ung-quyen-nua-ky-truoc.html>.

rewarded was population (Nguyễn Minh Cần 2003). The Vietnamese Communist Party later apologized for its own Land Reform pointing to mistakes and criticizing the Chinese model. In its aftermath many who had suffered despite their anti-French reputations recovered assets and their social positions (Moise 1976, 1983).

To sum up, it is quite clear that Chinese advisors affected Vietnamese patriotic emulation from 1950 on. Emulation in Vietnam started in 1948, and in January 1950 the DRV was diplomatically recognized by both China and the USSR. This recognition meant inflow of aid. The question of aid and its possible contribution to the success of emulation movements will be considered at the end of this chapter. It is also clear that, not least because of the Land Reform, for many in the VCP Chinese advice was problematic.

In the next paragraph, I will return to 1948 when Ho Chi Minh first called for emulation, and I will investigate how the patriotic emulation movement started in Vietnam and its key characteristics during the early stages.

### **3. 6. Ho Chi Minh's Call for Emulation Movement**

The Vietnamese anti-French resistance movement is a key to understanding the context of the birth of emulation in Vietnam. For Vietnam national salvation ‘cứu quốc’ was a fight for national identity and the connection between patriotic emulation and national salvation was of utmost importance. In that respect, as mentioned above, the word ‘patriotic’ had a deep sense in Vietnam because it had a more intense and specific meaning of national survival. The relationship between national identity which was fought for many centuries and the continuity of that identity in its new form as presented by Ho Chi Minh and Vietnamese communists, was a particularly important part of the success of communist movement in Vietnam. After all, Vietnam had been part of Imperial China for most of the first millennium, and subject to French colonial rule for decades prior to 1945. The notion of national salvation was connected to the notion of ‘new life’ and it presented a new hopeful starting point for Vietnamese society that was living in extreme conditions resulting from continuous war. ‘New life’ was a part of a broader and more complex communist narrative about the necessity to create a new man with the new standards of morality, however in Vietnam this ‘new’ (‘mới’) meant continuous ‘old-new’ rather than the disruptive Maoist ‘brand new, unrelated to the past’.

It is not surprising that the first book where Ho Chi Minh writes about emulation is *New Life* (*Đời sống mới*), written by Ho Chi Minh under the acronym Tân Sinh. Ho Chi Minh intended to widely distribute this book, suggesting that everyone should read it because in his words: “To practise new life is a necessity for the national salvation and foundation of our state”. This short book is written as questions and answers on what it means to live a new life. The book was finished in March 1947 and published later that year to serve as a manual for all Vietnamese people. This book mentions ‘emulation’ (*thi đua*) as the ‘best way how to organise new life in a village’:

“A person emulates with another person. Household competes with another household. A village competes with another village. Who is better, obtains respect from the people and reward from the government. As such, everyone becomes fervent/ardent. Cadres in the village have to be ‘pure’ people, egalitarian and talented, to be able to set an example for others” (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 338).

Ho Chi Minh’s initiative culminated in the proclamation of ‘patriotic emulation’ (*Thi đua yêu nước*) on 1 May 1948 (Appendix 1):

“My dear all, our country is economically backward but the love for our country is undoubtable (...). Therefore, intellectuals, farmers, workers, soldiers, boys or girls, young or old, our whole nation, everyone, irrespective of location or profession, have to participate in patriotic emulation movement, to increase the production” (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 888).

The similar message was repeated in the letter addressed to the workers in the whole country dated the same day. After emphasizing the importance of the role of workers, Ho Chi Minh wrote:

“Today, the whole country is opening the patriotic emulation movement. All of the people and all of the workers must eagerly volunteer in this emulation. (...) International worker’s day 1-5-1948 has to open a new epoch in action and victory of workers in our country” (p. 890).

Ho Chi Minh thus called for an emulation movement on the occasion of the International workers day but later in June “on the occasion of the 1,000th National Resistance Day, June 11, 1948”, he called for patriotic emulation (*Lời kêu gọi thi đua ái quốc*). In his call for emulation, Ho Chi Minh identified its goals as eliminating (literally ‘killing’) hunger, ignorance and invaders as the main purposes of patriotic emulation. In a



simple wording he expressed that it is up to the people: only the spirit of the people can bring happiness. He also included all classes in patriotic emulation and finished with the words: “We will certainly win! All my compatriots, all soldiers, forward!” (p. 888).

### **3. 7. Organisational Aspects of Patriotic Emulation in Vietnam**

Patriotic emulation in Vietnam was an emerging political institution and therefore needed its own apparatus to function and to organise movements and their propagandisation. In 1948 the Vietnamese Party and state organisation was still at an early stage of development and many of the usual socialist organs, institutions and principles were still very new (Marr 2013). The Leninist Mass Organisations (for Farmers, Youth, Women, etc.) did not yet have substantial membership and in the absence of know-how, many steps of the DRV government were a matter of improvisation.<sup>48</sup> In June 1949, a year after the proclamation of patriotic emulation campaign, Ho Chi Minh complained that:

“Organisation and leadership are poor and [government struggles with] the inability to develop initiatives as well as [use] the capacity of the masses” (Ho Chi Minh’s Letter sent to Conference of Patriotic Emulation, 1949a). In the same letter Ho Chi Minh goes into greater detail to describe the initial problems: lack of experience, plans of the different Mass Organisations that did not match, emulation committees that only knew how to listen to superior directives, the original directive goes down the hierarchy (to provinces, communes) and places do not really know how to practically apply it, etc. (Ibid.). It is interesting that the same problems are still mentioned in today’s Vietnam in the area of implementation of policies, despite contemporary Mass Organisations and their parallel Party structures being far better resourced (from the state budget) and technically equipped.

#### **3. 7. 1. Medal Institute and the Central Committee for Patriotic Emulation Movement**

What were the emerging structures of patriotic emulation? Chronologically the first relevant institution, established by Presidential Decree 83/SL was the Medal Institute (‘Viện Huân chương’). This Institute was formed in April 1947 to assist Ho Chi Minh as President to research and promulgate medals and other rewards. It served as a connection between

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<sup>48</sup> For details see Marr (2013).

ministries, government agencies and mass organisations and their requirements for rewards. This institution went through several changes, most notably in 1983 when the Institute started to assist the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (‘Chủ tịch Hội đồng Bộ trưởng’) in the management of reward work for the whole country (Decree No. 160/ HĐBT from December 1983). In 1987, one year after the official launch of Đổi Mới, the Council of Ministers decided that the Medal Institute required reorganisation towards better efficiency and renamed it the ‘State Institute for Emulation and Awards’ (‘Viện Thi đua và khen thưởng Nhà nước’).

Institutionalised organising and planning of emulation in the DRV emerged parallel to the Medal Institute. Decree No. 195 issued on 1 June 1948 (Appendix 2) established a body originally called the Central Committee for the Patriotic Emulation Movement (‘Ban Vận động thi đua ái quốc Trung ương’). The Decree states that the Committee was composed of representatives from the government, National Assembly and mass organizations (Article 1). The concrete members were appointed by separate Decree (Article 2). Article 3 states that Patriotic Emulation Committees would be established in Inter-regions<sup>49</sup>, provinces, districts and communes. Each Committee has three to five members. The purpose of the Committees is stated in Article 5 of the Decree and includes two groups of tasks. Firstly, mobilisation, collection and spreading of emulation experience and secondly, at all administrative levels<sup>50</sup> Committees were to establish their emulation plans for their localities (Decree No. 195/SL 1948). Emulation mobilisation committees at local level (‘Ban Vận động thi đua’) were supposed to coordinate with existing Resistance committees (‘Ban kháng chiến’).

Issued on the same day as the Decree just mentioned, in Decree No. 196/SL 1948, Ho Chi Minh nominated members of the Central Committee for the Patriotic Emulation Movement (Appendix 3). The members were representatives of the government, National Assembly and Mass Organizations and the Committee was directed by Tôn Đức Thắng.<sup>51</sup> According to an article in the newspaper People’s Army, it took another two months to appoint a personality who would be a good fit for the function of Secretary General (‘Tổng Thư ký’) of the Committee (Nguyễn Vũ Hoàng 2008). Ho Chi Minh eventually nominated

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<sup>49</sup> A so-called Inter-region is a Vietnamese military-administrative structure, usually merging a number of geographically and military areas in Vietnam. This structure was established in 1948 by Decree No. 120/SL (Decree No. 120/SL, 1948).

<sup>50</sup> Administrative division of Vietnam from the top to the bottom – province and cities at the level of province (municipalities), district, commune. Vietnam works on the principle of democratic centralism, that is a system of hierarchy in which lower levels are subordinate to the levels above.

<sup>51</sup> Tôn Đức Thắng was a high-level politician, he was multiple times in the function of the President, either of Northern Vietnam or after the unification, the first President of the VSR.

Hoàng Đạo Thúy (1900-1994), a senior cadre in the army from the Military Training Department and long-term leader of the Vietnamese Scouts. Ho Chi Minh's letter from June stated:

“Dear Mr. Hoàng Đạo Thúy,

Old comrade,

It is very important job to find a person who is creative, has a lot of experience and is swift. That person becomes a Secretary General of the Central Committee for the Patriotic Emulation Movement. I want to ask comrade to become in charge of this function. Surely you would not decline. National defence and commander-in chief will have to help you should you need it. Kind greetings and victory! 6/48 Ho Chi Minh”<sup>52</sup> (Nguyễn Vũ Hoàng 2008).

This letter was preserved in Hoàng Đạo Thúy's diary. In the diary he also describes how he was supposed to write a draft text on the meanings and functions of “patriotic emulation” and “emulation cadre” and how he struggled with it. He wrote the draft and had it delivered to Ho Chi Minh. The next day, the text returned heavily marked with red pen, adding commas where necessary and other diacritics. Ho Chi Minh added some practical points:

1. “Each cadre from area (‘khu’) to district (‘huyện’) must be in charge of one commune (‘xã’)
2. Officials must clearly understand [the movement] and the benefits of it
3. Prior to the launching of the movement officials must set up an association and have a clear plan with volunteers
4. There are rewards so that those who receive them can move higher and help other people
5. From the individual to collectives, the organization of work is very important” (Ibid.).

This rather detailed story shows how inexperienced and uninformed the Vietnamese were at the beginning of emulation movement. There was no real plan for the organization of

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<sup>52</sup> Vietnamese original:

“Gửi ông Hoàng Đạo Thúy

Lão đồng chí,

Nay có một việc rất quan trọng, cần có một người có sáng kiến, nhiều kinh nghiệm, và tính xốc vác. Tức là việc Tổng bí thư cho Ban thi đua Trung ương. Tôi muốn nhờ đồng chí phụ trách việc ấy. Chắc đồng chí sẽ không từ chối. Vẫn biết bên quốc phòng và tổng chỉ huy cũng cần đồng chí giúp, song nếu đồng chí bằng lòng, thì tôi sẽ tìm cách dàn xếp. Chào thân ái và quyết thắng! 6/48 Hồ Chí Minh”.

the movement and everything was rather worked out on the spot. The emulation movements therefore offered a range of opportunities for the Party to develop its organizational capacity and structures for engaging with and controlling the population.

Like others, many Vietnamese love symbolism and the symbolic object that is tied to this particular story is a paper fan which was a 56<sup>th</sup> birthday gift from the youth of Canh Hoạch Village in Hà Đông Province to President Ho Chi Minh. At the appointment meeting, President Ho Chi Minh gave the paper fan to Mr. Hoàng Đạo Thúy with the words: "Use this fan to fan the strong movement"<sup>53</sup> (Hồng Minh 2017).

Similar symbolism can be found later in the names of the movements from early 1960s, such as 'wind' or 'wave', etc.

Ho Chi Minh based the core ideas behind the system of emulation movements in Vietnam upon two components: plan ('kế hoạch') and results ('kết quả'). In one account, Resistance Committees prepared the plans and Emulation Committees were charged with dissemination of experiences (suitably defined and authorised) and overall propagation of the movements (Trần Thương Hoàng 2003). Based on democratic centralism, it meant that the Resistance Committee and Emulation Committee at the commune level would send a plan and report with results up to the district level. Districts would then send it up to the province level. At the province level materials split into two parts: those which have a character of professional work (chuyên môn) and those which have a character of emulation experience. Professional work materials went through the channels of departments (sở) of People's committees ('ủy ban nhân dân') to ministries ('bộ') and the government ('chính phủ'). Materials containing emulation experience were supposed to be sent to local level Emulation committees and then Central Emulation Committee (Trần Thương Hoàng 2003, p. 174). Whilst this description, written long afterwards, may in part reflect practice as it was meant to be, rather than realities, it does show the present-day conception of hierarchy and order within the Party-State and how it is meant to engage with the population.

As with the Medal Institute, the Central Committee for Patriotic Emulation Movements also went through several modifications. In 1964, Resolution No. 28/CP specified the work of the Committee, saying that this was to align it to the requirements of the planning system. Among the tasks of the Committee were "studying and submitting the direction, tasks and content of emulation, as well as policies and measures on how to strengthen the emulation

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<sup>53</sup> Original: 'Chú dùng cái quạt này để quạt phong trào lớn mạnh lên'.

movement” (Phuong Thanh 2017). In terms of the composition of the Committee, it was made up of representatives of the Government, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Defence, the Executive Committee of General Trade Unions and the Women’s Union.

In 1983 Resolution No. 61/HDBT established the Central Emulation and Awards Council (‘Hội đồng Thi đua – Khen thưởng Trung ương’) and Emulation and Awards Councils at local levels. This Central Emulation and Awards Council became the top organ for emulation and that is still the case today. The Central Committee for Emulation and its local counterparts were however dissolved in December 1987 by Resolution No. 223/HĐBT, although the State Institute for Emulation and Awards started to fulfil some of the Committee’s Roles. The currently valid Law on Emulation and Rewards was issued in 2003 and for the first time laid down a legal framework (at the level of Law rather than state directives) that connected the emulation agenda with the agenda of rewards. In 2004, the State Institute was renamed the Central Committee for Emulation and Awards (‘Ban Thi đua - Khen thưởng Trung ương’) and this is the current situation. Today in Vietnam the Central Committee and the Central Council for Emulation and Awards coexist together and the Central Committee fulfils the function of standing body to the Central Council (‘Central Emulation Council...’, 2016).

Ministries played an important role in emulation from the beginning and the Central Emulation Committees were often subordinate to Ministries, especially the Ministry of Home Affairs, Labour, Agriculture and Defence (today under the Ministry of Home Affairs). From 1950 each Ministry had an emulation planning cell with Chinese advisors in it. The same can be said about Mass Organisations, as mentioned above, as Chinese advisors trained them to fulfil their educational and organisational role (Tréglodé 2012, p. 64).

Institutionally, granting of Awards (‘khen thưởng’) for outstanding performance in production or combat was separate from emulation, likely with separate budgets, however, practically, these two parts were inseparable.

### **3. 7. 2. Rewards and Titles**

From the beginning of emulation movement in late 1940s, there was a question on what types of rewards and titles should people should receive for their efforts in emulation movements. Ho Chi Minh himself was an advocate of small rather than large rewards. There

were two general categories of rewards: material ('vật chất') and spiritual ('tinh thần'). The term used ('khen thưởng') can be glossed as 'praise and reward' (also 'give bonuses', for example in addition to a wage or salary). From the beginning the system of rewards was rather loose and decrees adding different types of rewards were added gradually.

Benoît de Tréglodé (2013) points to the importance of reciprocity in Asian societies, arguing the rewards and gifts were an important tool to secure loyalty of peasants to the new DRV government. As we have seen, material rewards paid to Stakhanovite workers and others in the Soviet Union were relatively large (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2). By obtaining gifts, peasants were indebted to the Party: what a poor peasant could give back to the Party was discipline and support. He also describes types of emulation rewards in Vietnam. At the beginning of the emulation, the rewards were certificates, pennants, flags, medals, badges, or small gifts, together with a system of financial rewards drafted by the National Assembly in 1948. Later also we see wage increases or financial bonuses, promotions and access to foreign goods. In the early 1950s the first Emulation Heroes received diverse gifts and financial rewards, such as: a water buffalo, sets of towels or handkerchiefs, photographs of leaders, a Parker fountain pen, or a Canadian jacket, a new home and/or salary increases. Other types of rewards included trips to China and USSR or treatment in health centres - Emulation Hero Ngô Gia Khảm was sent for a treatment to Moscow after his serious injury working in a factory with explosives (Tréglodé 2012, pp. 124-126).

However, as much as financial incentives mattered to poor people decimated by the war, another reward, traditionally important in Confucian societies, played an indisputable role: prestige. Being titled Emulation Fighter or Emulation Hero meant an important change in societal status, and such people became very well known by their participation in propaganda activities, travelling and narrating for others their story. For example, La Văn Cầu, after the First National Emulation Congress, spent reportedly nine consecutive months with hundreds of thousands of troops and soldiers (Trần Thương Hoàng 2003, pp. 168-169). Based on the number of accounts about them in electronic and other resources, first seven Emulation Heroes rewarded at the Emulation Congress in 1952 are still in the Vietnamese memory.

Apart from material rewards and titles, the Vietnamese government in the North developed a system of Medals, Badges, Certificates and Flags related to emulation. The Medal Institute assisted President Ho Chi Minh in constructing the foundations of the award system. A complete list of medals existing today can be found on the website of the Central

Committee for Emulation and Rewards.<sup>54</sup> In May 1950, Ho Chi Minh issued Decree 65/SL in which he established a new type of medal, the Labour Medal ('Huân chương Lao động'). The Labour Medal had three levels ('hạng nhất', 'hạng nhì', and 'hạng ba' – first, second and third) and was awarded for work and construction of the country. The other main medals awarded for emulation were the Golden Star Medal ('Huân chương Sao vàng'), the Ho Chi Minh Medal ('Huân chương Hồ Chí Minh') and the Independence Medal ('Huân chương Độc lập'). All conferred varying degrees of prestige and possibilities for advance both for the individual and close relatives in the Party-State and collective organisations such as the system of agricultural cooperatives, as well as the Mass Organisations.

Gradually, the North Vietnamese government started to introduce patriotic emulation in Vietnam to villages and launched its first emulation campaigns. Rewards were providing important incentives for motivating the people who were not always excited about emulation activities which added extra work and time to their already busy and tough lives. Movements gave aspirant cadres opportunities, as in the Soviet Union (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2), to show superiors what they could do. But the vision of prestige and personal growth inspired many. In practical terms, rewarding was a type of reciprocity if not redistribution: as people were supposed to contribute by donations to the resistance, those who contributed more, received a reward.

Yet, as emulation was tied to the prospect of victory over France, rewards that were promised by Ho Chi Minh and others primarily included the future for Vietnamese people and their children, raising living standards, the end of war and life in peace. These rewards were likely more inspiring than material advantages.

### **3. 7. 3. National Patriotic Emulation Congresses**

National Patriotic Emulation Congresses were occasions to celebrate and propagandise the successes of patriotic emulation and to reward Emulation Heroes and Fighters. Congresses were also an occasion where leaders of the country met with Emulation Heroes and Fighters, an important act in the eyes of common people. Congresses served several functions. They were celebrations where people shared experiences and also, they were the occasions to emphasize the line of the Party. To that end, they were given much publicity in the mass

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<sup>54</sup> Online at: <http://banthiduaqhenthuongtw.gov.vn/tabid/108/Default.aspx>

media. In the history of patriotic emulation, Vietnam experienced in total nine congresses - the first Congress was held in 1952 and the most recent in 2015. Since 2000, congresses are organised every five years, but before that they were irregular. The number of delegates rose over time, from around 150 people in 1952 to around 1800 in the last Congress in Hanoi, 2015. I will later introduce in detail the first three congresses to illustrate how they were organised. So far as is known they were and are, like the Party and Mass Organisations, largely paid for from the State budget.

### **3. 7. 4. Penetration of Emulation to the Villages**

In Vietnam, similarly as is reported in China, emulation was meant to penetrate into the population via villages. For the ‘new life’ to begin, it was necessary to create a new village, a process that primarily intended profound reorganisation and indoctrination. This process is well described in Tréglodé’s book:

“In the beginning, provincial People’s Committees chose a certain number of ‘test communes’ or a particular experimental zone in its jurisdiction. The Bureau of Emulation and the Peasants’ Association then took over the operation. Groups of emulation cadres were sent to meet with villagers; until 1955, itinerant cadres were regularly accompanied by Chinese advisors. Upon arrival, they had to explain to the people how they could take part in the movement, for example, by joining Mass Organisations such as Patriotic Youth, Peasants’ Association, Association of Mothers of Combatants, senior citizens’ group, etc., which could nominate them on their behalf (...). They explained to the people what they had to do to obtain the new patriotic title (...). Many people, however, still did not understand the movement. Some villages, for example, posted slogans that said: ‘Emulation for a beautiful wife’” (Tréglodé, pp. 74-75). This account shows not only the concrete process of penetration of emulation at the Vietnamese village but also the part of process of building Mass Organisations in Vietnam as part of the local Communist political project.

This process took a long time, and even by 1954 there is evidence that many people were still confused about emulation. Committed to it, the leadership of the DRV had to come up with practical suggestions how to bring emulation to the countryside. Again, Tréglodé’s book is well-informed in this matter. At multiple places he describes how emulation and the cult of emulation heroism penetrated the villages, creating links between the Party and people via a kind of middlemen, Emulation Fighters and Heroes. The penetration of the villages was,



he argues, cleverly done through reference to what a majority of people believed in: ancestor cults, a popular belief in spirits. The DRV leadership also used national martyrs as a connection between the worlds of the living and the dead (the dead traditionally legitimised the powers and social position of the living). It also created ‘new spirits’, ritual sites, altars and tutelary spirits of the villages from leaders of the ICP, heroes from the anti-colonialist era and new heroes of the DRV (Tréglodé, pp. 130-175).

Again, by we see how a balancing between tradition and a new imported yet adapted doctrine, emulation movements (and the communist regime) were implanted in Vietnam.

To sum up, perhaps the most interesting observation about the organisational beginnings of the emulation and its institutions is how little experience it appeared that the Vietnamese leadership had with such a complex and big task. What comes through is a process of local adaptation where issues arising, such as from the Land Reform, can be labelled publicly as errors that need to be corrected. We know that China supplied Vietnam with advisors but whilst we do not know precisely the extent it seems that they were not ‘in charge’ and the Vietnamese Party did not mechanically follow their advice ‘to the bitter end’. Based on Ho Chi Minh’s writings, we can observe that he authored many decisions about the organisation of emulation. It is also clear that Ho Chi Minh was and is reported historically as the initiator of the movement and all major documents about emulation went through him. Official state documents related to emulation are sometimes written by hand on a piece of paper, when typed the script does not have diacritics (they are filled in by pen), materials are inconsistently written and even have some factual mistakes<sup>55</sup>. This was a picture of the beginnings of emulation in Vietnam that reflects simplicity and improvisation as two main characteristics. As such, this is a powerful and largely nationalistic narrative. It suggests, as it is the history one can find in the archives and in other publications, that the political position of the VCP is one that seeks legitimacy and legitimacy effects, and to show that its position does not simply rest on coercion and force.

However, penetration of the Party-State and its structures into society was central to the regime, and use of emulation movements in Vietnam through the villages, ancestor cult and ritual was important. Many villagers initially struggled to understand emulation but the appeal to heroism and rewards was strong. The leaders of the DRV targeted those whom they

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<sup>55</sup> For details see Trần Thương Hoàng (2003).

needed the most, the peasants, a majority of the population and the source of its soldiers and new cadres.

In the next paragraph I will focus on the first three main patriotic emulation campaigns in Vietnam.

### **3. 8. Emulation Movements in the Period (1946-1954)**

This section will map emulation movements in Vietnam since the proclamation of the first campaign in 1948. This section covers the period of the First Indochina Conflict (1946-1954). The first national campaigns were aimed at dealing with three main issues simultaneously hunger, ignorance (illiteracy) and war with France. I will show in this section how emulation movements were heavily influenced by continuous conflicts in Vietnam. The first three emulation movements in Vietnam were expressed in Ho Chi Minh's slogan: "Eliminate Hunger, Ignorance and Foreign Invaders" (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 913).

#### **3. 8. 1. 'Eliminate Hunger'**

*"All people emulate to increase production and eliminate hunger"*

(Folk Picture Đồng Hồ in Appendix 4, Picture A)

Since 1944 and after the Second World War, Vietnam, like many other countries in the world, suffered famine. In the Vietnamese case, this situation was largely caused by the Japanese occupation of Indochina in combination with natural causes and demographic increase in the North, supported by France's implementation of questionable measurements when it came to food policy (Gunn 2011). The first thing that Ho Chi Minh pursued after the 1945 August Revolution was thus to deal with this serious issue. Ho Chi Minh suggested two main solutions to the hunger problem. The first one was fasting each tenth day, and the saved rice was supposed to be redistributed amongst the poor. The other strategy was to increase the production of rice. The system of dykes was often broken due to the war and American bombing, some needed reinforcement and it was also necessary to create additional dykes. For a substantial task like that Vietnam needed experts. Ho Chi Minh decided that experts would be hired as contractors. According to an article in the journal Tuổi Trẻ, Nguyễn Xiển who was a chairman of the Northern Administrative Committee at a time later wrote in his memoirs

about the dilemma. Contracting was considered unrevolutionary and labor exploitation. Ho Chi Minh solved the problem by saying that “from now on, contracting for embankment is patriotic” (Đặng Phong 2005). This was not the only case where Ho Chi Minh’s pragmatism and patriotism pointed to his pragmatic ‘devotion’ to the socialist path.

Vietnam got over the worst stage of its famine by 1946. The success was ascribed to a combination of strategies: extensions of dykes, allowing of the use of public and abandoned plots for growing crops, and two harvests of rice combined with the harvest of sweet potatoes, corn and other crops in between (Ibid.). However, the withdrawal of Japan and the end of the Second World War and natural conditions were certainly largely important factors.

In 1948 when emulation officially started, hunger was still present in some parts of the country. When in 1949 Ho Chi Minh evaluated emulation in his threefold campaign that started in 1948 he stated:

“We started emulation in June last year, competition is aimed three purposes: eliminate hunger, illiteracy and foreign invaders. Despite the lack of facilities, lack of experience and the presence of French invaders who sabotage our actions, we still achieved many good results in just a year. Because you, the compatriots, increased production, we still struggled but avoided starvation” (Ho Chi Minh’s Letters to Compatriots from the Whole Country 1949b).

From the seven Emulation Heroes rewarded at the First Patriotic Emulation Congress in 1952 (see below, Section 3.8.4) the only non-military hero was Hoang Hanh. In 1954, the Party newspaper *Nhan Dan* (No. 218, 27/8/1954) printed an article with the title ‘*New achievements and experiences of the hero Hoang Hanh*’ (‘Thành tích và kinh nghiệm mới của anh hùng Hoàng Hanh’). This article emphasized Hanh’s achievements in agriculture production. According to the article he managed to “strengthen the emulation movement in agricultural production. (...) [He was also] “spreading the experience on agricultural conferences and to local levels” (Quỳnh Sơn 1954).

The Central Committee for Emulation and Rewards published Hanh’s speech at the First National Emulation Congress where he named many of his achievements. He compared his increases in production against those of other people in the area: he grew 57% more rice, 40% more potatoes, 70% more cotton, 20% more sesame, 270% more peanuts, etc. He also described his achievements in breeding, irrigation, conservation of water, plowing, fertilizing and other agricultural techniques. Besides that, he mobilized fifty families to pay agriculture

taxes in one hour of a meeting and helped his neighbors with their production (Hoàng Hanh's Speech at the First National Emulation Congress, 1952). These are very large increases and there is no evidence to confirm his results.

Although we can conclude that by the end of 1949 the hunger issue in Vietnam had substantially improved, with the lack of statistical data, the real effect upon this of the emulation movements and activities is not clear but in principle, as stated by propaganda, innovation in techniques and other policies had a positive effect. Emulation perhaps contributed more than anything politically, by bringing a new motivation for Vietnamese people to deal with their everyday fears and problems. But we have to be cautious in the absence of better information.

### 3. 8. 2. 'Eliminate Ignorance'

*"All people emulate learning alphabet to eliminate illiteracy"*

(Folk Picture *Đông Hồ* in Appendix 4, Picture B)

In his speech from September 1945, Ho Chi Minh pointed to illiteracy as one of the reasons why the French dominate in Indochina, he said:

"Ignorance ('dốt') is one of the methods that colonists use to rule over us. An ignorant nation is a weak nation. Therefore, I propose to start a campaign against illiteracy ('mù chữ')"<sup>56</sup> (Ho Chi Minh's Speech at the First Session of the Government of DRV, 1945).

Education traditionally carried an important value in Confucian societies. The same belief in the power of education led Vietnamese patriot Phan Bội Châu to start the above-mentioned movement *Đông Du* (Eastern Study, Section 3.3. above) which sent dozens of Vietnamese students to Japan to study as a strategy to defeat French. Ho Chi Minh who himself came from an educated family shared that belief. With this in mind, Ho Chi Minh launched the Popular Education movement ('Phong trào Bình dân học vụ'). In September 1945 he signed three important decrees: Decree No. 17 which established a general education budget for the whole country; Decree No. 19, which opened evening classes for farmers and

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<sup>56</sup> Original: 'Nạn dốt là một trong những phương pháp độc ác mà bọn thực dân dùng để cai trị chúng ta... Một dân tộc dốt là một dân tộc yếu. Vì vậy tôi đề nghị mở một chiến dịch để chống nạn mù chữ'.

workers<sup>57</sup>; and Decree No. 20 that stipulated that study of the national script was compulsory and free of charge. In his 1946 letter for the teachers in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh thanked them for volunteering to teach their compatriots how to read and write? and called the teachers ‘nameless heroes’. Vietnamese emulation practices of emulation thus had their beginnings in the year 1945 (Appendix 5). In the 1948 popular education movement stepped to the next stage, stage of official emulation. Volunteering of the teachers thus shifted from their admired selfless heroism based on their own will to something that was prescribed and expected from a good patriot. Ho Chi Minh said:

“I hope you are eager to volunteer for the Patriotic emulation movement. Regions that have not overcome illiteracy yet, you try to emulate to eliminate it in a quick time. Where you did eliminate illiteracy, you emulate to move one step further, by teaching the people: Regular hygiene, so that people are less sick; Scientific knowledge, to reduce superstition; Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; History and geography of our country (briefly in poetry or song) to raise the patriotism; The ethics of a citizen” (Phạm Hải Yến 2009a).

In 1949, a year after the launch of patriotic emulation, Ho Chi Minh wrote in *Sự Thật* newspaper: “Thanks to the enthusiastic support of compatriots and the people devoted to training, few provinces such as Quảng Ngãi, Hà Tĩnh, Hưng Yên, and Thái Bình have finished elimination of illiteracy. Other provinces are struggling to catch up with these provinces. It is an honorable achievement, if we remember that under colonial rule, in 1941 only half a million children were allowed to go to school” (Ho Chi Minh’s Proclamation of Emulation of the Preparation of General Counter Attack 1949).

The numbers show that impressive results in increasing of literacy in Vietnam were actually achieved prior to the official launch of the emulation movement and they did not rocket after the its launch of emulation campaign. From 1946 with 2.5 million literate people the total had reportedly risen to 6 million in 1948, and by 1952, reportedly 10 million people were literate (Phạm Hải Yến 2009a). Again, as it was officially concluded in the previous campaign, the increasingly better positive achievements in education were suggestively more a result of general popular enthusiasm after Vietnam gained independence and the society was cheerful about the possibilities of building their own independent state. Emulation perhaps contributed to this general excitement, but was also clearly part of the gathering thrust from Vietnamese communists to establish and develop their regime.

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<sup>57</sup> The Decree stated that in 6 months each village and township must have at least one class for the people.

### 3. 8. 3. ‘Eliminate Foreign Invaders’

*“All people emulate to kill French”*

(Folk Picture Đồng Hồ in Appendix 4, Picture C)

As was suggested above, military motives played an important part in emulation practices in Vietnam. The War with France started in 1946, only two years before Ho Chi Minh’s call for emulation. Emulation in military matters was not just emulation in killing enemies, competing formally to see who could kill the most enemy soldiers, but also emulation in training soldiers and emulation of all Vietnamese to help their soldiers to beat the French. In his 1949 speech, Ho Chi Minh mentions construction of weapons, emulation in volunteering for the army and militia (the exemplary locality here was Hà Tĩnh Province), old people emulating to join the Union of the Mothers of soldiers (‘Hội mẹ chiến sĩ’), people emulating to purchase government bonds, emulation in paying taxes, owners of the land emulating to lower the land rent, older women and men competing to organize guerilla groups, and many children sending money to contribute to the Resistance Fund”<sup>58</sup> (Ho Chi Minh’s Letters to Compatriots From the Whole Country 1949).

The emulation campaign ‘Forge Army to Establish Contributions’ (‘Luyện quân lập công’) was launched in 1948 with the intention of recruiting and training soldiers. From 1950 to 1951 another similar campaign was launched under the name (‘Forging and Purifying Army’ (‘Rèn cán chính quân’). In the classes involved in the campaigns, soldiers and cadres were learning about resistance methods, but also tactics together with practical physical training aimed at small to large-scale combat operations. Complementary to these two campaigns, another campaign was launched in the army with the name ‘Training Party members, purifying organization’ (‘Rèn luyện đảng viên, chấn chỉnh tổ chức’). This campaign was aimed at the political education of the army, and classes touched upon such topics as

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<sup>58</sup> The Resistance Fund (‘Quỹ kháng chiến’) was established in 1946 but in May 1949 the President of the DRV signed Decree 36-SL. It was administered by the Ministry of Finance and controlled by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly. All citizens in the age group 18 to 35 contributed a sum of money which was designated to cover 10 days of subsistence for a soldier. Many groups of people were exempted from contributing to the fund, such as women, soldiers, guerrillas, students who did not have income, people with disabilities, etc. Not participating in the fund without a formal exemption was punishable through fines (Presidential Decree 36-SL, 1949).

revolutionary ethics and leadership methods in the Party. Members of the Party were to read and study various materials on the Party and how it functioned<sup>59</sup> (Trương 2014).

All these campaigns were in principle patriotic emulation and as such had ideological functions. But emulation in the elimination of foreign invaders also had practical results. Ho Chi Minh wrote letters to groups or individuals praising their achievements in killing enemies. For example, Trần Văn Diên received a letter from Ho Chi Minh dated 11 June 1948 (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 912). Ho Chi Minh praises Diên for: “Killing 103 men, injuring 28 men, explosion of 4 tanks and 9 French camions” all that within 5 months from October 1947 to March 1948. For these achievements Diên received the title ‘Hero of Mines’ (‘Anh hùng địa lôi’). On another occasion, Hồng Sinh from Cao Bằng Province received a letter of appraisal from Ho Chi Minh for killing 16 enemies. Ho Chi Minh emphasizes that other men and women from Cao Bằng Province should try to emulate Hồng Sinh to kill many enemies and steal many arms (Ho Chi Minh 2000, p. 1023). Similar letters can be found throughout the whole Volume 5<sup>60</sup> of Ho Chi Minh’s *Selected Writings*.

Government bonds started to be issued in July 1946. In April 1948, Ho Chi Minh signed Decision No. 160-SL which allowed issue of a national Resistance Bond to the total value of VND 500 million. The issuing of governmental bonds under the Ministry of Finance served two purposes: the government borrowed money from the people to pay for the war with France. Later, in 1950, the government started to issue bonds denominated in rice with a total value of 100,000 tons of rice (Vĩnh Chi 2017). Emulation in the purchase and sale of governmental bonds was often publicized in the newspapers. Thus, on 27 August 1951, the heading of an article in *National Salvation* (‘Cứu Quốc’) newspaper announced that Ninh Binh compatriots lend to the government 2,953 tons and 551 kilos of rice (‘Up to the End...’, 1951). On 28 August of the same year, *Cứu Quốc* published an article about emulation fighter Nguyễn Đình Thuận from Phú Thọ Province who was able to regulate water so as to grow an additional crop of rice which he lent to the government. Consequently, he obtained the title of Agriculture Fighter from his commune (‘Agriculture Emulation Fighter...’, 1951).

As the new imported emulation practices slowly gained attention, part of the reason appears to be that the structures coordinating them organized ceremonials around them. The

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<sup>59</sup> For example, soldiers had to study the following documents: ‘Explanation of communism’, (‘Cộng sản sơ giải’), ‘What is the Party?’ (‘Đảng là gì’), ‘Party Statutes’ (‘Điều lệ Đảng’), ‘Work of Party Cells’ (‘Công tác chi bộ’), or ‘Change of work style’ (‘Sửa đổi lối làm việc’).

<sup>60</sup> Volume 5 of Ho Chi Minh’s *Selected writings* covers the years 1947, 1948 and 1949.

highest ceremonial of that kind was National Patriotic Emulation Congress. The First Emulation Congress in 1952 hosted Emulation Fighters from different provinces which prior to that had their own congresses to choose delegates for the national level. The first congress convened in 1952 and is discussed in the next section.

### **3. 8. 4. First National Patriotic Emulation Congress and First Emulation Heroes (1952)**

The first National Patriotic Emulation Congress (‘Đại hội thi đua yêu nước lần thứ nhất’), alternatively called the Congress of Emulation Heroes and Fighters (‘Đại hội Anh hùng, Chiến sỹ thi đua’) or National Congress of Emulation Fighters and Exemplary Cadres (‘Đại hội toàn quốc các chiến sỹ thi đua và cán bộ gương mẫu’) convened from 1 to 6 May 1952. According to the Vietnamese archives, this congress was attended by Ho Chi Minh himself and 154 delegates, including public servants, peasants, soldiers and mental labourers (‘lao động trí óc’). The Congress was also attended by many important Vietnamese political personalities, such as Trường Chinh (General Secretary of the VWP), Tôn Đức Thắng (Head of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly), Phạm Văn Đồng (Deputy Prime Minister), Võ Nguyên Giáp (Minister of Defense), Nguyễn Văn Tạo (Minister of Labor) and others. Two foreign guests from the Lao People’s Government were Xi-Hon (Xi’an) and Nu Hac (Nu-Hain). The Congress was officially opened at 19:30 on April 30, in Eight-roof hall (‘Hội trường tám mái’) in Khuôn Lân Hamlet, Hợp Thành Commune, Tuyên Quang Province (Nguyễn Minh Sơn 2008).

Ho Chi Minh read the opening speech, saying that the purpose of emulation is to achieve victory, secure new democracy and advance socialism. He also affirmed that: “Emulation is patriotism and patriotism means we have to emulate” (‘Thi đua là yêu nước, yêu nước thì phải thi đua’). This slogan, still widely cited today, comes from his speech at the congress, and he proclaimed: “Every person emulates, every sector emulates, we will definitely win, enemy will certainly loose” (Ho Chi Minh’s Speech at the National Emulation Congress, 1952). Elsewhere, Ho Chi Minh is cited to say: “Emulation is Patriotism, to be patriotic, we have to emulate. And who emulates are people who are most patriotic” (‘Thi đua là yêu nước, yêu nước thì phải thi đua. Và những người thi đua là những người yêu nước nhất’) (Huyền Trang 2013). All of these slogans are a firm part of today’s propaganda in Vietnam.



Trường Chinh at the Congress defined who is a new hero with the following characteristics: loyal to the fatherland, serving the people rather than oppressing them, liberating the masses, loyal to the political line and policies of the vanguard Party, in contact with the masses and trusted by them, eager to learn and improve, is critical and practices self-criticism, and is creative and employs science and technology (Truong Chinh's Speech at the National Emulation Congress, 1952).

The Congress summarized experience from patriotic emulation. First, Ho Chi Minh presented a general passage about different sectors or groups of people, for example: "soldiers emulated with quite a good result, there were clear results which were manifested in successive victories; in technology, emulation has some positives in some areas such as in spirit, discipline, and large number of initiatives but lacks regularity, transport sector is slow" (Ho Chi Minh's Speech at the National Emulation Congress 1952). After that Ho Chi Minh proceeded to the contents of emulation, and the main two areas he named were emulation in production and saving and emulation in killing of enemies. As an example of saving, Ho Chi Minh mentioned Nguyễn Đăng Đại who was constructing mines. In one month, he saved 50 litres of petrol, 14 kilos of shellac, 140 metres of cloth, but still sustained high productivity and the quality was even better than before" (Ibid.). A special emphasis was put on dissemination of initiatives and experiences. With a typical Vietnamese symbolism, Ho Chi Minh described this process as the flow of rivers: "Experiences and initiatives are like the small streams flowing in the large rivers and large rivers flowing in the lakes with fish" (Ibid.). In the next section Ho Chi Minh emphasized that emulation is not just a matter of individual people and collectives in the same sectors, it has to go across the sectors: "For example, one agriculture unit can compete with a military unit and technology unit. Commune A and factory B sign an agreement with military unit C about how much they will increase production and how much they will save. A military unit signed up to a commitment to how many enemies it will kill and how many weapons it will steal. Others emulate with each other and progress together" (Ibid.). In two concrete examples Ho Chi Minh highlighted two individuals to inspire delegates at the Congress. Eighty-three year old Ms. Nam from Cao Bằng was repairing the road when she was advised by the officer from the army to rest, she allegedly replied: "the older you are the more you have to help the resistance. The better the road, the faster our army can go to kill the enemies and win the battles" (Ibid.). Another example was Nguyễn Thị Giao Tiên, a pharmacist in the military who encouraged her

siblings: “We have to emulate to make medicines faster and more carefully, so that our soldiers can comfortably fight with the enemy” (Ibid.).

Congress in 1952 selected seven best Emulation Fighters who were awarded a new title ‘Emulation Hero’ (‘anh hùng thi đua’). It is worth looking at some of these heroes and what they achieved.

For example, Emulation Hero La Văn Cầu (born 1935) was an officer of the Vietnam People’s Army of Tay ethnic origin at Phong Năm Commune, Trùng Khánh District, Cao Bằng Province. In the Battle of the Eastern Front (1950 Border Campaign), he wounded his arm and forced his fellow soldiers to cut it off, then he continued to fight. The detailed story of his heroism is recollected at the Congress (Phạm Hải Yến 2009b).

In May 19, 1952, he was awarded the title of Hero of the People's Armed Forces by the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. That same year, he was awarded the title of Emulation Hero under Decree 107-SL dated August 10, 1952. Later he became a member of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

This story provides a couple of interesting points. Firstly, the new Vietnamese government awarded a person from the ethnic minorities and as Treglodé (2012) showed this can be seen in the context of the general struggle to involve ethnic minorities in emulation movements. He reports that in the course of patriotic emulation, there were not many Emulation Fighters or Heroes of ethnic groups other than Kinh (the prevalent ethnic group in Vietnam). The same problem was also met with Catholics. Secondly, Emulation Heroes were often promoted to relatively important positions but their real influence or power was limited (Treglodé 2012, p. 122).

Another example of Emulation Hero was the previously mentioned Nguyễn Thị Chiên who became the first women to hold the title. Nguyễn Thị Chiên was only twenty-two years old when she received the title of Emulation Hero. According to the records of the Vietnamese Military History Museum she was born in 1930 in Thái Bình Province where she participated in guerrilla activities. After 1954 she worked at the General Political and Military Region Department in Hanoi and retired in 1984. She received many high military awards (Kiều Mai Sơn 2016).

At age 16 Nguyễn Thị Chiên joined the revolution, and she was assigned by the guerrillas to spread leaflets and detect French troops. She recollected the story of how she

swam in the Thái Bình River hidden under a banana leaf to spy the French Colonial posts when the shooting started, luckily, she managed to escape. On other occasions she fought in different battles against the French and at once she was captured and tortured (ibid.). In one of the Vietnamese sources her capture is described as follows: “Her enemies forced her into the Thái Bình River, waiting for her to drown, then they pulled her out, but she still did not talk. They took her to be shot. In the field and with loaded guns, her eyes were sealed but she still kept silent. The enemy was forced to release her after four months of brutal investigation” (Hà Hương Phúc 2009).

She was known for her self-sacrificing and pragmatic approach and modest way of life. In 1980 when the country met economic problems she was active selling lottery tickets. When her husband found out he was upset and asked her why she was doing it. She replied: “I am a Party member, but I still have to make living. As a small party member and a small citizen, I have never asked the state for anything, it is normal to do more work” (Việt Quang 2016).

According to Tréglodé this story illustrates a typical end to an Emulation Hero’s life: “Once awarded a national title and placed in hierarchy according to his rank, the hero faded from the public eye. The State then elected new ones to keep up momentum. The meeting with Uncle Hồ was the last chapter in the hero’s biography and signaled his death or dissolution into the illusion of an ideal. Officially, after the meeting the hero was sent back to his home province to begin spreading the movement. Once he returned to his family, his symbolic role was finished. The central government’s solicitude also limited his field of action. From now on he was expected to be modest and dedicated in his new daily life” (Treglodé 2012, pp. 108-111).

These two accounts are examples of Vietnamese heroes who were awarded their titles for their bravery in combat. As Emulation Heroes, they served as examples for other combatants. Other emulation heroes were awarded their titles for their work achievements, however these were often combat and war related, mainly involved in the construction of weapons. For example, the famous Vietnamese Trần Đại Nghĩa was a military engineer who is in Vietnam known as ‘the king’ of Vietnamese weapons (‘ông vua’ vũ khí Việt Nam’). As a young student with a French scholarship, he secretly collected books about armaments construction. After he met Ho Chi Minh in Paris he wanted to return to Vietnam to help the war of resistance. Professor Trần Đại Nghĩa and his colleagues successfully built modern weapons like bazookas. A popular story recalls the famous general Giáp describing Trần Đại

Nghĩa as a very gentle person. After a battle at Tran Pagoda (March 1947) where the Vietnamese used bazooka for the first time to destroy the French tank, Giáp called Nghĩa a “Buddha making guns” (‘Ông Phật làm súng’) (‘Intellectual Labor Hero...’, Radio Voice of Hanoi).

Another similar-style ‘Labour Emulation Hero’ award given out in 1952 was Ngô Gia Khảm who together with engineer Nguyễn Văn Xuân manufactured the first hand grenades in the Viet Bac area in 1944. During the war of resistance against the French, Khảm founded a chemical workshop to make explosives like mines and grenades. He was injured three times during production work. The Vietnamese archives contain records from his autobiographical entries. These describe his initial lack of experience as well as how they constructed hand grenades by copying Japanese grenades, and the serious injury which burned his face and hands (Lê Thị Lý 2011).

As can be seen from the above discussion the only Emulation Hero who was related to agriculture production and not military-related activities was Hoàng Hanh. As Tréglodé (2012) suggested, however, he was perhaps selected as one of the few Catholic supporters of an emulation movement (p. 90).

### **3. 8. 5. Emulation Movements in the Period (1946-1954): Summary**

The first emulation movements in Vietnam cannot be considered without their connection to the fight against French colonialism. The new DRV government started to build its legitimacy on the basis of its leadership of opposition to French rule in Indochina and in the context of newly proclaimed independence. Marr describes the enthusiasm as follows:

Amidst the revolutionary exaltation of August 1945, no feeling was more widespread than national solidarity – the joy experienced when “the people” (dan chung, nhan dan) join together as never before to build and defend “the nation” (quoc gia), or, more colloquially, “our country” (nuoc ta). Vietnamese who had never met before saluted each other as “comrade” (dong chi), shared food and drink, marched side by side in demonstrations, and joined with persons from other localities to form a range of patriotic organisations. Public speakers and newspaper writers insisted ceaselessly that only with the unity and self-sacrifice could Vietnam’s newly won independence be safeguard from foreign predators” (Marr 2013, p. 383).

The ideas of communism that Ho Chi Minh had studied for more than two decades included Lenin's proposals for how to get rid of colonialism (*Lenin's Theses on National and Colonial Question, 1920*) while building a new political system based on collectivism and renewed morality rather than individualism with its selfishness. French colonial rule created in Vietnam a general sense of discontent which together with the devastation of the country after the Second World War certainly contributed to the smoother implanting of communist ideas and emulation movements.

The new Vietnamese government mobilized people to contribute in different ways to the war with France while in various ways getting new ideas and vocabulary into people's minds. As I have shown, emulation was tied to images and historical figures from the heroic past and ideas of identity which created a feeling of continuity... a hero became an Emulation Hero, formally recognized, praised and rewarded, and the subject of propaganda activities.

Everything was to be emulated but for the sake of simplicity, Ho Chi Minh carefully selected three main and pressing areas for organized emulation activities: hunger, illiteracy and French colonial rule. In a few years, all of them were shifting in a good direction: hunger was getting under control, popular classes substantially raised literacy and people were willing to fight against French. Calls for emulation came from the mouth of a political personality who was initially not very well-known in Vietnam but soon began to gain authority, respect, and with his charisma, also legitimacy.

The interdependency between war of resistance and emulation was an important feature which should not be overlooked. The Government needed people for its cause, beating the French, and rather than the typical character of 'friendly competition' for raising of economic production, the DRV above all needed emulation in the shape of volunteerism which was framed in terms of contribution and sacrifice. After that, Vietnam could start to build a 'better tomorrow'. Ho Chi Minh directly connected the need for emulation with achieving the three goals that were attractive to many groups of society and that were leading to the goal of the end of colonialism.

### **3. 9. Emulation Movements in the Period (1954-1975)**

In 1954 after the Geneva Conference Vietnam was divided at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, thus creating two entities on Vietnamese territory: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the

North and the Republic of Vietnam in the South. Such a division was considered temporary and general elections were scheduled for 1956 when Vietnam should have been reunited. That, however, failed to happen and increasing American involvement in Vietnam together with the efforts of the Viet Minh to spread its influence in the South in the context of the Cold War led to the Second Indochina War (1964-1975). Vietnam was reunited in 1975 and received the name Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), the same name Vietnam carries today. After eleven years the Vietnamese Party in 1986 gave a green light to the economic reforms called *Đổi Mới* (Renewal) and slowly adopted a form of mixed economy. In the period 1954-1975 emulation movements were primarily, with a brief period during the Second Indochina War, the matter of North Vietnam up until reunification in 1975.<sup>61</sup>

Emulation movements between 1954 and 1975 saw many changes and experienced two more Emulation Congresses. As written above in this chapter (Section 3.5.2) emulation was allegedly used as a technique during the Land Reform Campaign (1953-1956) and emulation campaigns were present during the Second Indochina War (1964-1975). The content of Vietnamese emulation movements was often affected by the conflicts that Vietnam went through in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Second Indochina War was not an exception: we find emulation campaigns in the military, such as the ‘Three Most’ (‘*Ba Nhất*’) movement. In 1960 after the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Congress of the Party, during peacetime, emulation movements were slowly shifted towards a focus on agriculture and to a lesser extent industry, and then this changed again when the US directly entered the War in 1964.

Changes in emulation movements in Vietnam often reflected political shifts at a time as well as military issues. For example, the period 1956 to 1964 experienced a gradual shift away from China and towards the focus on Socialist Construction expressed in the Three (1958-1960) and then the first Five (1961-1965) year plans and thus marked a shift towards celebrating agriculture and labour heroes rather than previously predominant military heroes. The largest DRV emulation campaign in agriculture was named ‘*Đại Phong Wind*’ (‘*Gió Đại Phong*’) according to the successful exemplary commune in *Đại Phong Village*. In Industry, the ‘*Duyên Hải Wave*’ (named after the *Duyên Hải Mechanical Factory*) became a model to emulate for workers in different factories throughout the DRV. Concurrently, Vietnam continued with the education movement, though in changed form, and the main campaign during the 1960s was called ‘*Bắc Lý Drum*’ (‘*Trống Bắc Lý*’) according to a model school

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<sup>61</sup> The focus on historical emulation movements of this thesis is in the Northern Vietnam, I omitted the emulation movements in the liberated zones in the South.

called *Bác Lý*'. But in 1964, we can see a reverse shift back towards the military and defense movements ('Three Ready', 'Two Excellent', 'Three Assurances') after the US got directly involved in the Second Indochina War.

The following section will go through the main emulation campaigns and congresses in the North focusing primarily on the 1960s to investigate details about the character and changes in emulation movements in Vietnam in that period. To keep events in chronological order I start with the National Emulation Congress in 1958, then move through the four important movements of the early 1060s, then briefly mention the 1962 Congress and finish with the two major movements which started in 1964.

### **3. 9. 1. Second National Patriotic Emulation Congress (1958)**

The second National Emulation Congress ('Đại hội anh hùng, chiến sĩ thi đua toàn quốc lần thứ hai') took place between 7 and 8 July 1958 in Hanoi and the number of delegates increased to over 450<sup>62</sup>. The Congress occurred in the context of the efforts of the DRV to promote socialism, internationalism, maintain good relations with both China and the Soviet Union and deal with the problem of national reunification that seemed to be more and more distant at a time. This all can be read from Ho Chi Minh's opening speech at the Congress where he emphasized that the numbers of Emulation Fighters and Heroes were rising; he mentioned the presence of 6 Emulation Heroes from the South, and one Hero and a few Emulation Fighters of foreign origin<sup>63</sup>; 26 Labor Heroes, 69 Army Heroes and 446 Emulation Fighters who represent 42,700 Emulation Heroes of the entire country (Ho Chi Minh's Speech at the Second National Emulation Congress, 1958).

The higher number of Emulation Heroes in the army could be misleading as the majority of awards granted at the Second National Emulation Congress were workers and farmers (obtaining titles of Emulation Fighters). This was the result of the upcoming First

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<sup>62</sup> The numbers of delegates vary in different sources. For example, Treglodé (2012) states there were 456 people (p. 114), the Electronic Newspaper of the VCP provides the number 450 ('Propaganda Material on IX National Patriotic Emulation Movement' (2015). According to Ho Chi Minh's opening speech there were 541 people present (Speech available online: <https://tennguoidenphat.net/2012/05/05/loi-chao-mung-dai-hoi-anh-hung-va-chien-si-thi-dua-toan-quoc-lan-thu-hai-23-7-7-1958/>). Nhan Dan newspaper from July 8, 1958 states the same number as Treglodé, 456.

<sup>63</sup> Ho Chi Minh talks about Emulation Hero Ho Xay Dau as being of Cantonese origin (Treglodé 2012, p. 114).

Three Year Plan and related effort of the DRV to lift the country by developing agricultural production and industry.

The Second National Emulation Congress in 1958 was a larger meeting than the previous Congress in 1952. Many people received the titles of Emulation Fighter but the Congress also awarded many medals of different degrees, and diplomas. Rewarding six Southerners was politically important due to the situation of the division of the country into North and South. It can be concluded, however, that the 1958 Congress did not bring substantial changes in the emulation movements and how they were organized. It rather coincided with a new period of Socialist Construction in peacetime, with the Three Year Plan and adjusted the focus of emulation accordingly whilst seeking a growth of emulation and improving organization and technology in agriculture and industry. The following campaigns reflect this.

### **3. 9. 2. ‘Three Most’ Campaign in Military**

‘Three Most’ Campaign in the military was launched in June 1960 when North Vietnam was fighting very limited conflicts (compared with what was to come) in the Southern battlefield against Ngô Đình Diệm’s Republic of Vietnam backed by the U.S. The ‘Three Most’ according to the Vietnamese News Agency meant of: “best in military and technical training; best in discipline and exemplarity; and best in labor and production” (‘The Cradle of...’, 2014). This movement was intended to strengthen the building of the DRV Army and add science and technology in the process. The pioneer of this movement was 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Vĩnh Phúc Province. The origin of the ‘Three Most’ movement is derived from a competition that took part in the mountainous area Múc- Hòa Lạc where the 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment won gold medals in all three categories of the contest: the most achievements, the most participating and the best firing. Among the reported successes of the 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment were participation in 2,000 battles, capturing 20,000 enemies and 7 warships, destroying hundreds of tanks, military vehicles, cannons, dozens of aircrafts, etc. As with many other similar emulation campaigns, the goal was to encourage other units to perform as best as possible because the DRV needed a strong army for its military ventures, whilst another goal was perhaps to create the aura of success to motivate people in support of the DRV. Reportedly, the campaign inspired other units to emulate 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment and became widespread, ‘creating



the emulation atmosphere throughout the whole army' (Ibid.). This can be likely interpreted as a strategy how to reinforce political control.

It is not an accident that the 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment still exists and still carries the title of the best Regiment in the Vietnamese Army. Another interesting fact is that its commanding officer Major Đặng Văn Chiến in 2009 travelled 33 days on the sea to the disputed Spratly Islands (disputed with China) during the celebration of the 2009 Lunar New Year (Ngân Hà 2010). This connection of old success (of the regiment) related to the new problems of Vietnam today (South China Sea conflict) is distinctive for how the present-day Vietnamese government publicly presents connections between past and present. Again, the Vietnamese people are taken back to heroic pasts, when (it is said) people did not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for the protection of the nation.

As the fame of the Campaign gradually progressed, the Vietnamese propaganda apparatus presented the campaign via different channels, for example via stamps (Appendix 6) issued by the Vietnamese Post in June 1962 ('Celebrating the Birth...', Viet Stamp Club). The movement was also propagandized in the Army Newspaper.<sup>64</sup>

The campaign became a subject of the 1961 Congress of Emulation Fighters of the Whole Army where Ho Chi Minh said: "Workers raise the 'Duyên Hải' flag. Farmers raise the 'Đại Phong' flag. The heroic Army raises the flag of 'Ba nhất'" (Phu Quy 2015).

In the situation of military conflict between Northern and Southern Vietnam, the relatively young DRV Army was motivated by the speeches from the authority figure who was by the 1960s well-established and respected. Even nowadays, the VCP still often lets Ho Chi Minh 'talk' to motivate people in different situations which are related to modern emulation movements. Emulation in the military was suggestively providing motivation for units to improve and consequently be appreciated and rewarded.

One political personality connects two large emulation campaigns of this time, the military 'Three Most' and agricultural 'Đại Phong Wind' - General Nguyễn Chí Thanh. General Thanh was the second person in the DRV to be promoted to general (the first being general Nguyễn Giáp). Thanh came from a poor farming family and had to leave school at the age of fourteen, after his father passed away, to take over the farm. For this experience, he was later sent by the Central Committee of the Party to agricultural sector to deal with the

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<sup>64</sup> Báo Quân đội nhân dân, số 770, ngày 4-7-1960.

'lack of excitement among farmers'. That is how Đại Phong Wind campaign was born (Vũ Tiến Đức 2014).

### 3. 9. 3. 'Đại Phong Wind' Campaign in Agriculture

On the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Patriotic Emulation Congress (2010 in Hanoi), New Hanoi Newspaper ('báo Hà Nội Mới') printed a series of articles with the title 'They started – They still lead' ('Họ đã khởi nguồn - Họ vẫn dẫn đầu') with the meaning that emulation movements from the past were still alive and in a leading position. The author of the article tried to send to the readers one simple message: "emulation still plays an important role today" (Tống Ngọc Thanh 2010). As we will see in the next chapter, this message corresponds with official propaganda but this thesis asks how accurate and effective this is in the context of market mechanism that predominates in today's increasingly globalized Vietnam and so a political situation apparently facing completely different conditions for emulation in Vietnam today.

Đại Phong Wind was one of the four large movements of the 1960s and involved a cooperative which was presented and organized by the Communist Party as a model to emulate. It was a part of an intended revolution in agriculture and also, importantly, an active contributor to popular mobilization during the First Five Year Plan (1961-1965). It was located in Quảng Bình Province which produced many pilot cooperatives at a time when cooperatives experienced a substantial boom in the DRV and were the foundation of rural development efforts by the Party. The movement was a subject of speeches, books, newspapers and it also is a part of the song 'Quảng Bình our home!'<sup>65</sup>

Đại Phong Village is located in the area of Central Vietnam lying between the towns Vinh and Hue, in Quảng Bình Province. This area is prone to natural catastrophes and its geological position is unfavorable because it suffers both draughts and floods. In 1959, three

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<sup>65</sup> Song written by Vietnamese singer Hoàng Vân in 1964 contains following verse: 'Có ai về Đại Phong xin vô ghé thăm vùng bên Tiến Tây cuộc khai hoang đã đẩy lùi quá khứ nghèo nàn'. ("Please if there is someone coming from Đại Phong, visit area of Tiến Tây in which land reclamation pushed back the poor past" (Hoàng Vân).

small cooperatives<sup>66</sup> merged together to create a new model of large cooperatives in the DRV. Phạm Ngọc Định, who held a position of Head of Đại Phong Cooperative, said:

“We encouraged one person to work as two. We even worked at night. All people, young and old, women, and even 80-year-old men were eager to work. During the anti-American war, young people got involved in production and fighting” (Dinh Thieu 2013).

The history of the emulation movements I have recounted so far largely tells us a story about why people were motivated to participate in emulation campaigns and make sacrifices when the young DRV was under the threat from the French, and at this time, some years later, the threat appeared to be from the US and the Republic of Vietnam, though before 1964 this was far less than during the First Indochina War. This thesis asks how today’s situation differs, when there is again peace, and what are the consequences for emulation movements.

There is no doubt that the Đại Phong Movement was in official eyes a successful and well propagandized movement. When General Thanh visited Đại Phong Cooperative in 1960, he reportedly recognized its potential to become a national model for intensive farming and reducing poverty. He spread his message about the Cooperative through the radio and it became a ‘story’ that has been repeated long after. It gained wide publicity. Firstly, in January 1961, when Ho Chi Minh under the acronym T. L. (Trần Lực) published an article in Nhân Dân Newspaper praising Đại Phong: “From 23 poor households Đại Phong Village developed into 455 households with middle-class living standards” (Ho Chi Minh under the acronym T. L. 1961a). Secondly, in April 1961 when Ho Chi Minh published an article in Nhân Dân Newspaper under the same acronym T.L. where he introduced the movement with the motto: ‘Learn from Đại Phong, catch up with Đại Phong and overcome Đại Phong’ (Ho Chi Minh under acronym T. L., 1961b). Later in May 1962, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Emulation Fighter’s Congress, Đại Phong was awarded an emulation flag and Mr. Nguyễn Ngọc Ánh, head of the cooperative, was awarded the title of Emulation Hero.

Đại Phong likely became an emulation model for several reasons, although we do not know the precise politics behind its selection. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, lying in one of the poorest regions in Vietnam with harsh natural conditions, it could send a message that anyone could repeat this success, thus encouraging other farmers to act accordingly,

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<sup>66</sup> The Cooperative 6/1 was merged from Mỹ Phước Cooperative and Đông - Tây Bắc Cooperative. Additionally, by October 1960, cooperative 6/1 merged with cooperatives Trần Phú and Lê Phong, creating large Cooperative Đại Phong (Trần Thị Diệu Hồng 2016).

based on the same know-how. Secondly, the new government was sending a message that even though the building of socialism is difficult, with enthusiasm, personal sacrifice and cooperation it is possible to win. Thirdly, Quảng Bình province was, besides Nghệ Tĩnh,<sup>67</sup> what the Vietnamese like to call a ‘leading flag’ (‘cờ đầu’) of emulation movements, and as Treglodé 2012 (p. 48) suggests, a pillar of the DRV’s newly established authority. From this we can attempt to derive how the young DRV and its government organised and spread emulation movements, using Đại Phong as an example. Campaigns were established first in a few provinces, then the success and well-being of people from these provinces were propagandized and extended through many channels to other DRV provinces.

Quảng Bình Province was a home to many cooperatives in different provincial communes that won the ‘title of Đại Phong’<sup>68</sup>, for example: Tiên Lang Cooperative, Đức Phở Cooperative, Thanh Tân Cooperative, Tứ Mỹ Cooperative, etc. These cooperatives were awarded the title for different achievements, for example, Đức Phở was chosen to pilot the improvement of agricultural tools, good irrigation techniques and achieving up to three harvests of rice a year (Trần Thị Diệu Hồng 2016). The fact that provinces ‘were chosen’ to focus on certain improvements in agriculture indicates that emulation was a part of ‘political and economic engineering’ orchestrated by the central authorities. A report of an interview in 2012 with the then Chief of Cooperative Nguyễn Văn Hoàng provides some important insights. Mr. Hoàng describes the visit of General Nguyễn Chí Thanh, member of the VWP Politburo and Head of the Central Agriculture Committee (‘Ban Nông nghiệp Trung ương’):

“In the cold windy rainy day, with a conical hat, sandals and brown clothes, the General came to the field to check the situation and understand the life of the villagers. He talked to each member of the cooperative and asked about food, accommodation, production and work ... He also paddled 8-9 km against the stream of the river Giang Tiên up to the Ben Tiên area, the site of the new Đại Phong’s reclamation of land” (Văn Hoàng 2012).

This personal approach left according to Mr. Hoàng a deep impression on people. On the question ‘what left the biggest impression in general’s working style’ Hoàng answered:

“It was perhaps that the General became a close person, like a member of the family, one Đại Phong’s people, he did not talk only to central or local cadres” (Ibid.).

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<sup>67</sup> Province Nghệ Tĩnh was composed of two provinces Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh.

<sup>68</sup> According to the article written by Dương Sông Lam in 2013, there were 3,191 cooperatives in the North competing with Đại Phong, of which 24 cooperatives were selected as ‘Đại Phong’ in their province (Dương Sông Lam 2013).

This excerpt from the interview shows one way how the new DRV government sought to gain the support of villagers during the collectivization drive and provides important insight into how it presented the role of personalities in the DRV government as well as in how it sought to gain support for emulation at the local level.

The 1960s ‘boom’ of cooperatives was a part of a broader movement in agriculture in the DRV when, although the connection with military conflict was a part of everyday life, socialist construction and the First Five Year Plan (1961-1965) were important. This connection was apparent when we look at the the slogans of the period 1961-1965: “Enemy came to be beaten, we will continue production” (‘Giặc đến là đánh, giặc đi tiếp tục sản xuất’), “The plough and gun, one hand is on the plough, one hand is on the gun” (‘Tay cày tay súng, tay chèo tay súng’), or, “We will not stop production because enemy is bombing us” (‘Không vì địch bắn phá mà ngừng sản xuất’). (Trần Thị Diệu Hồng 2016).

Based on research of available resources in Vietnamese language, we can say that Đại Phong Wind Campaign in agriculture got more official attention<sup>69</sup> than Duyên Hải Wave in industry perhaps because industry was still underdeveloped in Vietnam at a time. Also, it is possible that the relative failure of Land Reform to create a loyal cadre of Party members throughout the DRV meant that the collectivization campaign was harder than the take-over by the state of existing factories and its management of those financed by aid during the First Five Year Plan.

The Đại Phong Campaign was in 1964 interrupted by the direct US involvement in the war after the Tonkin Gulf Incident.<sup>70</sup> In the same year, Quảng Bình Province was heavily bombed and Đại Phong was over-shadowed by the Youth campaigns of the period which were focused on defense of the country.

Based on the official narrative of the VCP, the Đại Phong Campaign was considered nothing short of a revolution in agriculture and a living proof that collectivization is the right direction for the country. Đại Phong Cooperative was subsequently substantially rewarded<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Despite both movements being usually named together, there were more articles and details available for the Đại Phong Wave Campaign.

<sup>70</sup> Tonkin Incident or Gulf of Tonkin Incident led to a direct involvement of the U.S. in the Second Indochina conflict. US destroyer Maddox was allegedly attacked by the North Vietnamese naval vessels, this served as a pretence to president Johnson to involve in the conflict but in 2005 US admitted that there was no Vietnamese presence at a time (Hanyok 2001). Vietnamese historiography talks about US involvement in the War since 1954, but the level of conflict escalated greatly after 1964.

<sup>71</sup> In the early 1960s, 98% of the land in Vietnam was still ploughed by water buffalo instead of tractors (Wiegiersma 1988, p. 151).

at the time: In March 1961 after his visit, Ho Chi Minh sent to Đại Phong Cooperative a tractor DT54, originally sent by Lenin's Communist Youth League from the Soviet Union (Dương Sông Lam 2013). Of course, after the economic crisis of the late 1970s hard line rural collectivization was abandoned, and then after Doi Moi in 1988 cooperatives were largely disbanded.

### **3. 9. 4. 'Duyên Hải Wave' in Industry**

To a lesser degree, the Duyên Hải Wave was a similar story to the Đại Phong Campaign in Agriculture. With the First Five Year Plan, authorities of the DRV encouraged their citizens to emulate to fulfill the plan. The birthplace of the Duyên Hải Wave, Hai Phong, a developed port city, was suitable for launching of the emulation campaign related to industry. Duyên Hải Wave was named after a factory called Duyên Hải specializing in mechanical engineering and transportation. The factory was established in 1955 under the name Duyên Hải Mechanical Factory, which gradually developed into a large corporation under the name Duyên Hải Production Corporation ('Tập đoàn sản xuất Duyên Hải'). (Đỗ Chí Thành 2015). The conglomerate still exists today as the State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) under the name 'One-member state mechanical company Duyên Hải', Ltd. ('Công ty TNHH Nhà Nước một thành viên Cơ Khí Duyên Hải'). As such it was from the start a state factory, equipped with Party cells, the official Trade Union and the other elements of Party rule.

This company provides on its website a history of the Duyên Hải Wave. Amongst the most important issues was a visit from President Ho Chi Minh on 15 March 1961 (Appendix 7) who acknowledged the need for production and supplies of heavy machinery for the development of Vietnamese agriculture and industry ('Continuation of the story...' Website of the Company). An official visit from Ho Chi Minh was considered a top honour and brought considerable attention. During his visit, Ho Chi Minh spoke to workers and managers of the company, emphasizing some basic points of Soviet education. Ho Chi Minh pointed to the example of the Soviet Union which had to 'tighten its belt' in order to build socialism (from savings, it was argued, they are able to build new factories). Then he complained that people in Vietnam still have the old way of thinking, they want salaries and careers but do not realize that that is an individualistic way of thinking that does not have a place in the construction of socialism. Ho Chi Minh told the story of suffering followed by happiness to ensure that Duyên Hải Factory continues, he praised the workers but also pointed to the

importance of staying on the right track (Ho Chi Minh's Speech at Duyên Hải Factory, 1961). As a part of propaganda, the story of the visit of Ho Chi Minh to Duyên Hải Factory was recounted in a book published in 1985.<sup>72</sup> Duyên Hải Factory as other emulation models were typically visited by multiple officials to sustain the aura of importance. In 1962 deputy Prime Minister Lê Thanh Nghị also visited Duyên Hải Factory after it received the Labour Medal of first grade at the Third National Emulation Congress in May 1962.

The core of the Duyên Hải success as presented at a time was opening technical workshops by workers of the factory and formation of socialist labour brigades ('Uncle Ho and Hai Phong...', 2015). Journalist Đức Trường interviewed Mr. Nguyễn Xuân Cồn, former director of the Factory. Mr. Cồn talked about the beginnings of the fame of Duyên Hải. The decision to open the technical workshops came after the Third National Congress of the Party in 1960. Workshops were initiated from above, by the Party Committee of the Duyên Hải Factory. The workshops in the spring of 1961 brought technical improvements and rationalisation of production ('hợp lý hóa sản xuất') (Đức Trường 2010). However, Duyên Hải's success did not last long, for problems initially started during the war with the US, and by the end, Duyên Hải did not really survive the transition to a market economy. Despite this, it still exists, but its size is substantially reduced and it seems to be facing the final phase of its life with outdated equipment and lack of investment (Ibid.). Unlike other movements from the 1960s, Duyên Hải cannot be used anymore as an example of success of emulation. In a certain sense it reflects how emulation practices lost their momentum, became outdated and empty in different conditions of the new market era. And it clearly does not offer images and stories that the regime nowadays finds useful in contemporary emulation movements.

### 3. 9. 5. 'Bắc Lý Drum' in Education

*"Sound of Bắc Lý Drum still travels far."*<sup>73</sup>

– Ngô Văn Hăng, Director of the Secondary school in Bắc Lý

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<sup>72</sup> 1985 book: *President Ho Chi Minh and Party and people of Hai Phong*. ('Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với Đảng bộ và nhân dân Hải Phòng'). Hai Phong: Hai Phong Publishers.

<sup>73</sup> Original: "Tiếng trống Bắc Lý đến nay vẫn còn sức lan tỏa" (Thu Hà 2009)

As was emphasized above, education plays a particularly important role in traditional Confucian societies and Vietnam is no exception. This can be practically seen when we consider its past system of imperial examinations adopted from China and which constituted a system where the educated were highly honored and respected. In the modern history of Vietnam, education still remains its important focus, and this can be observed in different periods: Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on literacy (education), which according to him would lead to freedom from French colonizers; later in the 1960s, the regime's emphasis on 'science and technology'<sup>74</sup> required widespread modern education; and lastly, current emulation campaigns include strong reference to education in the context of the present discussion in Vietnam about problems of education (these last two points will be discussed in the next chapter). The campaign against illiteracy was started in 1945 but it was more a 'proto emulation campaign'. 'Bắc Lý Drum', on the other hand, is considered by the regime to be a genuine exemplary emulation movement, a model of what an emulation movement should look like.

Bac Ly school was established in 1953 in Hà Nam Province but did not have its own building and so education took place in temples and pagodas. In 1957, the school moved to today's Bắc Lý Commune, Lý Nhân District. According to Vietnamese sources, teachers, students and people from Bắc Lý participated in the construction of a modern school building, classrooms and facilities and built ponds, garden, and planted plants and trees. (Hà Trang 2010). Based on the Resolution of the Third Congress of the Party, Bắc Lý school was said to have applied in practice what the Party prescribed. A message that education should be developed on a large scale, should serve the revolution, and connect education and labor in Vietnam. In other words, it should bring education closer to the tasks of socialist construction. In case of Bắc Lý School, it meant that students, parents, as well as teachers contributed bricks, bamboo, wood and their work to build a school in their free time to teach pupils and students about labor, socialist morality and reliance on community. The school was proclaimed to be an 'emulation model' for every school and it awarded twice the title of 'Emulation Hero' (Thu Hà 2009).

In July 1961, Ho Chi Minh suggested that schools should launch an emulation movement called 'Two good' ('Hai Tốt') with the meaning 'Teach well and study well'. Bắc

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<sup>74</sup> The importance of 'science and technology' was emphasized in the Resolution of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Party in 1960. The word 'education' ('giáo dục') is used 25 times in the Resolution. (Resolution of the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Congress of the Vietnamese Labor Party, 1960).



Lý was a model school fulfilling this slogan for tens of years. Bac Ly's teachers were often praised for developing not only theoretical but also visual practical learning:

“For example, when teaching about animal husbandry, teachers taught students theory from the book and then took them immediately to the commune farms to watch how farmers take care of pigs and poultry. To learn about rice varieties, school received a field for students to learn how to cultivate their own rice and how to harvest it” (Hà Trang 2010).

The story of Bắc Lý School tells us about emulation movements in the 1960s. Bac Ly was selected as an emulation model, it appeared, because people in the commune simply behaved according to the prescriptions of the government. In the harsh times of general food shortage, Bắc Lý stayed focused on education which was encouraged at the time. People volunteered and built their own school for the sake of community when the state was too decimated and unable to fulfill its functions. This type of behavior was important because it created real results. The leaders of the DRV then connected these results to themselves and by rewarding (and paying attention to) Bắc Lý Commune, they gained more support not only from Bắc Lý but other localities who also wanted to secure the future of their children. Teachers in Bắc Lý came from different provinces (Ninh Bình, Hải Dương, Thanh Hóa, Hưng Yên, Hà Nội)<sup>75</sup> which helped both with the dissemination of emulation and in gaining support for the DRV government.

At this time as the DRV government fought for the recognition of political authority, the connection of practical results to the policies of the DRV government was very important.

After 1964 when the US directly entered the war, DRV emulation campaigns changed again towards a military direction. The most famous movements in the mid-1960s were ‘Three Ready’ (‘Ba Sẵn Sàng’) and ‘Two Excellent’ (‘Hai Giỏi’). Before these two movements are discussed, I will briefly mention the 1962 Third National Emulation Congress.

### **3. 9. 6. Third National Patriotic Emulation Congress (1962)**

The Third National Emulation Congress took place in Hanoi between the 4 and 6 May 1962. The meeting was held in the context of the First Five Year Plan which started in 1961, where widespread collectivization, industrialization and efforts to bring science and

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<sup>75</sup> See: Đỗ Thanh Bình and Nguyễn Thị Thu Thủy (2013).

technology into the different areas of production accompanied great pressure upon free markets. It was also the last Congress before Vietnam directly entered war with the US in 1964. The Congress rewarded 45 Labor Heroes and 985 Emulation Fighters ('Propaganda Material on IX National...' 2015). Deputy Prime Minister Lê Thanh Nghị was chairman of this Congress and created an extensive report from the Congress from which we can understand some interesting details.

The speech has four large sections. In the section named 'The large victory of Emulation movement' ('Thắng lợi to lớn của phong trào thi đua'), he proclaims the success of measures seeking rationalization of production and mechanization which was an important push of the Party at that time. The deputy PM mentioned all of the main emulation movements but put an emphasis on agriculture. Nghị stated: "Entering collective production relations, our peasants are fully capable of successfully implementing the Resolution of the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Party's Central Committee, we have to build a prosperous agricultural economic foundation, that will create a basis for the development of industry" (Le Thanh Nghị's Speech at the Third National Patriotic Emulation Movement, 1962). The Reason behind all of these successful movements and overall progress was, in Nghị's interpretation, the new socialist regime: "Only the socialism provides conditions for the workers to develop their creativity, to build the country and prosperous, joyful and happy life (...) our people's patriotic emulation movement has grown tremendously, and it has gained enormous successes because it has grown in a socialist economy, on the basis of the self-consciousness of millions of people. They work because they have the proper leadership of the Party, the Government and President Ho" (Ibid.).

Once again, Vietnamese leaders tried to connect the old 'patriotic tradition' and the 'new socialist regime' to legitimize it in the eyes of people. Patriotism was still needed and so was the 'love for socialism'. These values were combined with the goal of reunification and the need to liberate the South from Ngô Đình Diệm's regime. This was tied together for Emulation Fighters, as people who worked in the country's interest: "Our labor heroes and emulation fighters have the strength and talent to devote so much to our country. Love for our country and love for socialism is the source of endless strength which will secure for the emulation movement many great victories" (Ibid.).

The rest of the speech addressed the issues of learning from initiatives, emphasized the importance of collectivity, promoted and characterized new heroes, and showed appreciation for the support of USSR, China and other socialist countries.

It is useful to look at the Third Emulation Congress in 1962 in the context of a period in which the DRV promoted mass emulation to secure the general support of their people in believing that socialism is the right path. Development of socialism as prescribed by the Party with the above characteristics continued during 1960, but in 1964 these movements were slowed down by the renewal and rapid escalation of armed conflict with the US. From 1964, emulation movements shifted back towards military concerns.<sup>76</sup>

### **3. 9. 8. Emulation Movements in the Period (1954-1975): Summary**

Immediately after 1954, emulation movements in the DRV were still beginning. The government was promoting the principles of emulation, but it was also busy establishing its authority against the problematic Land Reform and dealing with the overall situation following the War with the French and the division of Vietnam. By 1960 movements were better organized and their focus could be shifted to supporting important elements of socialist construction through the coming First Five Year Plan (1961-1965), such as agricultural collectivization, state factories and schools. The Party Congress proclaimed the following years to be the ‘years of construction of socialism and fight for peace and unification of the country’. This shift brought substantial changes in emulation movements, which was seen mainly through more intensive mobilization and collective thinking. The leaders of the DRV believed that the country needed to develop its agricultural production in order to build industry and support efforts to reunite the country. Emulation movements were a tool used to create enthusiasm and drive for necessary changes including technological improvements, collectivization and to fulfil the First Five Year Plan. They also gradually implanted a new vocabulary and new socialist ideas in the Vietnamese Society. They were a central part of the politics of the DRV and its ruling VWP, drawing upon and adapting Soviet and Chinese practices to Vietnamese conditions.

The main area of focus in the 1960s was in agriculture and in building cooperatives. This was reflected through the Đại Phong Movement, perhaps the largest and most important movement of the period. Having said this, DRV communist thinking was promoted in all four movements: In the military, the ‘Three Most’ Movement emphasized being best as a collective; in industry, Duyệt Hải Factory became famous primarily with its ‘brigades of socialist labor’; in education, Bắc Lý School became an emulation model based on collective

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<sup>76</sup> This paralleled to the rise of economic aid from the USSR and China.

contributions and the work of students, parents and teachers. This drive towards communist and so collectivist thinking was also reflected in emerging terminology. Vietnamese vocabulary started to frequently incorporate expressions such as: ‘đội lao động tiên tiến’, or ‘đội lao động xã hội chủ nghĩa’ – ‘progressive labor team’ or ‘progressive socialist labor group’. These collectives were expressions of the Leninist principle that the Party directly lead society in socialist construction and in war, and so contained Party cells and were coordinated with the DRV state apparatus and the Mass Organisations. The DRV started to industrialise and urbanise, and its Party-State apparatus grew.

The numbers involved with emulation movements grew from one Congress to another. Congresses from 1952, through to 1958 and then 1962 were gaining more and more delegates as well as more and more rewarded people. While the Congress in 1952 had 150 delegates, the Congress in 1962 had over a thousand attendees. The giving of the title of Emulation Hero was restricted to preserve its value: 7 heroes at the First Emulation Congress, 26 and 45 at the Second and Third Emulation Congresses. Numbers of less prestigious titles or medals also grew, from almost 1,000 in 1951 to 65,000 in 1961 (Trégodé 2012, p. 70). However, it seems possible that these figures might not be exact as the titles had many shapes and levels and were conferred by different offices at different levels with no proper system for collection of the data. This also explains the lack of precision when it comes to numbers of delegates at the Congresses and other events in various resources.

Emulation from the beginning of its existence in communist Vietnam was presented to citizens as a duty connected to the readiness to protect the fatherland. Emulation movements were often of a military or paramilitary character, showing pictures of women working at the fields while having a gun hanging over their shoulder. In 1964 when the US became directly involved in the Second Indochina War, the movements shifted to a military focus again and stayed that way until the end of war. The beginnings of 1960s, with the focus on agriculture is thus an important point of difference, showing the way, the Party adapted their use to its perceptions of the changing needs of the situation, as was to happen in the late 1990s when emulation activities were revived in the face of popular unrest (the Thái Bình protests).

Before I come to the conclusions of this chapter, I briefly consider the problem of Chinese and Soviet aid and its role in the Vietnamese emulation movements.

### **3. 9. 7. ‘Three Readies’, ‘Five Volunteerings’ and ‘Two Excellents’ Movements after 1964**

The ‘Three Readies’ (‘Ba Sẵn Sàng’) Movement started in 1964 in the Hanoi National University of Education (‘Trường Đại học Sư phạm Hà Nội’) and from there it was spread throughout the North. At that time, emulation was also promoted in the South where in the so-called liberated areas the movement received the name ‘Five Volunteerings’ (‘Năm xung phong’). These two movements were organized by the Youth Union and were considered to be the largest emulation movements during the Second Indochinese Conflict from the year 1964.

‘Three Readies’ was a movement that developed through the declared need of the DRV to recruit as many people as possible to fight against America and the Republic of Vietnam. What were the three things young people were supposed to be ready for? Firstly, being ready to enlist in the army; secondly, being ready to work, learn and build the ‘new life’; and thirdly, being ready to do anything that their country required of them (Lê Đức Hoàng 2015). The Southern counterpart movement that was launched to ‘unite the youth in the resistance’, had on its program five points: 1. Volunteer to destroy many enemy forces; 2. Volunteer to join the army and join the guerilla war; 3. Young people and civilians volunteer to serve at the front lines; 4. Volunteer to struggle politically; 5. Volunteer in agricultural production (Propaganda Material of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Organization, 2015). In summary, the DRV above all needed devoted soldiers who would fight not only for patriotism but for a new socialist life.

Two Vietnamese authors, Prof. Trịnh Thị Hồng Hạnh from the National Ho Chi Minh Political Institute and author Trần Thị Diệu Hồng, have written articles about the ‘Two Excellents’ movement (1965-1975). It is worth emphasizing that this movement was born in Quảng Bình Province, an important area of other movements. Both authors emphasize Quảng Bình’s Province geographical position: it borders Quảng Trị Province which was a dividing province between the North and the South (Trịnh Thị Hồng Hạnh 2017; Trần Thị Diệu Hồng 2016).

The ‘Two Excellents’ movement was launched in November 1965 during Quảng Bình Province’s Emulation Congress. ‘Two Excellents’ was proposed as a commitment to excel in fighting and production. Prof. Hạnh’s article lists heroes who sacrificed their lives to defend their country, lists achievements in the number of enemy aircrafts that were shot down by

Vietnamese forces from Quảng Bình,<sup>77</sup> and acknowledges the role of Quảng Bình's people in sustaining both transportation and agricultural production (Hanh 2017). Together, this established a basis for Quảng Bình's numerous awards and overall emulation success<sup>78</sup> during 1960-1975.

According to Hồng (2016), Hanh (2017) and others, Quảng Bình Province received two First Class Orders of Independence ('Huân chương Độc lập hạng nhất'), the first in 1965 and the second in 1968. A high award is conferred for the construction and defence of the country.

Hồng's article in the Quảng Bình's Journal of Science and Technology (Tập chí Thông tin Khoa học và Công nghệ) from 2016 also lists the successes of Quảng Bình people in military and production output. Similarly, as the previous author, it also emphasizes Ho Chi Minh's attention towards and praising of the province (Hồng 2016, p. 54). This high-level attention is an inseparable part of emulation practices in Vietnam today.

Together with the above three major movements, various articles (both newspapers and journals) mention smaller movements, including a women's movement called 'Three Assurances' ('Ba Đảm Đàng') which started in 1965, and an ideological movement initiated in 1966 called 'Three Determinations' ('Ba Quyết Tâm').

The women's movement was aimed at a woman's role in: "substituting their husbands or children who went to the front, securing production, encouraging their husbands and children to combat and learning how to use guns for self-defense and defense of the country" (Lê Đức Hoàng 2015). During the Movement's anniversary in March 2005 numerous women, state, Party and Women's Union representatives met in Hanoi. According to an article published in Nhân Dân Newspaper, 42 women and 9 women's units received the title of hero, and over 5,000 women received the title Emulation Fighter within the history of the movement (Phan Diễn 2005).

Prescribed to be an ideological movement of intellectuals, 'Three Determinations' had the meaning: "Determined to serve production, fight and live; determined to promote technological, ideological and cultural revolution; and determined to build a group of socialist

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<sup>77</sup> According to Hanh (2017), in 1968 provincial soldiers shot down the 500<sup>th</sup> aircraft.

<sup>78</sup> Between 1965-1968, tens of thousands of people from Quảng Bình Province received the title of 'Two Excellents' of which 18,000 people won the title in 4 consequent years. The Province had 12,000 people who received the title 'Emulation Fighter', 220 winning units, 160 socialist brigades (brigades of socialist labour), 11 people and 7 units were awarded the title 'Emulation Hero' (Phan Việt Dũng 2015).

intellectuals. (Lê Đức Hoàng 2015)”. These movements were smaller but still important as they were aimed at groups of people which were represented in society in substantial numbers. For the DRV government everyone was worth mobilizing. Mobilization of women was an important part of emulation movements which certainly deserves further research.

### **3. 10. Chinese and Soviet Aid and the Practical Efficiency of the Emulation Movements in Vietnam**

Although the DRV had to deal with wars and a multitude of serious crises and complications between 1946 and 1975, the overall resilience and determination of the Vietnamese people was undeniable. This was in part due to the success of emulation, though it is not clear just how important emulation was. This is not to say however that the Party did not struggle for support. In many cases, the communist leadership of the Viet Minh lost popular support especially after the Land Reform, which arguably showed to many the adverse consequences of their reliance upon Chinese advice and advisers. When natural conditions re-triggered famines, the DRV became reliant on its allies for aid (Olsen 1997, p. 33), which largely fed the cities from the late 1960s and eased pressures upon rural collectives to supply rice to the rest of the population.

Considering the efficiency of emulation movements in terms of real outcomes is complicated and can seem almost unachievable. Firstly, statistical data is often not available and when it is, it is often unreliable. Emulation may have partially contributed to the successes of Việt Minh, however, it is not possible to quantify it. The problem of quantifying the efficiency and results of emulation movements is also complicated by other factors, most notably Chinese and Soviet aid and their impact on this success.

Unfortunately, the statistical data on Chinese and Soviet aid is similarly as unreliable. As Jan Prybyla in his article wrote: “Any attempt to gauge the magnitude and composition of Soviet and Chinese economic assistance to North Vietnam since 1955 comes up against the problem of statistical secrecy” (Prybyla, 1966).

Chinese assistance started in 1950 and initially included military advice but since 1951, also included material assistance. Zasloff reports that between 1946 and 1954, Chinese support for the Việt Minh was estimated to constitute less than 20% of Việt Minh supplies. Even this however, resulted in a substantial contribution to the success of Viet Minh. The

supplies were mostly petroleum products and ammunition, and to a lesser degree arms and medical equipment (Zasloff 1967). Zasloff groups the types of support into psychological and ideological, diplomatic and political and military. In the ideological and psychological sphere, it was the win of Chinese Communists in 1949 and the arrival of Chinese soldiers at the Vietnamese Northern border. In the diplomatic and political sphere, it was a recognition of the DRV (USSR and the countries of Soviet Block followed) which allowed for international acknowledgement of Vietnamese sovereignty and related legitimacy for the Vietnamese fight for independence. Military assistance was both material and non-material: “The Chinese trained troops and supplied technical assistance, arms, ammunition, and equipment” (Zasloff 1967, pp. 18-19). Vietnam did not want to base its dependency on China only however, and many efforts went into negotiations with the USSR.

The Soviets were initially more hesitant to provide substantial aid for Vietnam, however, after 1954 they become more willing. Prybyla, enumerates Soviet aid between 1955 and 1965 to Northern Vietnam, as \$380 million on grants and \$452 million in credits, ‘a total of \$832 million’ in two decades<sup>79</sup> (Prybyla 1966, p. 93). These were not large numbers for the Soviets. As Marie Olsen puts it: “Soviet economic support for the DRV, in short, was very low key. The kind of assistance provided was identical to that given to other members of the socialist block, and by no means more important. It might even be that Soviet financial assistance to some non-socialist developing countries exceeded that given to the DRV (...)” (Olsen 1997, p. 53). Part of the reason for this was a change in Soviet politics in 1956 and Khrushchev’s strategy for a peaceful coexistence. However, even if the Soviets provided just an average assistance to Vietnam, together with the assistance of the Soviet block and China, their aid was an important source of help for the DRV.

In terms of the practical results of emulation in Vietnam, the Vietnamese leadership tried to create an image of ‘self-made success’ in order to gain popular support. However, without the contributions of Chinese and Soviet aid, both material and non-material, they would most probably not have been able to achieve such results which were a consequence of victory in war. What can be said, however, is that the resources devoted by the Party to emulation work, and the clearly important position of emulation in propaganda, shows us what the Party thought was important, what it thought the key problems were, and what they wanted their population to think suitable solutions were. Looked at in this way, we can use

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<sup>79</sup> Prybyla also notes that the equivalent aid of the US for Southern Vietnam was over \$200 million a year (in 1963).



study of these movements to investigate the Party's politics in relation to the population and specific sections of the population.

### **3. 11. A History of Emulation in Vietnam (1948-1975): Conclusions**

This chapter went through the history of Vietnamese emulation movements between 1948 and 1975.

Socialist emulation was a form of competition that Marxist-Leninist theory approved as a tool for building successful economic models while mobilizing masses for that purpose. In order to build prosperous economies, the Soviets attempted to build a 'new man', the Emulation Hero, who enthusiastically competes to achieve the best possible results and increases in production.

The Soviet Union's model in its general form as articulated by V. I. Lenin was adopted by many countries, including China and Vietnam. In Chapter 2, I discussed experiences in the Soviet Union and China, and in this chapter, I have focused on differences between the three countries. Without a doubt, the Soviet Union served as a foundational model for Asian countries, but emulation movements in China and Vietnam were shaped by local culture, politics and their Parties' assessment of the situation at a given time. In other words, the respective shapes of emulation were changing in all three countries throughout this time. It can be concluded that all three countries have both similarities (types of rewards, directed or genuine volunteerism, social mobility and promotions for the rewarded) and differences (level of socio-economic organisation and related focus on agriculture or industry, emulation from below vs. emulation from above, focus on technology, etc.). However, what is the most important for this thesis, with its focus upon VCP politics after the emergence of the market economy and globalisation in the early 1990s, is the different targets of emulation movements in Vietnam from 1948 to 1975.

Vietnamese emulation movements were born in a turbulent time of war with France (First Indochina Conflict, 1946-1954) and simultaneously, at a time when Vietnam was in a sort of international vacuum from both the Western countries and the USSR. It might seem surprising that the Soviet Union was not more interested in 'converting' Vietnam earlier, however its focus at that time was on Europe. This shifted in 1950 only indirectly, as the USSR gave China the task of looking after Vietnam. Despite this, this thesis suggests that Ho

Chi Minh and contemporary communist leaders in Vietnam gained a theoretical basis for emulation in his readings of Lenin's works whereas they gained more practical experience from Chinese advisors. Besides these influences, Vietnam seems to have been fairly self-dependent on starting and gradually shaping emulation movements within the perceived needs of the developing local communist regime. In 1945 we can start to see the launch of proto-emulation movements, which in 1948<sup>80</sup> came to be called emulation movements.

The first emulation movement in Vietnam had three main parts: 'Eliminate Hunger, Illiteracy and Invaders'. As we saw from later emulation movements, the number three is often used in the names of emulation campaigns as this number has a special symbolism in the Vietnamese context<sup>81</sup>. This thesis showed that the first three movements were easily implemented in Vietnam as similar practices were already happening before the introduction of emulation (cult of heroism, mobilisation within movements). Moreover, the first three movements were addressing the existential problems of the Vietnamese nation: it was necessary to address the problems of famine, illiteracy and French colonialism and these goals were not largely questioned, even if the question of how was contended by some. The movements started imprinting in society a notion of 'emulation', which was imported from Soviet Union and China. In Vietnam, this notion was readily connected to patriotism and Vietnamese traditional values.

The first important phase of emulation in Vietnam can be thus called the 'introductory phase'. Its main accomplishments rested in; a) in the ability to mobilise Vietnamese in the North to address the existential problems; b) labelling this mobilisation with a new name - 'emulation' ('thi đua'); c) at the same time using what people knew from the past, a 'patriotic tradition', to secure its acceptance; d) securing some support from China and USSR to ease up the problems and facilitate military help and the practical results which were related back to emulation.

Emulation movements in Vietnam in the late 1950s and early 1960s (up until 1964) marked another phase in which we observe some significant changes: a reduction in the focus on emulation in military areas coincided with the launch of the First Three and Five Years Plans. In this period, Vietnamese emulation focused primarily on an agricultural movement

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<sup>80</sup> Official proclamation of 'patriotic emulation' movement by Ho Chi Minh.

<sup>81</sup> Number three represents three major bases (jewels) of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma (Buddha's teachings) and Sangha (Buddhist Community). Number three is not only considered lucky but also important for a successful life and afterlife.

(‘Đại Phong’). Secondly, it focussed on industrial issues (‘Duyên Hải’) and educational matters (‘Bắc Lý’) movements, and only thirdly on military movements (‘Ba Nhất’). However, this does not mean that the movements of this period were not influenced by the conflict with the South. They were, and this time they were fuelled by conflict with the Republic of Vietnam, which was supported by the US. This increased after 1964 when US involvement changed with it directly entering the Second Indochina Conflict. But the balance at this time was more upon socialist construction.

The next phase can be called the ‘peak phase’ as movements of the early 1960s were more widespread and gained a form which was most similar to other communist countries. This is documented for example, by the increasing numbers of people rewarded at the Emulation Congresses in 1958 and 1962. The answer presented by the DRV government to the question of how to win a war, was structured in terms of agricultural progress followed by the development of an almost non-existent industry in Vietnam. Therefore, the main focus of the DRV was on collectivisation in agriculture and elsewhere and in bringing technology and science with needed innovation and mechanisation in agriculture. Đại Phong Cooperative was perhaps the most notable unit of emulation in this period. The geography here played an important role, and Quảng Bình Province was a particularly important area. It had connecting routes from the North to the South and was also one of the poorer provinces that suffered when exposed to harsh natural conditions. At the top, it bordered the Nghệ Tĩnh Province, an area of substantial Viet Minh influence. All of these factors contributed to the selection of Quảng Bình to represent an emulation model in agriculture in early 1960. Quảng Bình also later became the home of the emulation movement ‘Two excellent’, which was one of the two major movements of the Second Indochina Conflict after 1964. Another interesting aspect of Quảng Bình Province is that it was the birthplace of two figures representing two opposing forces, general Vo Nguyen Giáp and Ngô Đình Diệm. This symbolically expresses the division that was for Viet Minh and the new DRV government important to erase. The interest in Quảng Bình thus can be seen as a strategy of the VCP to gain support of the places that were both geographically and symbolically important. The question remains however, why Quảng Bình supported the DRV government and started to emulate in the first place? The above cited interview with the chairman of the Cooperative Nguyễn Văn Hoàng from 2012 can give us some clues as to how the government gained the support of the people of Đại Phong, including through the charisma of general Nguyễn Chí Thanh and through his personal approach as he ‘talked to all of the people from cooperative’. Another important

visitor was Ho Chi Minh who also sent a valuable present, a tractor, to the Cooperative. These things together suggest that the 'attention' given played an important part in the consequent support from the provinces.

The last phase had the imprint of renewed conflict and predominance of military mobilization. This phase in Vietnamese emulation movements can be called the 'regressive phase' as the development was slowed down as the war progressed. This regress eventually led to the 'dormancy phase' when emulation movements did not play an important role in Vietnam. That changed again in 1990s. This shift will be discussed in the next chapter.

Three emulation Congresses of 1952, 1958 and 1962 provided important occasions for exchange of information, evaluation of successes and shortcomings, as well as the propagation of emulation to a wider public. Those receiving awards at the congresses met with Ho Chi Minh and other important politicians and were praised personally for their achievements. Afterwards they travelled to recount their stories to other people, and they became generally respected and known. The fact that emulation movement in Vietnam started the tradition of National Congresses, was in itself important and signalled that emulation became a salient political tool. Institutions around emulation and the systems of organisation and administration around it, were built gradually from 1947 with the numerous reorganisations and changes in names signalling the lack of experience and efficiency of these institutions. Another interesting fact in Vietnam was the division between agendas of emulation and rewards. As we saw above, Ho Chi Minh determined many decisions about the concrete aspects of emulation movements in Vietnam. The same can be said about rewards; in a situation of war and overall financial deficiency, rewards were improvised, collected from donations or funds, and often they were very simple and had a form of diploma, ad hoc titles that carried the name 'Emulation Fighter', etc. After all, Vietnamese people were fighting for their country and as Ho Chi Minh assessed, that does not require large rewards as the largest reward was freedom from colonialism and prospects for a good socialist future.

## 4. Emulation Movements in Present-Day Vietnam

### 4. 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I focused on the history of emulation movements. Ho Chi Minh initiated formal emulation activities in 1948 with the aim of addressing three major problems in Vietnam: hunger, illiteracy and French colonialism. By 1954 he had largely delivered what he promised even though there had been substantial difficulties on the way, most notably Land Reform which damaged the reputation of the DRV government, however, not enough to trigger major opposition. Chinese and Soviet economic and military help was a substantial part of this success, though their support for national division in 1954 should be noted. By delivering promised results, Ho Chi Minh and the doctrine he represented (a somewhat pragmatic mixture of patriotism and communism) secured significant popular support. The mission, after 1954, was extended to protecting and building the independent Northern DRV and dealing with the Southern Republic of Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh passed away in 1969, yet what stayed was the charisma he represented. This loss of ‘moral grounds’ was the first challenge to the main sources of legitimacy of the communist regime in Vietnam. With the same appeal to patriotism, to the socialist path, and the need to fight the US in the war, future governments managed to sustain emulation until 1975 and a bit after. However, in a few years after the unification, the situation was to shift substantially: the strength of the patriotic appeal gradually faded as the major conflict disappeared, Vietnam was not divided anymore and neither France nor the US wanted to get involved in Vietnam again. The VCP had a big task ahead, to connect two very different parts of the country together. On top of it all, Vietnam lost the large levels of development and economic assistance from communist countries - first from China (from 1978) and then from the USSR (from 1985). Economic performance that backed the communist doctrine faded away through the 1990s, until powerful market-based development kicked in during the early 1990s, creating problems of governance and corruption, the latter of which was the main cause of the 1997 Thái Bình protests, which revealed considerable political tensions.

The solution for the crisis of the 1980s was a ‘green light’ for economic liberalisation in 1986 (Đổi Mới). The reforms in Vietnam were long needed and, eventually, they brought results. Vietnam experienced unprecedented growth and became ‘the Next Asian Tiger’, ‘The New Asian Miracle’ or ‘Poster Child for Economic Reform’ (Pincus 2015, p. 26; Pincus 2008, p. 29). Emulation movements initially stagnated simply because they were thought

irrelevant, until the market economy, which was a contra pole of emulation, took the lead in Vietnam. As we will see, in the late 1990s, the VCP realized that it needed to renew Ho Chi Minh's legacy and emulation movements. A new stage of emulation movements started in Vietnam.

This chapter will show how the VCP renewed its interest in emulation movements, marked culminating in the 2003 Law on Emulation and Rewards. 2006 started a new five-year emulation period. This chapter will introduce this new organisation of emulation movements, including funding, organs, and the question of voluntarism. A typology of the emulation in current Vietnam follows, created after I went through emulation movements in current Vietnam and inserted at the beginning of this chapter to make it easier for the reader to understand selected emulation movements in Vietnam. Selected movements and campaigns are thus presented as representing different types of emulation movements and were selected because they are the most important movements in present-day Vietnam. I will argue that analysis of this picture provides insights into the politics of the regime, returning to the theoretical issues discussed above (Chapter 1).

## **4. 2. Emulation Movements in Đổi Mới Period in Vietnam**

After the end of the Second Indochina War (1975), the DRV and the RV were in 1976 unified in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). Deployment of emulation movements seems to have become less important to the regime after reunification and were not used to manage the new and complicated situation of bringing together the northern and southern populations with their varied and different mentalities. Thus, when economic changes were launched in 1986, emulation movements were still present in Vietnam but had largely lost the attention of the Party and were kept in a dormant state. During the late 1980s the VCP greatly relaxed political controls over the population, and by the early 1990s Vietnamese were, for example, now largely free to have contacts with foreigners and, had far better access to information and were increasingly free to travel overseas. In the late 1990s the VCP officially called for a revision of this dormancy and since then resources and attention to emulation movements have reflected attempts to give emulation a new life, and familiar patterns of patriotic emulation re-entered the historical phase of renovation ('Đổi Mới').

In June 1998, the year after the Thái Bình protests, the Central Committee of the Party (CCOP) issued a Directive No. 35-CT/TW which described this 'dormancy phase' as follows:

“Looking back over half a century, we can affirm that the great achievements in building and defending the Fatherland in the name of the Vietnamese revolution in the last decades have been associated with the effective implementation and the organization of the Patriotic emulation movement at the national scale. However, in recent years, the leadership and direction of the Party towards emulation movements has been loosened. Emulation and rewards work has not yet become a strong mobilising force which would motivate and encourage all classes of people to wholeheartedly emulate the production, construction and protection of the country” (Directive No. 35-CT/TW, 1998).

To fix this problem, in the same Directive, the CCOM ordered a review of the previous 50 years of emulation and rewards and, based on this review, to launch a ‘Renovation’ (‘Đổi Mới’) for the new period. The focus should be, according to the CCOM, on the new leadership role of the Party and the new administrative role of the state in emulation; renovation of organisation, staff and agencies; renovation of the contents and forms of emulation; and developing a plan for a ‘dramatic change’<sup>82</sup> in emulation and rewards (Ibid.). To the end, the Party-state started to prepare a Law on Emulation and Rewards which was eventually promulgated in 2003.

### **4. 3. Law on Emulation and Rewards (2003)**

The Law in 2003 (‘Luật Thi đua, khen thưởng’) (Law on Emulation and Rewards, 2003) was divided into 8 Chapters and 103 Articles with some additional changes and revisions which were released in 2013 (Emulation and Reward Law Amendment, 2013).

The First Article states that emulation is a voluntary activity aimed at striving for the best results in construction and defence of the country. Chapter II on organisation and titles identifies three groups of emulators: individuals, collectives and families, with the respective highest titles: ‘National Emulation Fighter’, ‘Emulation Flag’ and ‘Cultural Family’ (Article 20). Chapter III contains all of the forms, objects and standards of rewards. This includes medals and orders (‘Huy chương’/ ‘Huân chương’); state honorary titles<sup>83</sup> (‘Danh hiệu vinh dự nhà nước’); Ho Chi Minh’s and State Awards<sup>84</sup>; Commemorative Medals and Badges (‘Kỷ

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<sup>82</sup> This change is in the following important Regulation No. 39 CT/TW from 2004 calling for ‘the great transformation’.

<sup>83</sup> For example: Vietnamese Heroic Mother, Hero of People’s Armed forces, Labour hero, Teacher of People and Merit-worthy Teacher, People’s Physician, Excellent Physician, People’s Artist, Eminent Artist, etc.

<sup>84</sup> That is - Ho Chi Minh Prize and State Prize.

niệm chương /Huy hiệu’); Diplomas or Certificates of Merit (‘Bằng khen’/ ‘Giấy khen’) (Articles 32-76). Chapter IV includes Articles on Competencies and Decision-making Procedures. This section identifies the individual leaders or agencies who can grant respective awards and individual leaders or agencies who can recommend a person, unit or family for an award. The submissions are handed up to the central level in so called dossiers (‘Hồ sơ’). Chapter V states the rights and obligations of individuals and collectives. Chapter VI is devoted to the administrative role of the state in emulation and rewards. This includes government, ministries, People’s Committees, the Supreme People’s Court and Procuracy, and Political and Socio-political organisations (that is, Mass Organisations). Chapter VII deals with violations and Chapter VIII specifies details of enforcement. An Emulation budget is mentioned in two articles - Article 11 specifies that the state should allocate adequate budget and also encourage individuals and Vietnamese and foreign collectives to contribute to Emulation and Rewards. These contributions are, in Article 94, to be paid into the newly-established Emulation and Rewards Fund (‘Quỹ thi đua, khen thưởng’) (Law on Emulation and Rewards, 2003).

As is often the case with Vietnamese Party and state documents, they contain revealing comments and analyses that explain the need for the law or directive. Thus the 2004 Directive (No. 39-CT/TW) whilst starting positively then at length lists negatives and shortcomings which need to be addressed, ranging from complaints about the lack of the leadership from Party Committees, uneven results, formality, slow progress and inconsistency. The tone is one that suggests major issues of disagreement within the Party-State of the value of emulation activities under the new conditions of a market economy and a far more open and globalising society.

Then, in 2014, after a further ten more years of efforts, Directive No. 34-CT/TW of the Politburo again re-evaluated progress in emulation movements and the same structure we read in the 2004 No 39-CT/TW is repeated, with a positive beginning praising the improvements followed by the same list of problems with very similar issues, adding ‘lack of motivation of individuals and collectives’. The document identifies the main cause of this situation as “the interest of the leadership, committees and Party and state organisations and the authorities at some ministries, sectors, localities, offices, units (...)” (Directive No. 34-CT/TW, 2014). To fix these problems, the Directive suggests increasing the responsibility of Party committees and individual leaders and strengthening of guidance (Ibid.).



A year later Hanoi hosted the IX National Patriotic Emulation Congress which affirmed this direction and the same content was inserted in the plan for Emulation in the period 2016-2020. Former PM Nguyễn Tấn Dũng at the Congress promoted the topic of the emulation for the upcoming period: “Unity, creativity, and emulation to build and protect the country”<sup>85</sup>.

The push for an overall plan for the renovation of emulation movements was repeated again in 2016 in a Directive of the new PM Nguyễn Xuân Phúc (Directive No. 18/CT-TTg, 2016). The areas that need to be improved are stated here as: renovation of contents and methods – diversification according to needs of localities. This section specifically states, that emulation movements should solve urgent problems and difficulties; better propaganda – emulation movements should be better propagated, new exemplary models have to be found; transparent and inclusive rewarding – rewarding needs to be transparent and timely and minorities in remote areas should be rewarded as well; and feedback – there needs to be regular review and evaluations of emulation movements. Reading this document against its predecessors, the picture gained is one where, whilst national Party structures push for emulation (and presumably are budgeted to do so), local politics shows a great lack of interest. The question is why, and this is discussed below.

The above-mentioned function of emulation movements in Vietnam (‘solving urgent problems and difficulties’) is in other Party resources emphasized again. For example, in the official journal of the Party, the *Communist Review*, we can read that: “emulation movement is an important tool for leadership and administration<sup>86</sup> of the country” (Nguyễn Thế Thắng 2012).

Alternatively, in an official booklet which informs the Vietnamese people about ‘what they need to know about patriotic emulation movements’, we can read: “These are the directions and orientations of patriotic emulation movements of our Party and State for nearly 70 years; It is the basis for the Party and State to supplement and perfect guidelines and policies on patriotic emulation, and emulation and commendation, in order to promptly respond to the requirements and tasks that each period brings” (‘Information You Need...’, 2015). These documents tell us about one of the functions of emulation movements: achieving practical results.

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<sup>85</sup> This can be read in the Directive which was issued a year later, in 2016 (Directive No. 18/CT-TTg, 2016).

<sup>86</sup> Administration (‘quản lý’) – the word Vietnamese people use for governing.

Most recently, in January 2018, another document was issued (Directive No. 22-CT/TW, 2018) on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ho Chi Minh's 1948 call for a patriotic emulation movement. This document calls for the mobilisation of cadres, Party members and the general population to promote the patriotic tradition, spirit of solidarity and self-reliance. Again, as we read in many official documents, the Party leadership encourages study of Ho Chi Minh's stated ideas on patriotic emulation (which can be accessed through official documents and propaganda). Better propaganda of Party policies on emulation is prescribed. Emulation should be practical and effective. The theme of emulation for 2016-2020 is repeated here: 'Solidarity, creativity and emulation of country construction and protection'. Patriotic emulation, 22-CT/TW states, should produce excitement through the whole country and many events should be planned for the Anniversary in March 2018 (Ibid.).

These documents are revealing. The problem of the efficiency of emulation movements is often mentioned in them. According to the official Party narrative (that of the VCP as a body), patriotic emulation movements need to be replicated and implemented more effectively given that the country faces many challenges of the period of innovation. They are a solution to stated problems. Through many official media outlets, as we written before, we read that emulation movements are "an important tool for leadership and administration (government) of the country" (Nguyễn Thế Thắng 2012).

If emulation is here defined as an important political tool of the regime, the documents' common theme of great problems in getting the Party-State apparatus in using it effectively is then deeply revealing. The issue of the efficiency of emulation as a tool for practical results will therefore be discussed in following chapters.

#### **4. 4. Organisational Aspects of Present-Day Emulation Movements**

As a political reality in Vietnam, this question has two possible answers, 'yes and no', but clearly the regime would like it to be 'yes', and secure that the population is willing to participate in emulation movements. However, in reality, it is more 'no' than 'yes'. Formally, the 2003 Law on Emulation and Rewards clearly states that emulation in Vietnam is voluntary and it is illegal to make someone participate against her or his will (Article 3 of the Law on Emulation and Rewards, 2003). On the other hand, there are many invisible and visible pressures on individuals to participate, which can be examined in various ways.

We can start with the Q&A from the brochure about the National Patriotic Emulation Congress from 2015 ('Information You Need...', 2015). This booklet, published by the Central Propaganda Department, is supposed to answer people's questions about patriotic emulation. Question No. 3 directly asks - what does it mean to say that patriotic emulation is the cause of the masses, the responsibility, obligation and interest of each citizen? The answer is in many ways revealing as to how 'voluntary' emulation is (and what the regime says to the population about this issue). In the answer we can read the following:

“(...) people who are patriotic are obliged to actively emulate and translate the guidelines and policies of the Party in practice”

And,

“Everyone is responsible for participation in patriotic emulation movement, promoting all resources to overcome the difficulties and challenges” (Ibid.).

For the post-1975 reunited Vietnam, with the southern population having quite different historical experiences from the north, given the experiences of the hardline communist period after 1975 and the chaos of the 1980s, not to mention the widespread and apparently entrenched corruption of the market economy, statements that patriotic Vietnamese will feel obliged to participate are not likely to have great power. On an everyday basis, there are many pressures on the Vietnamese to participate in emulation movements. For example, when a collective applies for a title of 'Excellent Labour Collective', then every worker in the unit is pushed to emulate. This is because if 100% of individuals in the collective fulfil their assigned tasks, and 70% reach the title of 'Advanced Labourer', only then can this collective be considered for the title (Article 27, Law on Emulation and Rewards, 2003).

The two statements above show that participation in emulation will often be tied to personal progress, insofar as it is influenced by relations with the Party-State, especially in state positions. For individuals with private businesses, it would seem easier not to emulate, yet again, because every individual needs a state, for example to obtain various licences, it is better to avoid problems and emulate at least 'on a paper'. Farmers who are not registered with the Vietnam Farmer's Union and do not emulate within the Union cannot gain some substantial advantages, for example loans for the development of their businesses (Võ Thành 2017). Participation is, to the extent that these forces are in play, pushed to occur for pragmatic reasons and calculations of personal advantage, rather than any emotional commitment.

Other motivation, however, which contributes to the voluntary participation it tied to the financial bonuses that are connected with respective emulation titles. This is related to the financial aspects of emulation movements.

#### **4. 4. 1. Financial Aspects of Emulation Movements**

Emulation movements in Vietnam are funded by a central so-called ‘Emulation and Reward Fund’ (‘Quỹ thi đua, khen thưởng’) which is, according to the Law on Emulation and Rewards (Article 94, Law on Emulation and Rewards, 2003) and Guidelines No. 91 ND/CP from 2017 formed on the basis of state budget, financed by contributions of individuals and organisations at home, foreign individuals and organisations and other sources (not specified).

The Emulation Funds at lower and sectoral administrative levels are set up differently. The source and dedication of the fund for different agencies varies. For example, for the ministries, the government, government agencies and People’s Supreme Court’s Emulation Funds are based on the state budget and their maximum level is 20% of the total local budget for salaries. In case of provinces, district, communes, their Funds are formed from the annual state budget of the local government with maximum spending equivalent to 1% of regular budget spending of the provinces in deltas and cities, and 1.5% of regular local budgets in mountainous provinces, the central area of Vietnam, the Central Highlands, and remote and isolated areas. Another potential source of funding for the Emulation Funds of provinces are domestic and foreign individuals and organisations (a likely source of graft). Emulation Funds of other entities (State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), Cooperatives, Vietnam Fatherland Front, Professional organisations, etc.) are formed differently again. Their Emulation Funds are managed by the relevant Emulation Agency (this usually means an Emulation and Rewards Committee) at a particular level in coordination with the financial agency of that level.

The Fund is intended to pay for printing of certificates, making medals, emblems, emulation flags, frames, and boxes; and for expenses for bonuses or gifts to individuals and collectives. 20% of the Fund at each administrative level goes into organising, directing, and summarizing of movements, propaganda and popularization, inspection, etc. Each type of title is connected to different financial bonuses, which are calculated based on the base salary. The highest title, that is ‘National Emulation Fighter’ is entitled to 4,5 times of her/his salary. At ministerial level it is 3 times salary and grassroots level 1 times salary. For collectives, the highest title of ‘Emulation Flag of the Government’ receives 12 times a base salary. Cultural

village or cultural street group obtains 1.5 times their base salary. It is worth remarking that salaries are rather low, and the value of positions in the Party-State (which can be bought if profitable) are, if high, due to corrupt earnings. Even larger bonuses are related to the medals and orders. A Gold Star, for example, brings 46 times the salary, and a Ho Chi Minh Medal 30.5 times salary. Ho Chi Minh Prize and State Prizes are attached to the highest bonuses, 270% and 170% respectively (Article 72). Article 75 names ‘other benefits’, which are further rewards to those who have received titles, rewards and bonuses, such as being prioritised in terms of salary raise, and priority in studies and professional skills training (Guideline No. 91/ND-CP, 2017).

The question is, how do we interpret these bonuses? On one hand, for poorer people these can be substantial rewards, on the other hand, for people in higher positions in the Party-State, in a market economy and with widespread corruption, riper fruit is elsewhere.

For better illustration of the financial aspects of emulation movements I will now provide an example of a national emulation movement (and concurrently a target program) ‘Building New Countryside’ (BNC) (details of the movement will be introduced later in this chapter, Section 4.7.4.). For now, it is important to know that the difference between target program and emulation movement is minimal, and they have the same budget.

The financing of the program comes primarily from credit. For example, in 2016, “the country mobilized VND 332,475 billion, of which VND 7,374 billion (2.2%) from central budget, 23,193 billion (7%) from local budget, 4.7% from other programs and projects, 78.3% from credit, 3.1% from enterprises, and 4.7% from people’s contribution” (Hoa Mai 2017). The same source states that: “in the period of 2011 - 2015, the total capital mobilized to implement the program reached VND 851,380 billion, of which VND 98, 664 came from the state budget, accounting for 11.6% (including VND 16.400 billion from the central budget, VND 82,264 billion from local budget) and 88.4% from various sources such as VND 434,950 billion from credit , VND 42,198 billion from businesses, VND 107,447 billion from communities and other sources, and VND 168,121 billion from other programs and projects implemented in rural areas” (Ibid.).

The 2010 Decision No. 800/QĐ-TTg elaborates on target program funding. The BNC draws money from diverse resources. The first source is already existing target programs, the second is a specific part of the state budget that officially supports the program, which should include funds raised from government bonds but that is ‘if there are any’. Third, at least 70%

of local budgets should be retained “from land use rights auction for allocation of land with land use levy payment or lease of land in communes (after subtracting expenses) for commune budgets (...)” (Decision No. 800/QĐ-TTg, 2010) This means that the local budgets for the BNC are in practice in large part funded by the rural population who has to purchase land use rights. Fourth, voluntary contributions of commune inhabitants, which, as we saw above, are relatively high. Five, investment from either Commune management boards or capable units with the participation of commune’s People’s Committees. Sixth, from non-refundable domestic or foreign aid. Seventh, from credit (Ibid.).

In terms of the overall financing of the BNC emulation movement, the rewards awarded are financed from the same source, the state budget contributed to the target program. These rewards are given for achieving the ‘New Countryside Standard’ (see Section 4.7.4.). For example, a commune that meets the standard receives a certificate of merit from the PM and welfare projects worth VND 1,000 million (\$40,000). Award of an Emulation Flag is rewarded with the same amount of money but with only 1 welfare project. A province which meets the New Countryside Standard, receives a Labor Medal of the First Class and welfare fund VND 30,000 million (\$1,200,000) (Part d/ Section IV. 1730/QĐ-TTg, 2016).

Entities such as schools also have their Emulation Funds. Consider for example Lê Hồng Phong of Communist Youth in Hà Tĩnh Province.<sup>87</sup> Based on the Financial Emulation report of the school, in 2016, the school had VND 28,731,000 (\$ 1,150) in its Emulation Fund. A plan for 2017 was VND 42,500,000 (\$1,700) (Emulation Report of the Le Hong Phong School, 2017).

There are various question marks around the funding of emulation movements in Vietnam as the information available is very scarce. The exact numbers on different movements were not find. On the other hand, whilst we can say that emulation rewards and bonuses may seem relatively high and as such perhaps provide a substantial incentive for participation, there is little corroborating evidence to conclude that this generates sufficient incentives to push for high levels of local ‘buy-in’ by the Party-State and population. The result is, as we see from the policy documents discussed above, there are ongoing complaints from the top about inefficiency.

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<sup>87</sup> The school had in 2006 20 classes, but the number of students is not available on the school website (Emulation Report of the Le Hong Phong School, 2017).

#### **4. 4. 2. Central Emulation Council and Committee**

Whilst the basic structures from the past stayed, many diversifications and changes were brought by the law and new circumstances. Formally, the highest organ of emulation is the Central Emulation Council ('Hội đồng Thi đua khen thưởng Trung ương'). The head of the Council is the Prime Minister and its members are representatives of the Party, ministries, and central-level Mass Organisations and Associations. This body meets only every six months when it evaluates the overall situation in emulation in the whole country and proposes the direction and tasks for the next 6 months. The Central Emulation Council is also responsible for monitoring and inspecting, and it is meant to control local emulation councils and the councils of central ministries, sectors and unions (Decision No. 168/QĐ-TTg).

The Central Emulation Committee ('Ban Thi đua Khen thưởng Trung ương') is a standing body of the Central Council for Emulation which works when the Council does not meet. The Central Emulation Committee is attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Among the main functions of the Committee are proposing drafts of laws and regulations to the National Assembly, proposing strategies, plans, and national target programs, and creating long term plans (5-year plans). The Committee also coordinates between Ministries and People's Committees and central-level Mass organisations and inspects them. Another responsibility is to evaluate and archive dossiers (ho so) sent from localities and which contain applications for an emulation title and reward. The Central Emulation Committee is in charge of the central Emulation Fund, it prepares physical rewards, creates training contents on emulation and in general coordinates propagandization of emulation (Decision No. 59/QĐ-TTg).

In terms of organisation, emulation movements are divided according to administrative levels in Vietnam (central and local levels) but simultaneously also according to who launched them (agencies, organisations or individuals). These divisions will be elaborated in greater detail later when I present a typology of emulation movements in Vietnam. Units of emulation, that is those who emulate and can receive Awards, are individuals, collectives and families, and it is these who can receive titles and rewards. The large category of 'collective' includes many types of groups, for example: working

collectives, cooperative, mass organisations, communes, districts, cities, provinces, blocks and clusters<sup>88</sup>, schools, companies, etc.

Today's emulation is organised in two main streams, ongoing emulation ('Thi đua thường xuyên') and topic-based emulation ('Thi đua theo chuyên đề'), often called emulation according to the task ('Thi đua theo đợt'). Ongoing emulation is it seems understood as the everyday emulation of individuals or collectives aimed at successful fulfilment of everyday work. Emulation according to the topic or wave is emulation which has one specific task which should be fulfilled in a certain period of time and reported on as such. As there are many agencies and many levels which can launch emulation movements based on their concrete conditions, the number of emulation movements is large, especially because the term 'emulation movement or campaign' is used rather loosely.

I found a model diagram of how to organize emulation movement in the new period, published at the Ministry of Home Affairs' Institute for State Organizational Sciences ('Bộ Nội vụ', 'Viện Khoa học tổ chức nhà nước'). The diagram shows the main normative stages of emulation movement organisation. Emulation Councils at various levels create an emulation movement plan based on the urgency of the relevant political tasks, and the concrete conditions of the locality. The plan contains a characterisation of goals and how to achieve them, a time frame, the relevant resources and an implementation guide. The movement is then implemented, emulation agreements signed, tables of points created, and guidelines written. The process is inspected and at the end there should be a summary and drawing of lessons from the experience (Phạm Huy Giang 2015).

I now present a typology of emulation movements to suit my analysis in the next Chapter.

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<sup>88</sup> A special organisational unit of emulation in Vietnam, which is relatively new is an emulation cluster ('Cụm thi đua') and block ('Khối thi đua'). They differ in size depending on different administrative levels, at the level of commune and district are clusters, that is a group (more than 5 units) of communes or a group of districts, usually grouped together based on geography and other similarities. At the level of province and provincial cities, there groupings are called blocks. Not only administrative units are divided in clusters and blocks, also mass organisations, schools and other units. For example, Da Nang City in July 2017 had 57 blocks and clusters subscribed for emulation, the list is available online at: <http://tdkt.danang.gov.vn/dangky.asp>. Emulation clusters and blocks sign an emulation contract ('giao ước thi đua') in which they agree to fulfil together some goals. Organisation in clusters is not without criticism as often the units in cluster or block are not similar enough. For details see for example discussion in Lao Dong Newspaper about problems of blocks and clusters in education sector: <http://laodong.com.vn/ban-doc/cum-khoi-thi-dua-o-nganh-giao-duc-vo-bo-hinh-thuc-608552.bld>



## 4. 5. Typology of Emulation Movements in Present-Day Vietnam

Since there was no any other attempt to categorize emulation movements in current Vietnam (nor I know about such an attempt for China or Soviet Union), I introduce here the main divisions that I use in this thesis to help in the analysis of differences in the movements selected for analysis. This section also serves as an overview of existing movements and campaigns in Vietnam since 2006 (the start of the new five-year emulation period). After that I will choose several important examples of emulation for description and analysis. This thesis does not attempt to introduce a complete list of movements and campaigns. The reason is that the number of movements in Vietnam is overwhelming. As I reported above, each locality can now create its own movement or campaign ‘depending on local needs and conditions’ based on the general regulations of the Party-State. There are also different organisations and agencies that can ‘use their creativity’ to develop campaigns and movements. Without access to official records it is not therefore possible to have a complete list.

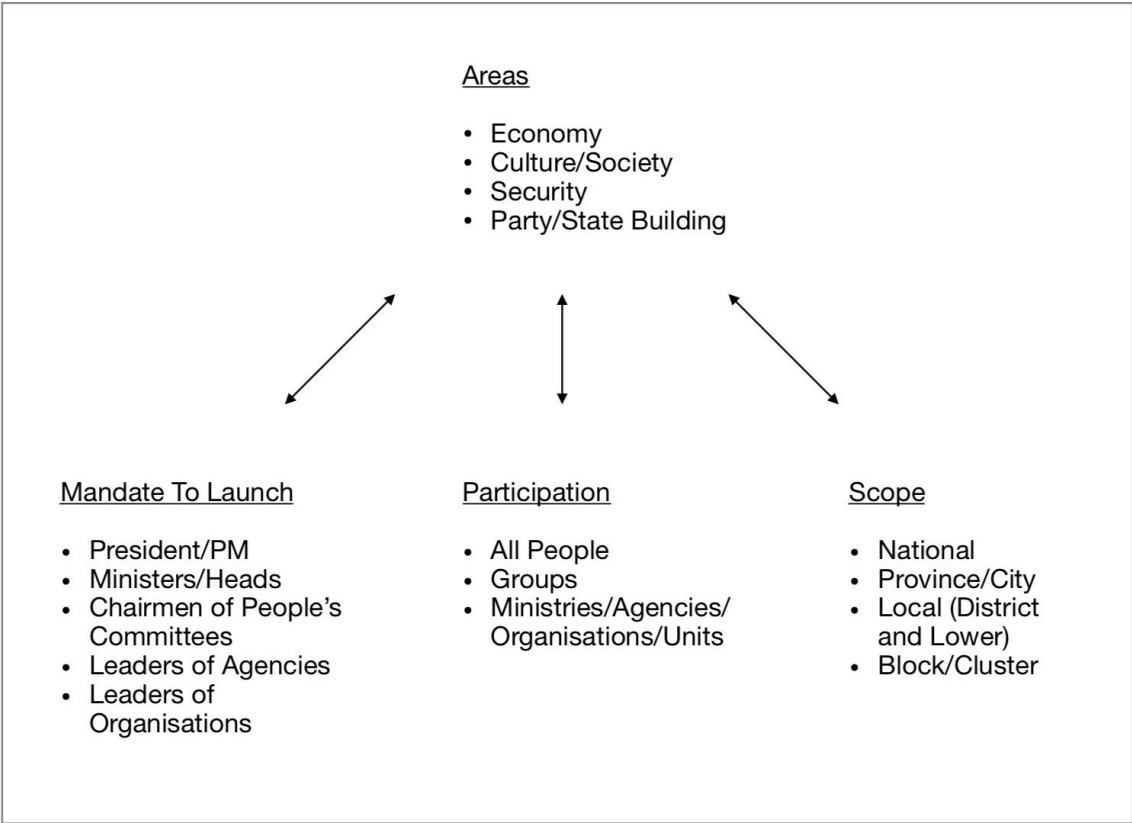
I find some basic divisions activities between emulation that can be organised in categories as follows

First of all, though, what so I mean, for analytical purposes, by current emulation movements? By ‘current’, one definition would be to refer to emulation movements ‘in the new period’, and in Vietnam this often means after *Đổi Mới* in 1986. But whilst many of these movements have some roots in historical movements in Vietnam, the VCP has clearly tried to renew the contents and forms to suit the new situation. What is that new situation? Here the nature of emulation movements as solutions to stated problems provides insights. Yet, whilst in Vietnamese leader’s eyes much is made of the presence of a market economy, for an outside observer there is more to it: the absence of war and conflict, problems with China, a decline of ideology, the inner problems of the Party related to decentralisation, discipline and hierarchy, more vocal and demanding society, corruption etc.

As much as the boundary between the Party and state in Vietnam is blurred, the question of who originated which movement in Vietnam is also usually rather unclear, and in fact, does not seem to be important. The Party-state often operates as a single entity (Thayer in Kerkvliet and Porter(eds.), 1995). Each 5 years the Party establishes a general political line at a National Congress of the Party. The Central Emulation Council and its standing body the Central Emulation Committee prepare emulation strategies, plans, national target programs

and policies and laws for the next 5 years based on Party guidelines and the 5-year socio-economic plan. Each 5-year plan usually has one (or a few) large complex national emulation movements, a few more focussed and simpler national movements, and a large number of movements from sectors (industries), mass-organisations, state or party agencies, at both central and local levels of the country. On this basis, it is useful to appreciate that there are several divisions that can be drawn from the Vietnamese sources (Law on emulation, regulations, and various electronic resources, i.e. website of Central Committee for Emulation and Rewards).

Typology: Emulation Movements in Vietnam



It is useful to appreciate that there are several divisions that can be drawn from the Vietnamese sources (Law on emulation, regulations, and various electronic resources, i.e. website of Central Committee for Emulation and Rewards), and that it is most useful to categorise movements into ‘problem areas’ where these are understood to be areas *identified*

*as such by the Party/State.* I then divide emulation movements in Vietnam according to four such broad areas (lĩnh vực):

1. Development of Economy (industry, agriculture, finance, cooperative economy)
2. Culture and Society (education, science and technology, healthcare, social security, mass media, sport)
3. Security (national defence, security, internal and foreign affairs)
4. Party and State building, including administrative reform (strong political system and Party, uncorrupted effective government)

With problem areas thus defined, the agencies responsible for deploying emulation as solutions can be easily read into the official documents. This leads to a pattern of three: First, a division based on different administrative and organisational levels (that can both launch and participate):

- a) national
- b) province, city
- c) local (district and lower)
- d) block or cluster (special units that exist within administrative units or organisations (cum/cluster is based on similar geographical, economic and social similarities, for example cluster of provinces, whereas block is based on similarities in functions and tasks, for example block of ministries), clusters and blocks sign an agreement for a period of time in which they set their emulation goals (tables of points).

Second, a division according to the authority who can launch a movement or campaign:

- a) President or Prime Minister
- b) Ministers, Heads of ministerial-level agencies, government attached agencies, leaders of committees (ban), sectors (nganh)
- c) Chairmen of People's Committees at local levels
- d) Leaders of agencies (co quan), organisations (to chuc) and units (don vi) cơ quan, tổ chức, đơn vị
- e) Vietnam Fatherland Front, mass organisations, socio-political organisations and socio-professional organisation

And third, a division according to the different groups of people who emulate:

- a) All people (society)

- b) Groups of people within mass organisations, professional organisations, others (women, workers, farmers, cadres and civil servants, education staff, army, police, youth, veterans)
- c) Ministries, agencies, organisations, units

Not only Prime Minister and President can launch the emulation movement for the national level (‘phạm vi cả nước’), also Ministries, the VFF and other organisations can.

This basic logic is very similar to that proposed by Ho Chi Minh and discussed above (Chapter 3 Section 3.7.): define the problems, develop solutions, allocate tasks to defined entities. What seems lacking is the assessment of results.

## **4. 6. Examples of the Important Emulation Campaigns and Movements since 2006<sup>89</sup>**

Emulation in Vietnam and the movements are usually implemented in 5 year periods but often, the large movements cover more than one 5-year period. This process is usually described as the ‘strengthening’ (‘đẩy mạnh’) of an emulation movement. In the new 5-year period, movements which continue often slightly change the names. In 2006, national movements were launched by the then Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng. He was Prime Minister for 10 years, and after considerable political conflict within the Party was not re-appointed during the 2016 National Congress of the Party and was replaced by Nguyễn Xuân Phúc. Majority of movements from all three periods up to now was launched during Nguyễn Tấn Dũng’s leadership.

### **4. 6. 1. ‘All People’ Emulation Movements**

‘All people’ emulation movements are emulation movements which are targeted at the whole country and are thus national-level movements and the largest movements in Vietnam.

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<sup>89</sup> Since there are hundreds of emulation movements in Vietnam since 1975, this thesis is limited to the last three emulation periods. Year 2006 is a start of a 5 year emulation period (2006-2010). The next two periods are (2011-2015) and (2016-2020). Current period is thus running. These three periods best represent the current shape and organisation of emulation as it was imprinted by the Law on Emulation and Rewards from 2003 (amended 2013).

Their names are usually initiated either with ‘All people’ (‘toàn dân’), ‘Whole country’ (‘cả nước’) or ‘The Vietnamese people’ (‘người Việt Nam’). Since 2006, Vietnam has seen several movements of this type, and all of them still exist. Some of the movements started prior to 2006 but continued through 2006 until now. For example, the movement ‘All people unite to build a cultural life’ was initiated in 1991 but still exists. As a socio-cultural movement this movement pursues changes in people’s behaviour, including for example how families live their lives inside their houses or organize their funerals and weddings. The emulation topic of the Cultural Family is described below. Another such example is a movement ‘Vietnamese people prefer to use Vietnamese products/goods’ (‘Người Việt Nam ưu tiên dùng hàng Việt Nam’). This campaign was launched in 2000 to support the domestic economy and is still present in the list of emulation movements in Vietnam. In 2005, the PM issued a Decision which established a Day (19/8) of ‘All people protecting national security’ (‘Toàn dân bảo vệ an ninh tổ quốc’). This developed into a movement which still exists and which will be discussed later in this chapter. Another campaign for the whole society which was launched in 2006 ‘was Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Example’ (‘Học tập và làm theo tấm gương đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh’) which does not contain ‘all people’ in its name. However, as it is covered by a Politburo document (Resolution No. 06 CT/TW), it is aimed at everyone (though Party members, cadres and civil servants are targeted primarily). This campaign still continues in 2018 and will also be discussed in detail below. ‘All people together build a new countryside’ (‘Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng nông thôn mới’) from 2011 is perhaps the most complex movement in Vietnam currently. This has the stated aims of reducing the gap between the cities and countryside in many ways, including improvements in infrastructure, governance, family life, education, healthcare, etc. This movement will also be discussed below.

#### **4. 6. 2. Examples of the Movements for Different Groups of People: Women, Farmers, Youth**

In Vietnamese society, different groups of people are prescribed certain roles by the Party/State. Without rights of free association, people in Vietnam are grouped into the official Mass Organisations (Women’s Union, Farmer’s Union, Youth Organisation, War Veterans Association and Worker’s Organisation – Trade Unions) and professional associations, for example lawyers, journalists, writers, entrepreneurs, artists, etc. At every level, there are local unions and associations who can again create their own campaigns and movements. These

organisations are ‘directly-led’ by the Party which organises cells within them and expects them actively to support implementation of Party policy.

This section discusses three examples of central-level Mass Organisations: women, farmers and youth.

Historically, in emulation movements in Vietnam, women traditionally played many supportive functions, including taking care of family, production during war time. Women often also had supportive functions in combat. In today’s Vietnam, formal political structures tend to ensure that women retain their supportive and labor roles together with somewhat traditional positions in family affairs. For example, the Vietnam Women’s Union (‘Hội Liên hiệp phụ nữ Việt Nam’) launched a movement ‘Women actively study, work with creativity and build happy family’ (‘Phụ nữ tích cực học tập, lao động sáng tạo, xây dựng gia đình hạnh phúc’). As the title advises, the movement has three main components: women should learn, work and build happy families. As the Q&A on the website of the Union advises, women should learn Party Policies, the Party line, laws, regulations; they should follow Ho Chi Minh’s moral example;<sup>90</sup> and study revolutionary ideals; additionally, they should practice so called ‘qualities of women’ which are specified as self-confidence, loyalty and honesty; and lastly, they should practice family and life skills and learn about gender equality (‘Emulation Movement Women...’, 2017). There are obvious tensions between these ideas and what the Vietnamese population experiences in the rapidly evolving market economy and through access to increasingly diverse international and domestic sources of information.

In terms of creative labor, there are four different sets of prescriptions for different groups of women - female farmers, female civil servants, female managers, business and small businesswomen.<sup>91</sup> Building a happy family means that women should create harmony in their families and make sure that the members of the family have their responsibilities, fulfil their roles as citizens and make positive contributions to family, community and society. A Happy family is also a criterion, meaning that it is normatively defined and such norms articulated and propagated by the Women’s Union, and as such it is tied to two other sets of

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<sup>90</sup> A national movement which includes the study of Ho Chi Minh’s writings, values and ideas, see Section 4.7.1 below.

<sup>91</sup> For example, female farmers are supposed to apply science and technology in production, implement the prescription of the movement ‘Building New Countryside’, be initiative at work and ensure clean production (hygiene, food safety, protection of environment). For female businesswomen, the stated norms mean trading according to the law, improving product quality, creating jobs, creating trademarks of Vietnamese goods, and paying taxes (‘Emulation Movement Women...’, 2017).

emulation criteria from two other movements: ‘Family of 5 no’s and 3 cleans’<sup>92</sup> (‘Gia đình 5 không, 3 sạch’) and ‘Cultural Family’ (‘Gia đình văn hóa’).

Farmers in Vietnam are associated in the official Farmer’s Union (‘Hội Nông Dân Việt Nam’). This Union launched a number of movements with the stated goals of improving farming methods, reducing poverty and contributing to rural development. The ‘Farmer’s movement emulating production, successful business, and unite to help each other to sustainably increase the wealth and reduce poverty’ (‘Phong trào nông dân thi đua sản xuất, kinh doanh giỏi (SXKDG), đoàn kết giúp nhau làm giàu và giảm nghèo bền vững’) supports agriculture and forestry projects, creation of jobs, training courses, development of breeding, cultivating, and support to cooperatives, including loans to the farmers to invest in their business, for example to buy fertilisers, machinery, etc. (Võ Thành, 2017). These advantages are available only to members of the Union which provides incentives for them to register. Another farmer’s movement is ‘Farmers emulate building of the new countryside’ (‘Nông dân thi đua xây dựng nông thôn mới’) which is a sub-movement of the already mentioned national movement. Another example is ‘Farmers participate in national defense and security’ (‘Nông dân tham gia bảo đảm quốc phòng - an ninh’). This movement is also a part of the large national security movement mentioned above. The goals of the movement are to cooperate with the police towards better security, and includes learning about ‘peaceful evolution of hostile forces’<sup>93</sup> (‘diễn biến hòa bình của các thế lực thù địch’), participation in patrols, cleaning roads, propaganda seminars, legal seminars, helping to settle disputes, dealing with crimes<sup>94</sup>, forming village security groups and militia, or implementing policy on the army reserve<sup>95</sup> (‘chính sách hậu phương quân đội’) (Tiến Dũng 2016).

The largest and best known socio-political organisation in Vietnam is that for young people, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union (‘Đoàn Thanh niên Cộng sản Hồ Chí Minh’). Together with the Student’s Association (‘Hội sinh viên Việt Nam’) and under Party leadership they organize emulation movements such as ‘Strike, voluntarily towards the

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<sup>92</sup> The Five No’s mean: no hunger; no transgression of laws and no social evils; no domestic violence; no third child; and no malnutrition and no to children passing on school. Three clean’s means clean house, kitchen and laneway (‘Campaign Building Cultural..’, 2017).

<sup>93</sup> ‘Peaceful evolution’ is a term allegedly developed originally during the Cold War. Currently it is used by China, Vietnam and other countries to express the idea, that capitalist regimes try to undermine socialist regimes by ‘peaceful means’, particularly by implanting Western ideas, lifestyle and political style in socialist societies (Ong 2007). For details in Vietnam, see Pham Van Son (2015).

<sup>94</sup> See the article on the website of Vietnam Farmer’s Union that mentions for example Mr. Nguyễn Văn Năm from Hoàng Phụ Commune who directly participated in an investigation related to theft of motorbikes and drug crimes (Tiến Dũng 2016).

<sup>95</sup> This could be also translated as ‘rear army’, or alternatively, ‘army backup’.

development of economy and society and national defense’ (‘Xung kích, tình nguyện phát triển kinh tế - xã hội và bảo vệ Tổ quốc’); ‘Accompany the youth in learning, starting a career and business’ (‘Đồng hành với thanh niên trong học tập, khởi nghiệp và lập nghiệp’); or Volunteering students (‘Sinh viên tình nguyện’). Youth is historically an important group which the Party seeks to mobilise. This engages with issues of ‘filial piety’ in Vietnam: as Ho Chi Minh put it: “Youth need to be the leaders and examples of patriotic emulation movement. They have to implement the motto: Anything the Party needs the youth has, anything that is difficult, the youth does” (Ho Chi Minh, cited in Phan Thị Quỳnh Hoa, 2018).

#### **4. 7. Selected National and Local Level Movements in Present-Day Vietnam**

The following section discusses selected emulation movements of types which serve as individual case studies. The selected movements reflect current issues that somehow challenge Vietnamese leadership, and are defined by the leadership as problems that emulation should be able to solve. These are, as we shall see, corruption and degradation of ideology; increasing gaps between rich and poor; environmental damage; education; and the relationship with China. Considering these issues are creating (in the different degrees) challenges to the Party, we will look at the respective emulation movements and how they reflect these problems.

A special attention will be put on ‘patriotism’ which is interwoven in all of the emulation movements. Selected emulation movements are thus divided according to the areas on: Party and ideology; Education; Countryside; Environment; and Security. Concurrently, the selected movements are also three largest national movements. In the case of the smaller movements or sub-movements, I include those, representative of movements for different groups of people (party members, women, police, youth, teachers, students, etc.)

Most recently, at the national level (phạm vi cả nước), Vietnam currently has two *complex* movements which are at the local levels split up into in many smaller *targeted* movements. It also has one movement which is national but is less complex: security movement.

The two complex movements are: 1. ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Min’s Moral Example’ (‘Học tập và làm theo tấm gương đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh’) and 2. ‘Building New Countryside’ (‘Xây dựng nông thôn mới’). Both of them originated at the top organs of the



Party, either Politburo or Central Committee but were launched by the President or Prime Minister. These movements are split up into smaller targeted movements (or campaigns) by state agencies, usually Ministries, sectors or areas, ‘ngành’ or ‘lĩnh vực’<sup>96</sup> in Vietnamese) or alternatively, also by the Mass Organisations. These two movements are somehow qualitatively different from other larger whole-national movements. How are they different? There are two main reasons that appear to distinguish them from other national movements. First, they are highlighted in Vietnamese sources as being of primary importance and second, they are complex as they relate to at least two broad areas of emulation in Vietnam. For example, ‘Building new countryside’ is related to many problems of emulation in Vietnam, i.e. economy, culture, security and government at the countryside. ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s moral example’ is primarily in the area of Party-state building but it links to other areas, mainly culture, society and economy in a broader sphere of ideology.

Vietnam has other important movements at the national level, but they are more narrow and targeted. For example, the security-oriented movement ‘All people unite to protect the security of the Fatherland’ and its sub-movements can be clearly categorized in Security area. Despite all three of the just-mentioned movements being national movements launched by the Prime Minister, they differ slightly. Vietnamese sources often sub-categorize smaller movements under the two complex movements rather than divide movements in the four broader areas, that means, that Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Example and Building New Countryside have many related movements.

#### **4. 7. 1. ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Example’ (SFHE)**

Ho Chi Minh in today’s Vietnam is in official propaganda given the highest importance and is an embodiment of ‘great moral values’ which is in Vietnamese official terms labelled as ‘revolutionary ethics/morality’ (‘đạo đức cách mạng’). Linking the decision to a Resolution of the Party Congress from 1991, in 2003 after emulation had been revived from its ‘dormancy’ (see below) the VCP started a movement ‘Following Ho Chi Minh’s

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<sup>96</sup> Vietnam currently has ‘multisector/area Ministries’. Before 1986, the term sector was understood in a narrow sense, for example metallurgy, chemical, textile, etc. After that, sector was understood as derived from the type of industry, for example heavy industry, light industry, agriculture, commerce, etc. Area is also understood in a broader sense and usually refers to a distinction between material production and cultural or spiritual areas. Most recently the general view on this problem seems to be that sector is related to industries with a dominance of economic activity (transport, construction) whereas area is related to social activities (education, culture, internal affairs, diplomacy). However, today they are often call both sectors (Dương Quang Tung 2010).

moral example'. In 2006 the VCP then launched a campaign called 'Following Ho Chi Minh's moral example'. Each year after that, a concrete topic for the year was introduced. The yearly 'topics' reflect pieces of Ho Chi Minh's moral thoughts collected from his writings and other recorded materials.

Revolutionary morality emerged as a Party focus during the struggle for national independence and it is based on stated and propagandized norms of patriotism and sacrifice for independence and freedom. Ho Chi Minh, in these accounts, promoted many values that became tenets of revolutionary morality: love for the country and nature, community, unity, solidarity, self-sacrifice, hard work, resilience, or learning. Later, in the period of 'renewal', new values were added: "These are new moral qualities, socially progressive, such as; being dynamic, creative, dare to think, dare to do, dare to take responsibility, be determined to overcome difficulties, create wealth, unite to help each other to develop, build cultural life... These two resources are creating a system of social morality prevailing today" ('Strengthening Studying and following...', 2007).

### ***Continuous Revolution and Degradation of Morality***

As a revolutionary regime, the VCP and its adherents hold revolution in awe and uses it and its image as a source of legitimacy. It is clear that this was in some sense authentic, though not for all Vietnamese, a revolutionary period generated sentiments that are still alive in Vietnam. A sense of being proud of what Vietnam achieved during the struggle for independence is still very strong, though links between this and the Party's narrative are complex and not uncontested. In Vietnamese official political narratives, however, revolution never ends, it just goes through different phases. The current phase is a phase of 'Renewal' which meets the new challenges. It is clear from the stated goals of emulation work that with the opening of the country to market forces and international environment, traditional morality was in the eyes of the Party degrading. This is where and why the specific issue of 'morality' comes in as an important part of current propaganda.

With the economic changes after *Đổi Mới*, Vietnam was set on the journey of 'opening'. The renewal of Party-sponsored interest in Ho Chi Minh's Thought should be read as an attempt to counterbalance the new elements that could be perceived by the Party as potentially harmful to the regime, increased 'capitalist forms of competition' creating different types of 'social evils' ('Tệ nạn xã hội'), 'corruption' ('tham nhũng'), individualism

(‘chủ nghĩa cá nhân’), etc. As the Politburo Directive written on the occasion of the official opening of the Campaign in 2006 states: “This is an urgent policy in the context of current situation which has importance for both national construction and national protection”<sup>97</sup> (Directive No. 06 CT/TW).

Thus, in the VCP documents, we find that issues of morality and its degradation have an urgency. According to the materials published on the website of the Party’s College of Information Technology of Vietnam-Korean friendship on yearly topics of FHCMME, in the 2007 material the moral decline is identified as follows:

“The degradation of morals and lifestyle of officials and Party members has the following major forms: firstly, individualism, selfishness, pragmatism (...). Secondly, corruption, bribes and waste (...), which have become a national disaster (...). Despite the Party, state and people over the past several years being determined to take many measures to prevent and limit these dangers, they persist, and at some areas, they even increase. Thirdly, bureaucracy, distance from the people, indifference to difficulties and urgent matters and needs (...) which lowers the trust of the public in the leadership of the Party and trust in administration [governing] of the country. (...) Fourthly, lack of honesty and [presence of] opportunism, ‘run’ for personal benefit, i.e. personal performance, position of power (...). Fifth, ‘talking does not go hand in hand with doing’ [false promises] and with the resolutions of the Party. Talking a lot but not doing much. That causes dissatisfaction among people and public mistrust. Sixth, moral decline in the family relationships and relationships between individuals within society. Problem of family disputes over property, abuse of parents or grandparents (...). Life without enjoyment, nostalgia, idealism (...). Some officials, Party members and civil servants gamble at a worrying level. Seventh, professional ethics declines and even in the areas like health, education, law protection, press (...)” (‘Strengthening Studying and following...’, 2007).

This public statement, like many others in the same vein, articulates the problems the Party sees itself as actually facing today. Thus, first, the Party admits that it has serious issues with the control of its own members, the degradation of ideology, inefficient government and a general lack of solutions to the problems. This ‘moral’ degradation, which is in Vietnam is labelled as ‘moral evils’ is a substantial problem as it has an impact on legitimacy of both the

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<sup>97</sup> Original: ‘Đây là một chủ trương lớn, vừa mang tính cấp bách trong bối cảnh tình hình hiện nay, vừa có ý nghĩa lâu dài đối với sự nghiệp xây dựng và bảo vệ Tổ quốc’.

Party and the doctrine that the Party promotes. Emulation is presented as a solution to these problems and is organised by the Party-State itself to address them. As we saw though from the discussion of criticisms within Party documents above, central leaders are far from satisfied with the effectiveness and commitment to emulation activities of lower levels.

### *Legitimacy Challenge*

Perhaps the crucial aspect of why the Ho Chi Minh campaign was started and continues is a ‘problem’ that persists and was clearly stated in the 2012 Resolution<sup>98</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party: ‘Some urgent issues of building of the Party today’. This Resolution reflected on the limits of Party building and the dangers connected to these limits. The Resolution emphasizes that the weaknesses in Party building persist despite efforts to address them, and because it has taken too long to overcome them this lowers the confidence of people in the Party. “If this will not be fixed it will cause challenges for the Party leadership and even the existence of the regime” (Resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party, 2012).<sup>99</sup>

The Resolution later identifies further reasons the situation in three areas: In the first one, the document mentions a lack of training of cadres and their irresponsibility -cadres are less willing to fight. Furthermore, regulations of the Party and state are not applied with discipline. In the second area, the document mentions problems with organisation and supervision. According to the Resolution, principles of democratic centralism, self-criticism and criticism in many places are very loose and there are no basic standards for inspection and supervision. Furthermore, the amendments and promulgation of political norms and laws in the socialist market economy is not timely. On top of it, evaluation of cadres is lacking mechanisms to detect talented people (who are morally strong), and also, there is an absence of resolute replacement of those who violate the rules. In the third area, the document mentions that propaganda, political education, ideology, ethics and the right lifestyle are still too formal, mistakes and violations are not punished, and people’s supervision through the Vietnam Fatherland Front is still ineffective (Ibid.). This starts to suggest that Party leaders

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<sup>98</sup> ‘Nghị quyết hội nghị lần thứ 4 Ban chấp hành Trung ương Đảng khóa XII’.

<sup>99</sup> The Resolution was published in Government Newspaper online. Available at: <http://baochinhphu.vn/Tin-noi-bat/Nghi-quyet-Hoi-nghi-Trung-uong-4-Mot-so-van-de-cap-bach-ve-xay-dung-Dang-hien-nay/125067.vgp>; Original: ‘(...) nếu không được sửa chữa sẽ là thách thức đối với vai trò lãnh đạo của Đảng và sự tồn vong của chế độ’.

increasingly face a reality when emulation activities suffer from general systemic problems present throughout the regime, made more intense by the references within them to foundational issues such as Ho Chi Minh, morality, and the Party-led struggles to secure national independence.

The VCP, thus, identifies its problems and concludes that strong change in the Party is necessary. As a most important issue listed is to fight and prevent the degradation of political ideology, morals and lifestyle of large number of cadres and the Party members, it is crucial to improve leadership capacity and strength of the Party and have a trust of Party members and people towards the Party. This picture starts to challenge the claims coming from Levitsky and Way, that Communist Parties do not care about political engagement with their people because they can simply coerce them whenever they want. What we learn from the analysis of emulation activities is that the VCP does seem to care about its legitimacy.

The Resolution also identifies the causes of this situation: “Because the economic reforms must have been done and at the same time the experience was learned as we proceeded, we have not fully anticipated the adverse impact of market mechanisms and international integration. In particular, we lack mechanisms and policies to actively prevent these violations” (Ibid.). Despite wrapped in criticism of the market economy, here the VCP seemingly identified the problem it faces: ineffective tools for government (Ibid.).

### ***SFHE: National Movement***

There are many real issues of corruption which challenge the Party and damage legitimacy. Corruption affairs are many in Vietnam but perhaps the most damaging ones are those which directly affect farmers, related to land rights issues. The Thái Bình protests of 1997 were reported as caused by the rural populations’ willingness to take on and combat corrupt local officials (Abuza 2001, p. 83).

Land in Vietnam is formally owned by ‘the people’, and so the state, and it is not allowed to privately own land, however, part of Đổi Mới reforms was that agricultural land use rights were transferred from collectives to individual households – as land holders Vietnamese gained rights to sell, rent, exchange and mortgage their plots.<sup>100</sup> A contemporary

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<sup>100</sup> The first Land Law in Vietnam was adopted in 1988, however, the above listed ‘land use rights’ came with the Law in 2003 (Hansen 2015).

incident is illustrative of the politics of land problems: the title of a BBC article from April 2017 states: ‘*Why Vietnamese villagers are holding police hostage?*’. The incident happened in Đồng Tâm village, 40km (25 miles) from Hanoi, where local residents took 38 people captives to protest over a land dispute. The land in question was a 50-hectare area the defence ministry had allocated to the military-run communications firm Viettel Group in 2015. The local authorities said it was allegedly allocated for a defence project and local residents opposed the land requisition, arguing that they were given inadequate compensation. As tensions escalated in March 2017, Hanoi police opened an investigation into the residents for ‘disturbing social order’. On 15 April, police arrested four people and local villagers retaliated by surrounding and seizing 38 officials, including police officers (‘*Why Vietnamese Villagers...*’, 2017). Press reports argued that an underlying issue was the capture of the local state by one particular family and its allies.

The VCP dealt with the situation by sending Hanoi City chief Nguyễn Đức Chung to ‘negotiate’ and investigate what happened. However, despite the promise that villagers would not be prosecuted, the police began a criminal investigation of farmers in April 2017. The chairman of the People’s Council Nguyễn Thị Lan was sacked for ‘not fulfilling her role as a leader’, but hundreds of people from Dong Tam Village came to support her and “welcomed Ms. Lan back to people” (‘*đón bà Lan về với dân?*’) (‘*Looking Back at Dong Tam...*’, 2017). In November, Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc argued at the session of the National Assembly that the leaders have to learn through this incident: “We have prosecuted some people of Đồng Tâm who violated the law but up to now, police officers who beaten people or illegally arrested them are still standing outside the law” (Ibid.).

Violence in Vietnam is increasingly less ‘tolerated’ by the population and the authorities in Vietnam are well aware of this. This land dispute is one of many that have the same pattern and the VCP knows that something should change before it creates even greater challenges to legitimacy because, as one of the Đồng Tâm petitioners from Hanoi expressed: “In the future, there will be more Đồng Tâm incidents, people suffer the consequences of land reclamation policy which is robbing land off the communist state and tens of millions of people” (Ibid.).

This affair is illustrative of how the VCP more and more hesitates to use violence because it knows, that if it does, it loses legitimacy. In the following paragraphs, we will look at the SFHE movement which is supposed to address problems like this.

### ***SFHE: Official Documents***

In 1991 The 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party proclaimed:

“Our Party considers Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought to be the foundation and spiritual guidance for our actions”<sup>101</sup> (quoted in Politburo’s Resolution No. 23-CT/TWN, 2003).

This proclamation was showed somewhat starkly that Vietnam was formally ideologically unmoved with official positions still asserting the value of old Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s Ideology. The beginning of the actual emulation movement dates to 2003 when Politburo of the VCP issued a Directive 23-CT/TW. Emulation movements, as we have seen, would then put into play the foundational (for the regime and its relation to the population) issues of Ho Chi Minh’s morality and the role of the communist regime in the struggles for national independence.

The 2003 Directive is a four-page document with an introduction and five sections. The introduction emphasizes the pivotal role of Ho Chi Minh’s Ideology as “a comprehensive view of the core problems of the Vietnamese revolution” and as “a creative development of Marxist-Leninist ideology that allows to bring Marxism-Leninism closer to the specific Vietnamese conditions” (Directive No. 23-CT/TW, 2003). Subsequent text is devoted to reporting apparent successes in the application of Ho Chi Minh’s Ideology achieved since 1991. However, the next two paragraphs admit “limits and weaknesses”. Amongst the major issues listed are for example problem of differences and ambivalence in educational content [lack of clarity what should be taught], slow and limited dissemination of Ho Chi Minh’s Ideology, and the lack of practical guidance for political cadres and common people. The reason of this is explained in the Directive in terms of lack of understanding of the importance of Ho Chi Minh’s Ideology in many Party organizations at many different levels; lack of educational materials; and lack of investment in this problem (Ibid.).

Via this document we can observe one interesting part of Vietnamese communist ideology: Vietnam always was and still is proud to be unique and therefore, Marxist-Leninist ideology was “creatively developed by Ho Chi Minh to suit the Vietnamese specific conditions”. This is then said to be one part of Vietnamese national pride and an important

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<sup>101</sup> Original: ‘Đảng ta lấy chủ nghĩa Mác-Lênin và tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh làm nền tảng và kim chỉ nam cho hành động’.

source of legitimacy for the regime that always adapts to the “specific conditions” (‘điều kiện cụ thể của nước ta’) (Ibid.).

Directive No. 23 CT/TW is of course the general document that does not provide information on concrete practices or contents. Those are specified in other documents.

### ***Launch of the Campaign (2006)***

On the basis of a Resolution (Nghị quyết Đại hội X của Đảng) of the X National Congress of the Party, held in in 2006, the Politburo issued a Directive No. 06 CT/TW on ‘Organization of Campaign (cuộc vận động)<sup>102</sup> ‘Studying and following Ho Chi Minh’s moral example’ (‘Học tập và làm theo<sup>103</sup> tấm gương đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh’). The document, signed by Nông Đức Mạnh (General Secretary of the Party at the time), starts with a sentence which praises Ho Chi Minh’s thought and morality as a “crystallization of the beautiful tradition of our nation and quintessence of humanity which is an immeasurable spiritual property of our Party and people”<sup>104</sup> (Directive No. 06 CT/TW, 2006).

The launch of the campaign is described as ‘urgent’ in the context of the contemporary Vietnamese situation and said to be of long-term importance for the building and protecting of the country. Ho Chi Minh’s moral example must, it is said, be followed by the whole society but especially by cadres, party members, civil servants, mass-organizations members and youth and students. The Party had decided to increase relevant propaganda in the new period and the campaign should secure this goal (Ibid.). 15 years later, as we read above, the current Prime Minister reports failure to prosecute the police in the Đồng Tâm incident.

After eight years, the Politburo issued another Directive, No. 03 CT/TW ‘On Continuation of strengthening of studying and acting according to Ho Chi Minh’s moral example’. The official end of the campaign was planned for 2011 but the campaign was extended by the next Decision on ‘Continuation and strengthening of studying and acting according to Ho Chi Minh’s moral example’, discussed in the next section.

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<sup>102</sup> I translated this expression as ‘campaign’, however, another possible translation could be ‘mobilisation’.

<sup>103</sup> That is, ‘Làm theo’ – this Vietnamese expression literally means ‘act according to’.

<sup>104</sup> Vietnamese original: ‘ Tư tưởng và đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh là sự kết tinh những truyền thống tốt đẹp của dân tộc ta và tinh hoa văn hoá của nhân loại, là tài sản tinh thần vô giá của Đảng và nhân dân ta’.



***Directive No. 03 CT/TW (2011)***

This Directive, signed by General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng, evaluates the results of the five years of the emulation campaign stating that the campaign provided ‘initial results contributing to construction and reorganization of the Party’ which is crucial for revolution and some pressing issues ahead (Directive No. 03 CT/TW, 2011).

In the section ‘Purpose’ we read that the continuation of the movement should overcome some limits of the past campaign. The continuation of the campaign should provide general awareness of the classical values and morality of Ho Chi Minh. This document emphasizes several values which should be enhanced, for example, self-improvement, self-criticism, or increase of revolutionary morality. Among the dangers listed are for example: individualism, opportunism and pragmatism, degradation of political ideology, morality, or danger of corruption and passivity (Ibid.).

Three requirements to achieve positive results are set as follows: Firstly, it is necessary to create consensus between Party and society’s perception of the significance of the studying and acting according to Ho Chi Minh’s example. Secondly, it is necessary to combine the movement with the problem of building and reorganization of the Party, and with the promotion of performance in political tasks at local level. Thirdly, supervision is important (Ibid.). Again, as we can see, ‘political performance’ is acknowledged as an important problem, and the lurking issue is the possibility that the population, and/or elements of it, disagrees with the Party’s stated view of the value of Ho Chi Minh’s example, presented as central to the legitimacy of the Party’s position.

In the section ‘Contents to implement’ several points emphasize the alleged practicality of Ho Chi Minh’s moral example. According to the document, it is important to see the practical application of Ho Chi Minh’s ideology in day to day work and in every part of the Party-State. The VCP prescribes moral standards to be implemented in localities, branches, units and agencies. It is necessary that leaders take personal responsibility for training cadres in Ho Chi Minh’s ideology. Another significant component of the campaign is evaluation. Party members and members of Mass Organisations should be evaluated annually based on how they practice Ho Chi Minh’s moral example. The VCP in this document also focused on education as an essential sector, arguing that this is where the youth gain their moral education. The ideology has to be guided at all educational levels of the national educational system, and schools need to be provided with the relevant curricula. Lastly,

propaganda is accentuated: The Party-State has to organize both displays of success but also criticize misconceptions of Ho Chi Minh's moral example. These are for example: working without moral values of Ho Chi Minh, criticizing when someone says he/she will do something but does not fulfil this promise, fighting with 'wrong views', or corruption and waste (Ibid.).

In terms of organization, the Central Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Party is assigned the duty to provide full-time cadres to assist the Secretary General with organization of the movement. The Department of Propaganda is to: formulate a concrete program for the monthly activities of Party organizations, the government and the Vietnam Fatherland Front; establish curricula for schools; coordinate reviews and statistics; and formulate the responsibilities of the leading officials. The propaganda department should also direct the Party-controlled mass media to provide regular reporting on outstanding individuals following and studying Ho Chi Minh's moral example. Cadres from the Propaganda Department will be sent to local levels as the movement will be organised by the Party's People's Committees at all levels. The Secretariat of the Party, with the Secretary General, will provide guidance for the Party and society. Provincial committees and Town Committees will follow this Decision and give guidance to local levels (Ibid.).

This section tells us in principle, that the campaign should be organised based on the principle of democratic centralism, where the higher levels instruct the level below. We know, however, from the complaints expressed in documents discussed above, that this is where the VCP often struggles as these hierarchies are broken and authority fragmented.

The most recent Politburo Directive No. 05 CT/TW was issued in 2016 and was titled 'On strengthening of studying and following Ho Chi Minh's ideology, ethics and style'. This shows that the problems identified by the Party persist and have not generally been solved.

### ***Directive 05 CT/TW (2016)***

The first paragraph, as many other Vietnamese resolutions, starts positively with 'initial results'. However, the tone quickly changes and the rest of the resolution deals with the limitations and what is prescribed to be done to deal with these various persistent problems. If we contrast this 2016 policy position with that from the late 1990s and early 2000s, the VCP seems to struggle with the degeneration of its foundational ideology. The

problem number one as stated by the Party and listed over nearly two decades in a series of documents is that the people, occupants of positions of power in the political system and especially Party members are not well educated about Ho Chi Minh's ideology. The reported result is that Vietnam struggles with degeneration of political ideology, morals, and lifestyle, as well as corruption and waste (Directive No. 05/CT/TW, 2016). But is it, actually, a matter of education?

In the sections about what needs to be done, we read about the importance of "raising the next revolutionary generation", and "understanding Ho Chi Minh's ideas on national, class and human liberation, great unity, absolute loyalty, and firm revolutionary ideals, putting interest of the Party, state and nation above, or serving wholeheartedly to the Fatherland and people" (Ibid).

The text of the Directive also suggests, once again, that the campaign should serve as a concrete tool to deal with emerging problems at the local level. Here again, the emulation movements are prescribed a practical role in solving real problems: they are a 'solution'. Because an individual's career progress in Vietnam is largely dependent (at least in principle, bribes can get around this) on ideological education, the movement also serves as one of the formal criteria used for the evaluation of party members and civil servants. The significance of teaching Ho Chi Minh's ideas, ethics and lifestyle to young people is stressed also in this document. Ho Chi Minh's ideology has to be part of the required curriculum at all levels of education, for pupils in general education but even more for students in political academies and universities. The Mass Organisations should also develop lectures on Ho Chi Minh's ideology for meetings of their members (Ibid.).

When we compare the messages in the main official documents of this particular movement, they are very similar in their content. The VCP launched the movement to fix the 'degradation of ideology' in its own organisation. Ho Chi Minh's ideology needs to be put back to life as it is considered to be at the foundational core of the very existence of the VCP. As Vietnam entered the new period of economic liberalisation, it appears that the revolutionary excitement disappeared from Vietnam, not only from society but also from the VCP politicians who enjoy the opportunities of modern Vietnam as much as the common people, if not more so. The documents clearly emphasize the need for return to the exact same model which Ho Chi Minh prescribed for Vietnam, however, in a modernized form suitable for the needs of current Vietnam. The problem seems to be that it is not clear either what this

modernization means or how to tie it to Ho Chi Minh's Ideology as officially recorded and presented.

### *Harvest Essays*

School and university teachers in Vietnam (as well as other 'cadres' in different sectors) have to write so-called 'Harvest Essays' ('bài thu hoạch'). The essays are written in the summer, after they have attended political and legal classes organized by the educational sector. The media in Vietnam often write about the problem of 'formalism' ('bệnh hình thức') in general and in emulation movements in particular and the essays illustrate this, and this has been openly criticised. Nguyễn Văn Tú in a 2016 article does this and describes the obligation to write the essays in a critical manner. After submitting them, nobody reads or evaluate the essays and this practice needs to be eliminated: "Today is the era of information technology, everyone is constantly updated through books or media, especially online. Therefore, it is not worth just talking about the political and social events that happened or are happening, we need to address the problem of how to deliver what students need to take from them in an attractive and persuasive way, and we need to be open and objective. Therefore, we rather need to reconsider the quality of teachers and immediately quit the practise of writing of post-harvest essays which are unnecessary and wasteful. We do not need to study politics and law in the summer" (Nguyễn Văn Tú 2016).

In the essays cadres show, usually by repetition, how they know the official propaganda. Each year, they need to write about different 'topics' ('chuyên đề') and then describe how they concretely implemented Ho Chi Minh's ideology. For example, in 2015, the topic of the SFHE was: "Honesty, responsibility, sticking with people, unity, building of pure and strong Party". After describing their individual understanding of these expressions, cadres need to write their own application in practice. Examples of these essays are readily available online<sup>105</sup>.

Sectors and different types of socio-political, professional and Mass Organisations, as well as local administrative units and committees, usually participate in their own sub-

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<sup>105</sup> See for example the essay by Phạm Thị Thu Hồng, available online: <http://thptnguyencongru.hcm.edu.vn/chi-bo-dang/bai-thu-hoach-hoc-tap-va-lam-theo-tam-guong-dao-duc-ho-chi-minh-nam-hoc-2015-20-c48146-75183.aspx>; or that by Nguyễn Tiến Dũng, also available online: <https://123doc.org//document/3006900-bai-thu-hoach-hoc-tap-va-lam-theo-tam-guong-dao-duc-ho-chi-minh-nam-2015.htm>.

movements related to the national campaign. For example, as we saw above, the Mass Organisations for Women and Youth both had their own version of Following Ho Chi Minh's Example movements. As this is standardised way to organise movements and considering the topic changes every year, we can find at least tens of movements since 2006 which are sub-movements of SFHE movement. Ho Chi Minh's moral example is a movement and campaign that the VCP says it considers very important. There are other movements derived from Following Ho Chi Minh's Example, many of them in the education sector. This is for the obvious reason that the VCP wants younger generations and their teachers to perpetuate the ideas and values the VCP promotes. It is also possible that, being foundational to the VCP's political position, and as it has been deployed into the use of emulation movements to address problems that the VCP has identified as crucial to regime survival (see above, Section 4.7.1., p. 145), the VCP cannot, in some sense, avoid using the images and histories of Ho Chi Minh with which it surrounds itself.

#### **4. 7. 2. Emulation in Education Sector**

Emulation campaigns in education are a part of the broad SFHE movement. In the previous chapter we saw how the very first emulation movements in education in Vietnam were classes for the general population. Later, in 1961, as we also saw, the Bắc Lý School became an emulation model, a model for what the exemplary school should look like. In the new period, however, the Bắc Lý School model does not attract attention. Its Director Mr. Ngô Văn Hằng, admitted: "Today, education is not the same as in the past, it is not enough to have the movement or campaign. Today, only if the farmers recognize the benefit of education, will they then invest in it. That is the difficulty of the Bắc Lý model in the current period" (Thu Hà, 2009). Whether the Director wished to imply that earlier on farmer had invested in the school despite what it taught having no direct value to them, is not entirely clear. Journalist Trương Hữu Lợi confirmed this view, pointing to the anachronistic nature of the model, arguing that the Bắc Lý model developed when the North had just become independent but still had many problems. In this new period, it is necessary to act quite differently: "In the past few years education has had many emulation movements. Although I think these were very important what they resolved was just a tip of the iceberg. We need to resolve the basic problems of the foundations" (Ibid.).

This opinion corresponds with many others, which consider Vietnamese education to be among the reasons why ‘Vietnam is still small’.

In 2006, Thanh Nien Newspaper posed a question to its readers as to whether they thought Vietnam was small or not. The editors received thousands of opinions, and they compiled over 80 of them in a 2007 book called *‘Is Vietnam Small or Not?’*. Many of the contributions addressed the problem of education in considering how to answer the question. A Lê Kiều Anh, for example, criticized what he referred to as the mechanical and oppressive teaching style: “students drill themselves and after exams their heads are empty”. He was quoted as saying that he thought that students disliked schools (Lê Kiều Anh in Nguyễn Cường Dũng 2007, p. 42-44). James Nguyen, a Việt Kiều (overseas Vietnamese), also criticized the culture of ‘nodding’ when it comes to the authority of teachers and lack of cooperation between students in the classes (James Nguyen in Nguyễn Cường Dũng 2007, p. 50-53). Võ Xuân Tuong, former representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, referred to the same problem in a discussion of the appreciation and selection of talented people in Vietnam: “Talented people cannot carry the bag with presents [bribes] each time they go to ask for a job or talk to the secretary to talk with someone higher” (Võ Xuân Tuong in Nguyễn Cường Dũng 2007, pp. 57-60). Professor Trần Văn Tùng from the International Economic and Political Institute has criticized both the misuse of talented people and education in Vietnam. According to him, people are trained to achieve results at examinations but the really talented people often cannot get certain state positions just because they did not go to the right schools or did not obtain political certificates. In his view, far too few people in Vietnam can study abroad, and on top of it he criticised the continued use of old Soviet curricula at schools. Vietnam, according to him, needs a new standard in education and investment (Trần Văn Tùng in Nguyễn Cường Dũng 2007, pp. 73-81). Lê Vương Kiều Trang criticizes the culture of lying in academia where honesty is punished. The low level of quality is, according to her, obvious when assessing Ph.D. graduates and from the fact that the titles are not recognized internationally. She wrote: “In Vietnam, policy related to education is considered to be the top priority but we can all see the practice” (Lê Vương Kiều Trang in Nguyễn Cường Dũng 2007, pp. 82). Another author (anonymous contribution) shared that as a teacher he was forced to adjust the classification of students based on prescribed national standards<sup>106</sup> (p. 84-85). Other authors mentioned the problem of brain drain (p. 88), plagiarism (pp. 95-96), that academic journals in Vietnam do not have any international

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<sup>106</sup> See footnote No. 110 below.

recognition and that there is a lack of participation in international academia (pp. 99-102). These accounts generally agree upon the problems of the Vietnamese education system: it is a poor-quality, anachronistic, enclosed, rigid and corrupted system which needs to be opened up. This problem definition is, of course, very different from that of the VCP.

According to the 2013 UNESCO Report, “16% of 14 year-old students and 39% of those who are 17 drop out of the school” (‘Out-of-school Children’, UNESCO 2013, pp. 77-99). There is a relatively high percentage (reported at 2.57%) of children never attending school, especially among ethnic minorities. Among the main issues influencing dropping out or never attending schools were primarily affordability (high school fees) and children’s labor but also socio-cultural barriers, for example: lack of parental care, poor results to schools and lack of support in such a situation, being over-age and feeling ashamed, language barrier, absence of household registration in migrant families. Further, there were school infrastructure problems, i.e. inadequate facilities, large distance to school (Northern Uplands and Central Highlands), lack of qualified teachers and lack of incentives for teachers. Finally, core of the problem rested in governance, managers of schools at district or commune levels did not manage pro-actively, instead they were waiting for the instructions from the centre. As a result, urgent decisions were not made (Ibid.).

As we saw earlier, the education sector is a traditional emulation sector and has been central since the initiation of emulation in Vietnam. Vietnam started in 1945 with high rates of illiteracy which were linked by Ho Chi Minh to popular ‘ignorance’ which almost certainly reflect French attitudes to their colonial subjects, but today’s Vietnam is very different. The new movements in the education sector are introduced in following section. We will focus on whether they appear in the official and popular narratives, and indeed actually are, able to address the issues presented above.

### ***‘Two No’ Campaign (2006)***

The ‘Two No’ (‘Hai Không’) Campaign was launched in 2006 by Decision No. 3859/QĐ-BGD-DT of the Minister of Education and Training in the whole education sector. The campaign was launched, Decision No. 3859 states, to eliminate two negative phenomena at schools and universities, namely ‘negative phenomena at examinations and the disease of achievement’.

As ‘negative phenomena at examinations’ are considered all types of cheating (including bringing unauthorized materials or equipment to exams) and the failure of supervisors of exams. *Nguyễn Thị Hiền* lists the negative phenomena. On the student’s side these can be exchanges and talking in class during the exam, bringing forbidden materials, asking for more points, buying points (the so-called ‘envelope’ method, also known as ‘tiền uống nước’ – literally drink money [bribe]), etc. On the teacher’s side she cites the two examiners talking to each other rather than paying attention or leaving before the examination finishes. As for the other problems, she criticises the system of points in education (*Nguyễn Thị Hiền*, ‘Negatives in Exams...’, [Missing Year, LH]).

The so-called ‘disease of achievement’ is described as follows: “The concept of achievement inherently has a positive meaning. Achievement is a positive result from an individual or team, recognized and appreciated. But the pursuit of achievement which involves cheating and ignores the substance is a disease (...) As a rule, the more developed is society, the faster it spreads. Partly this is the result of market economy with the domination of the power of money which penetrates deep in social relationships” (Thái Bảo 2014).

It seems that there is widespread agreement in Vietnam, both officially and in the general population, that these two very specific issues should be dealt with. However, the question arises whether ‘emulation of not doing them’ is a good solution to the problem. Emulation of its essence means competing to mimic something or some group or some individual that has solved the problem already. This practice risks ignoring the way in which they actually did so, and there is nearly always a suspicion that emulation models were given favourable conditions. This problem will be addressed in the analytical chapter (Chapter 6).

### ***‘Each Teacher is a Moral Example, Self-Learning and Creative’ Campaign (2004)***

The campaign ‘Each teacher is a moral example, self-learning and creative’ (‘Mỗi thầy, cô giáo là một tấm gương đạo đức, tự học và sáng tạo’) was initiated in 2004 by Central Committee Directive No. 40-CT/TW to address the problem of quality of teachers and educational administrative staff. The campaign was launched in 2007. The National Education Union of Vietnam (‘Công đoàn Giáo dục Việt Nam’) published an article on its website about the movement. According to the article, the initial national survey found that the majority of teachers and educational staff have strong moral qualities, exemplary lifestyles and professional training. However, the article also stated that tens of thousands of teachers did



not meet the standards of professional training: 17.8% in pre-school, 4.1% in elementary schools, 3.8% in junior secondary schools, 3.8% at high schools. At the universities, the number of people with high qualifications is low (1.1% professors, 5.7% Associate professor, 15.5% Ph.D.) (Trần Công Phong 2010). These two datasets seem contradictory.

In November 2007, the Ministry of Education and Training in collaboration with the The National Education Union of Vietnam launched a campaign to address the problem. The article summarized the implementation of the campaign after three years of its existence. “In general, the campaign is evaluated as having no deep impact and not being implemented in all regions (...). Not all of the contents of the campaign "ethics, self-education and creativity" are fully addressed. (...) Many schools and educational institutions carry out the campaign just formally and have stopped reading and distributing materials about the campaign” (Ibid.).

The formality and superficiality of the movement is illustrative of the general situation with emulation movements and echoes the criticisms in official documents discussed above. The next campaign shows this starkly.

### ***‘Create Friendly Schools and Active Students’ Campaign (2008)***

A five-year campaign, ‘Create Friendly Schools and Active Students’ (‘Xây dựng trường học thân thiện, học sinh tích cực’), was launched in 2008 by Directive No. 40/CT-BGDĐT of the Ministry of Education and Training. After ten years, the Campaign still continues.

As the name of the campaign suggests, the Ministry of Education and Training decided to focus on use of the campaign to create a friendly school environment, such as clean classrooms and school facilities, and stimulation of active and creative students. The Directive describes several requirements, including improving school facilities and safe travel to schools. Vietnam, it is said, needs to increase student enthusiasm and initiatives at school and in community-based school programmes. Another part of the movement is to secure innovative and creative teachers. The movement is supposed to secure widespread mobilisation and participation of people in education in revolutionary culture and tradition. The concrete content of the movement is supposed to be elaborated by the grassroots (Directive No. 40/CT-BGDĐT, 2008).

In terms of school facilities, the Ministry prescribes: “safe and clean classrooms, breezy with light, chairs and tables fitting to the age of children, organisation of students in planting trees and taking care of them, sufficient number of clean toilets and participation of students in protection of the school surroundings” (Ibid.).

To raise pupil’s enthusiasm, the Directive suggests teaching them self-confidence, encouraging active learning, creativity and pupil initiatives. Teachers should provide ‘life-skills training’ for students which include a set of skills, for example: correct behaviour in life situations, the ability to create working habits and encourage group activities, practicing of ‘awareness’ which includes traffic safety and first aid, and training in ‘cultural behaviour’, including peaceful life, prevention of violence and social evils (Ibid.).

For mobilisation of sport activities what is advocated are traditional folk games. Students should “take care of local historical, cultural and revolutionary sights. Each school should take care of a relic, make it clean and enjoyable, a part of which is learning about local sights and promoting it to local communities and tourists” (Ibid.).

The propaganda suited to the movement is prescribed as follows. Local departments for education should report to the People’s Committees of provinces and cities directly under central government to unify the guidelines for local movements. The goal is to attract “an active participation of educational unions, associations, media, agencies, industries and individual families” (Ibid.).

The results of emulation movements are typically summarized in documents called ‘Report of the results of emulation movement...’ (‘Báo cáo kết quả thực hiện phong trào...’). The First Semester Report from *Túc Tranh* Elementary School<sup>107</sup> for 2016/2017 is illustrative of the problems of the campaign. The evaluation provides commentaries on different areas of emulation, emphasizing the successes. For example, the report states that the teachers and students are protected from social evils. The school reportedly takes care of a local cemetery, and during the celebration of Lunar New Year, it gives presents to students from poor families who are reported as being in a difficult situation. The report states that the presents were worth VND 2,520,000<sup>108</sup>. Furthermore, one ‘policy family’ (on the formal list of families deserving support – ‘gia đình chính sách’) received a support payment of VND 200,000<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> The school is located in Phú Lương District of the Thái Nguyên Province.

<sup>108</sup> Equivalent to \$10.

<sup>109</sup> Equivalent of \$9.

The school, according to the report, has a hygiene sanitation plan, was able to repair and upgrade toilets for pupils, and is regularly cleaning septic tank. Reportedly, there are daily shifts responsible for cleaning classrooms, and the school grounds, premises and other areas are regularly cleaned as well, either by hired workers or students who clean according to the school's weekly schedule. A plan for the second semester included: organisation of February's "Life skills training", exchanges of games between classes, and inspection of content of programme 'Green-clean-beautiful school'. In March the school plans to organise exchanges and discussions on life skills on occasion of International Women's day (8 March). Finally, in April, the school will organise evaluations. In May, the school will schedule a meeting and will write its final report (Emulation Report of the *Túc Tranh* Elementary School, 2017).

We can compare this report with the Application of the same school for becoming a school at Level 1 of the national standard<sup>110</sup>. The school had already attained national standard Level 1 in 2001. The report for re-application for 2017-2022 describes the situation of the school as follows: Four-storey building of the school was built from 36 to 16 years ago, and is at risk of collapse any time. The school has 7 classrooms (only one has its own entrance), 5 study rooms are too old and worn out, and 5 administrative rooms are deteriorating. The playground and exercise area has enough space but not enough for the activities of the entire school. There are separate parking areas for pupils and teachers. The school has gates and walls. In the Section 'Forecast for next five years' there are estimates that when as expected the number of pupils increases, the school will need to do some

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<sup>110</sup> Every 5 years, elementary schools in Vietnam have to write a new evaluation to obtain national standard (Level 1 or Level 2). There are 5 criteria to obtain the Level 1 of national standard: 1. Organisation and management – regular seminars, exchange of experiences with other schools, IT in schools; 2. Managers, teachers, staff, pupils – the training qualification of staff (pedagogical collages or higher), the school principal has to have more than 5 years of teaching experience, (...); 3. Facilities and teaching equipment - there must be a multifunction building, at least once a month students have to study outside, in a clean, green and beautiful environment, quiet and cool, with shade, trees, lawns, that is convenient for study and play, and a safe environment; there must be enough classes, each class has maximum of 35 students, no less than 1m<sup>2</sup> per student, separate toilets for staff, students and genders, library, teaching equipment; 4. Relationship between school, family and society – a School must actively advise the Party committees and authorities and coordinate with the local Mass Organizations to build a healthy educational environment in the school and in the locality. They must care for historical and revolutionary relics, cultural works; care for families of war invalids, killed heroes, families with meritorious services to the revolution, and Vietnamese Heroic Mothers in the locality. They must mobilize the contribution of effort and money from organizations, individuals and families to build the school's material foundations; they must add to teaching and learning equipment and facilities, and secure Awards; 5. Educational activities and results – there must be study plans, no local illiteracy phenomena, the school needs to mobilize 100% of 6-year-olds to attend school and 90% of other ages, 35% of pupils have to be graded as good and at least 15% as excellent, there must be periodical health examinations and vaccinations, participation in activities in environmental protection, 90% of pupils must complete elementary school, etc. Full list available at: <http://baobinhphuoc.com.vn/Content/5-tieu-chuan-de-truong-tieu-hoc-dat-chuan-quoc-gia-muc-do-1-8387>.

extensions and repairs. The school's projection is that it will need 10 classrooms (3 missing), 8 Administration rooms (3 missing), 9 study rooms (4 missing), and the playground should be redesigned for school activities. The fence around the school is old and eroded and there is a threat of collapse any time (Application of the *Từc Tranh* Elementary School for the Level 1 of National Standard, 2017).

This comparison shows how the schools are struggling to fulfil their duties and the push to both report successful emulation and achieve the criteria of national standard leads to a selective reporting which masks the true state of the school. Formalism is the major characteristic of emulation campaigns. Other accounts of this formalism can be found in all the emulation movements I have studied. Besides formalism are other reported problems: complaints that the titles 'Emulation Fighter' or 'Advanced Labourer' (and so the rewards), always go to the acquaintances or friends of members of Emulation Council who vote for them (Nhật Duy 2017). In another article '*Determination of title Emulation Officer: Why do the principals compete with teachers?*', the author agrees, arguing that people sitting on boards and councils are not objectively evaluating teacher performance ('Determination of emulation...', 2017).

Very often, the financial burden is shifted to the population. Budgeted funds may simply not turn up. If there is a lack of support from the government, the leaders of the country welcome different initiatives that promote 'the responsibility of people'. One of them is 'Saving Money in a Piggy Bank'.

#### **4. 7. 3. 'Saving' in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology and the Campaign 'Saving Money in a Piggy Bank'**

Thanks to the Vietnamese healthy life style and the improvements in health care, Vietnam is ranked among the healthiest developing countries in Southeast Asia. Vietnam's mandatory social security system called Social Health Insurance (SHI) is a main component of Vietnamese government efforts to provide welfare for its citizens. The VCP has been designing and implementing its health care reforms since the opening of the economy in the late 1980s. The main changes for Vietnamese citizens came with privatization, when a big part of the responsibility for health care was handed to private providers who in situation of poor financing from the government started to behave as profit companies. The financial burden was shifted to individuals who had to pay out of pocket (OOP) fees for health services.

Ramesh (2013) shows the three substantial phases of the health care reform in Vietnam: 1. substitution of budgetary allocation with user charges, 2. expansion of social insurance and, 3. promotion of decentralization. Translated into language of practice: 1. almost no money from the state, payments directly from the people's pockets, 2. being persuaded into the programs of social insurance and, 3. getting rid of responsibility and spending by handing it to health care providers. This situation is similar to the situation in other areas, for example education. I will explore now how one of the emulation movements attempts to 'tackle' these problems.

Various agencies or institutions at different administrative levels are supposed to launch their own smaller emulation campaigns that fit with the general theme of learning about and from Ho Chi Minh's ideology. The creativity of Vietnamese organisations is apparent from the campaign 'Saving Money in a Piggy bank'. According to Ho Chi Minh's ideology, saving is an important part of everyday revolutionary life. Saving is also the VCP's official national policy which is imbedded in the Law on Saving and Waste Control. Saving in Vietnam takes many forms: saving of human resources at work; saving time; saving money; saving energy and resources, etc. In Ho Chi Minh's ideology, saving (tiết kiệm) is one of the four core ethical principles: Hard work, saving, integrity, sincerity (Cần, Kiệm, Liêm, Chính). Lê Huy Tập describes saving (Kiệm) in terms of the saving of labour and time, which saves money for the nation, and he also stresses the absence of luxury or large and costly celebrations (Lê Huy Tập 2011). We will see some of these 'saving' prescriptions later, in connection with the concept of 'cultural life'.

The main participants in the 'Piggy Bank Movement' in Vietnam are various chapters of the the Women's Union and individual Schools but not only these two types of organisations participate. The movement started in 2007 in Ho Chi Minh City to support education in two ways: to help individual students and to create a Fund for scholarships for exceptional students – a real problem which the state did not manage to sufficiently address. This movement spread within the education sector and through the activities of chapters of the Women's Union where the collections of finances for different purposes were established. Money was used for repairs, support of children from poor families (presents), for emulation rewards, for poor women, etc.

The chapter of the Women's Union in District Bình Tân (Bình Tân is an urban district of Ho Chi Minh City and is known as a site of many migrant workers) started the Piggy Bank campaign within SFHE to support Union members to develop their family economies and repair houses. After three years, the number of participating members had reportedly

increased to 100. According to an article at the website of Vinh Long Radio, each day women put aside from VND 5,000 to 20,000<sup>111</sup>. Thanks to this, 100 members had escaped poverty, reducing the number of poor households in the District to below 5.5%. The movement, according to the article ‘supports families, promotes solidarity in the community and creates habit of saving in daily life’ (Hồng Vân 2010).

The Piggy Bank Movement practically works as a personal saving account or charity. *Chuong Duong* Elementary School at District 1 in Ho Chi Minh City collected VND 18 million to buy clothes, books and sweets for disadvantaged students. The Movement was actively supported by many parents. Schools were organizing Piggy Banks every year: “Schools usually organize pigs' gatherings at the beginning of the new school year and the Lunar New Year. During the Lunar New Year, Truong Quyen Primary School (District 3) collected nearly 30 pigs with the amount of over 10 million; Tran Binh Trong primary school (District 5) has collected nearly 50 pigs with the amount of nearly 30 million” (Hoàng Hải 2014). On top of these reports, the Piggy Bank movement was praised in *Tuổi Trẻ* Newspaper for raising the production of Piggy Banks and thus supporting the local economy (Vũ Bình 2006).

Collecting money in Piggy Banks, sometimes called the ‘Pig Movement’, was also used in Cao Lãnh District, Mỹ Thọ Commune to collect funds for voluntary insurance for households in 2015. Officials of the Party, People’s Committee and Mass Organizations organized a ceremony to finalize the Piggy Bank saving campaign to raise funds for voluntary insurance. Everyone put in VND 6000<sup>112</sup> a day. The author of the article about this movement wrote: “Profound transformation of awareness and action of each cadre, party member and people in the area was created through the movement” (Thuý Nhi 2015). On top of it, mobilisation of people in this issue contributed to fulfilling local sustainability criterion number 15<sup>113</sup>, of the Movement ‘Building New Countryside’ (Ibid.).

#### **4. 7. 4. ‘Building New Countryside’ (BNC)**

Building New Countryside (‘Xây dựng nông thôn mới’) is not only emulation movement but also a national target program (‘chương trình mục tiêu quốc gia’). The initial

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<sup>111</sup> Equivalent of \$0,2-0,8.

<sup>112</sup> Equivalent of \$0,26.

<sup>113</sup> See (Appendix 9).

step towards the programme came from the Resolution No. 26-NQ/TW of the Party Central Committee's 7<sup>th</sup> Plenum (5<sup>th</sup> Congress) in 2008.<sup>114</sup> The resolution emphasizes that agriculture requires industrialisation and modernisation that the whole country currently goes through. To deal with the 'agriculture problem' is according to the Resolution a task for both political system and society. The main first step towards this task is to raise 'patriotism and self-reliance of peasants'. In the section 'objectives', the VCP lists goals to be achieved, among them are increase of material and spiritual life of rural population; harmony between regions; fast changes in most problematic areas; to build modern sustainable agriculture comparable to other advanced countries and secure competitiveness, quality and efficiency; linking agriculture with industry (building worker-peasant alliance), creating stable rural society; protection of environment; and strengthening of the political system under the leadership of the Part in the countryside (Resolution No. 26-NQ/TW, 2008).

The target program is planned until 2020 with expected growth rate min. 3,5% in agriculture, forestry and fishery and related increase of rural population's income more than 2,5 times. Among the promises are development of infrastructure (roads, electricity), services (schools, medical services, cultural and sport facilities); increase in quality of life (elevation of poverty); raising of education for peasants about their political status as a class and teach them how to benefit from modernisation and industrialisation; natural disaster prevention; creating of conditions for the response to global climate change, environmental pollution and gradually improve quality of rural environment. Sub-target was set for 2010 with the aim for deep changes, especially in poor districts (over 50% of poor households), to maintain stability. This includes modernisation in animal husbandry, forestry, fishery and agriculture (Ibid.).

### ***'New countryside Commune' Standard***

In 2009, the PM issued Decision No. 491/QĐ-TTg which listed 19 criteria that communes have to achieve in order to attain the standard 'New Countryside'. Criteria were divided into five large groups: Planning; Socio-economic Infrastructure; Economy and Organisation of Production; Culture-Society-Environment; and Political System. Each of

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<sup>114</sup> For comparison, China launched the similar program earlier in mid-2000s.

seven regions have different quotas prescribed for the particular criteria and their contents (Appendix 9).

For the period 2009-2016, another Decision was issued in 2016 (Decision No. 1980/QĐ-TTg) which attributes the same quota to the regions.

The next Decision No. 800/QĐ-TTg in 2010 issued by then Vietnamese PM Nguyen Tan Dung approved the National Target Program on Building New Countryside for 2010-2020 with the goal: by 2020 50% of communes should reach the standards of New Countryside. The Decision assigns management and implementation of the criteria to different agencies, generally the respective Ministries are responsible for guidance, the People's Committees of provinces, centrally run cities and districts are responsible for guiding communes in formulating schemes and directing their implementation, and finally commune's People Committees are tasked with formulating schemes and organizing their implementation. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is BNC's standing body. The highest organ is a Central Steering Committee with the deputy PM as a head of the Committee and the Minister of Agriculture as deputy head. In terms of supervision, each communal community is supposed to elect a Supervision Board composed of representatives of the commune's People's Council and the Fatherland Front Committee, social organisations and representatives of the people benefiting from works (Decision No. 800/QĐ-TTg, 2010).

The program for modernisation of countryside appears comprehensive and has high aspirations. The Vietnamese leadership confronts an increasing gap between the cities and countryside, as well as the migration of rural population to the cities. The plan includes infrastructure projects such as better roads, supply of electricity or clean water and better services such as healthcare, education and others. The VCP wants to see created a stable sustainable modern countryside. Whilst the BNC program seems to bring some results, there are numerous problems: financial burden, unrealistic goals, role of people and formalism in fulfilling criteria.

An article '*Recognition of a standard 'new countryside' is still just a form which is running based on the 'disease of achievement'*' published in 2016 pointed to representatives of Điện Biên Province as the first Province reported unsatisfactory results compared to the plan. Dependence on state capital was said to be one of the main problems. Many provinces have substantial debts and are not able to implement the movement (Phan Thảo 2016).



The Building New Countryside emulation movement is a broad movement and consists of many related campaigns and movements which started earlier. For example, criteria from group 5. Political system in the movement's documentation are closely related to Study and Follow Ho Chi Minh's Example Movement. Criteria from group IV Culture, Society, Environment include campaigns related to Cultural Life and Family developed under the umbrella movement 'All people unite to build cultural life' ('Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng đời sống văn hóa'). Sub-movements 'Family of 5 no's and 3 clean's' ('Gia đình 5 không, 3 sạch'). Environmental issues are 'covered' by the campaign 'Green-Clean-Beautiful' ('Xanh - Sạch - Đẹp'). These emulation campaigns will be elaborated in the next paragraphs.

### ***'Cultural Family' and 'Cultural Life'***

The 'cultural family' is a standard that first came into existence in the 1960s when six families in Ngọc Long commune (Hung Yên Province southeast of Hanoi) "volunteered to emulate each other to build happy and prosperous family" (Hà Long 2010). At the time that meant helping each other in production, being excellent exemplary citizens, raising educated children and being clean and tidy (Ibid.). At a time, Ngọc Long's efforts were transformed by the authorities into a formal movement which was further developed and expanded by the Ministry of Culture.

As noted earlier (Chapter 3) in 1947, Ho Chi Minh (under the pseudonym *Tân Sinh*) wrote a Q&A-style book called 'New Life' which provided a basis for the concept 'cultural life' ('đời sống văn hoá') or 'civilized life' ('sống văn minh'). In 1975, the Party Secretary issued a Directive No. 214/CT-TW on building and implementing a cultural lifestyle in weddings, funerals, death anniversaries and festivals. In 1998 the Politburo issued Directive No. 27/CT-TW on implementation of civilized weddings, funerals and festivals. Lastly, in 2005, the PM issued Decision No. 308/OD-TTg with regulations on implementation of a civilized lifestyle in weddings, funerals and festivals. These documents, together with others, served as a basis for the campaign of Building a Civilized Lifestyle. Civilized life in Vietnam, the Decision argued, started with the elimination of superstitious activities and public disorder during weddings, funeral and festivals. This included several traditional rituals (fortune telling, horoscope, shock cards, spell casting, believe in numbers). People in Vietnam should avoid obstruction of traffic [during weddings, funerals and festivals], and were not to organise or participate in any type of gambling. They were required to keep quiet and

minimize noise at night. People in public service were not supposed to attend weddings in working hours and to use public funds to either organise weddings, funerals, festivals or buying gifts, etc. Very specific details defining a civilized wedding, funeral or festival are provided in the same document.

The concept of ‘cultural life’ however, goes beyond weddings, funerals and festivals. In its broad sense it has components of spiritual, material and social life. The campaign ‘All people unite to build cultural life’ consists of these three components.

In 1999 the PM established the Steering Committee of the campaign ‘All people unite to build cultural life’ and after a year, the Committee issued Decision No. 01/QĐ-BCĐ which introduced a plan for implementation of the campaign. According to this plan all classes in Vietnam (including Party and state authorities) needed to mobilize to ‘unite in sphere of ideas’ (ethics and good lifestyle) and in building a ‘rich and healthy cultural life without social evils’. By 2005, 50% of families and 40% of villages and hamlets were supposed to meet cultural standards. Further, “95% of families in the lowlands and 80% of families in mountainous areas have to have audio-visual tools” and “each citizen should have four books per year”. On top of it, “each commune, ward or township has a cultural and sport institution” (Decision no. 01/QĐ-BCĐ, 1999).

This plan around cultural life was aimed at five main contents. The first area was economic, including reduction of poverty. The second was ideological, named ‘Building a strong political mindset’. That included a concrete set of tasks, such as “raising of patriotic sentiment; building national pride associated with emulation movement; agreement with political line of the Party; strictly obeying the laws; completing the assigned political tasks; fighting against misconduct; creating self-respect; and maintaining national secrets” (Ibid.). The third area was aimed at ‘building civilized lifestyle’ which included “working with discipline; within regulations and laws; sustaining civilized communication, happy attitude and responsibility to work; building civilized offices and reducing bureaucracy; and having a healthy civilized lifestyle which included saving money on weddings, funerals, death anniversaries, festivals and other social activities; promoting traditional customs and avoiding ‘acts of belief’ (such as placing incense bowls and altars outside the specified premises according to the regulations); no smoking in crowded places” (Ibid.). The fourth area was ‘building a clean-beautiful and safe culture’ including “maintaining of hygiene in public places; no disturbing or encroaching on pavements; no stickers and advertisements in public places; dressing cleanly and politely when in public; housing and workplaces needed to be

clean; and public greenery was to be protected”. The population was encouraged to plant trees and protect historical-cultural relicts. It was forbidden to distribute toxic products, and it was necessary to “prevent prostitution, drug addiction, gambling and corruption, theft, fire, explosions and traffic accidents”. Lastly, a fifth area was devoted to ‘building of cultural and sport facilities’ (Decision No. 01/QĐ-BCĐ, 2000).

To fulfil these numerous detailed goals, the Decision prescribed the launch of seven individual campaigns:

1. **Build a good person**, with good work and progressive examples (with standards to measure set by the following criteria: “having a spirit of patriotism, striving for national independence and socialism, lifting the country from poverty; having collective consciousness, solidarity; having a healthy lifestyle, respect for discipline, sense of protection of environment; working hard, regularly learn and improve skills” (Ibid.).
2. **Build cultural family**, also with its prescribed standards, which included: “building harmonious, progressive, happy family; having a plan for family economy; spouses must respect each other; parents are responsible for raising children; adults live exemplary lifestyles; children are polite and take care of altars, parents and their relatives; families manage health and disease prevention and perform well civic duties; they are not violating law, there are no social evils in families, they protect environment; family planning is also important, each couple has only one or two children; families have to have a reasonable economic consumption plan; there should be solidarity with community and helping neighbours, participation in social activities, participation in reconciliation of disagreements, and participation in meetings” (Ibid.).
3. **All people unite to build new life in residential areas** this campaign of the Vietnam Fatherland Front from 1995 had six main contents: “unite to develop the economy together; unite to develop the tradition of love, humanitarian activities; unite to promote democracy, maintain discipline and adhere to rules; unite to build cultural life, preserve national identity; unite to care for cause of education and implement basic healthcare program for everyone; unite to build clean strong political basis attached to the people” (Ibid.).

4. **Build villages, hamlets and cultural areas.** This campaign included “stable economic life; spiritual healthy life, clean and beautiful environment; cultural and sport facilities; and well implement laws and policies” (Ibid.).
5. **Building of offices, enterprises, and armed forces with cultural lifestyle.** The campaign set similar criteria to other campaigns, namely “green, clean and beautiful offices; orderly political activities; working discipline, creativity, professional qualification improvement; close relations to the people and civilized and polite communication; practising grassroots democracy, integration of self-criticism, fighting with corruption and waste, etc.; protection of national secrets; and frequent cultural and sport activities” (Ibid.).
6. **All people exercise their body according to Ho Chi Minh’s example.** This campaign focused on physical exercise and had the following content: “each person chooses a sport to practice; each family strives to achieve the standard of ‘sport family’ that includes the provision that 50% of family members exercise regularly; each school realizes well physical education within and outside school hours; military units and police have to meet sport standards; each commune or ward has at least 1 amusement park and sport centre; each village or hamlet has a sport club” (Ibid.).
7. **Promote education movement and creative labor.** This campaign was aimed at professional learning and included: “creation of favourable conditions for education of society; opening of professional learning courses; investment in research projects; prizes and rewards for exceptional works; and establishing a form of rewards for those who contributed to cultural, artistic or scientific development of the country” (Ibid.).

These campaigns show how deeply the Vietnamese regime has been trying to penetrate in people’s lives. Not surprisingly, however, it is impossible to keep control of so many personal areas. I choose ‘Cultural Family’ title to show the problems of these campaigns.

***‘Everyone is a Cultural Family is Equivalent to No One Is a Cultural Family’***

‘Cultural Family Standard’ was most recently specified in Circular No. 12/TT-BVHTTDL of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism from 2011. In this Circular the Ministry established three areas where ‘cultural’ should be applied in connection to family.

Firstly, ‘cultural’ is in relation to the regime. It means to follow Party and State guidelines and regulations (laws), being a good citizen, maintaining political security and cleanliness of environment, protecting cultural relics, avoiding social evils, keeping cultural lifestyle in areas of weddings, funerals and festivals and participating in emulation movements.

Secondly, ‘cultural’ means cultural *inside* the family and it means to live harmoniously and help the community. This includes the relationship between husband and wife and their parents and children, exemplarity of husband and wife, preserving traditional family values, maintain hygiene and prevent diseases, maintain house and environment, physical exercise and help to neighbours. Thirdly, ‘cultural’ is related to efficient organisation of work and study in family. The set of criteria include children going to school and studying well, for adults, having jobs and stable incomes, in the family having a plan for a family economy, taking action in elimination of hunger and reduction of poverty (Circular No. 12/TT-BVHTTDL).

In order to obtain the certificate of Cultural Family (and the plaque to be put on the wall of the house), households have to register at the Chapter of the VFF in their residential areas. Each residential area has a chief who coordinates residential quarters and their meetings. At the meetings they mark Cultural Families. Based on the minutes of the meetings the Head of the Campaign ‘All people unite to build the cultural life in residential area’ (‘Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng đời sống văn hóa ở khu dân cư’) asks the Chairman of the local People’s Committee at the commune level to make the final decisions. This process should be repeated annually. Based on this decision the Head of the Campaign also asks the Chairman of People’s Committee to award the titles ‘Cultural Family’ initially for a year and consecutively for three years. The list should be announced by a loudspeaker (Ibid.).

In the Vietnamese official media, this practice is often criticised. For example, in 2015, Đà Nẵng City had the lowest rate of cultural families in the country. Đà Nẵng is often considered to be one of the most progressive areas in Vietnam which showed effective urban development and lack of formalism, especially during the leadership of Nguyễn Bá Thanh. One explanation behind the relatively low rate<sup>115</sup> (75,1%) was that the city pursued their own standards towards better quality and not just numbers: “we do not encourage high rates (...)

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<sup>115</sup> This rate is low compared to other cities which report close to 100%, in Vietnam, rates are often incorrectly reported to ‘achieve the standard’.

when families involved in drugs, prostitution or transgressing the law receive the title cultural family, it is unreasonable” (Hữu Khá 2015).

A similar message came from Nam Hà Ward (Hà Tĩnh City) where local inhabitants commented on the blue boards with the sign ‘Cultural Family’ hanging on their houses as “harmful, complicated and useless” (‘Plate Cultural Family’, 2016). Some interviewed inhabitants responded as follows: “Hanging of the signs ‘cultural family’ to some houses and some not is inadequate. In reality, it is just a form” (Ms. N.T.T., born 1962 in ‘Plate Cultural Family’, 2016). “I consider the hanging of these signs to be just too formal. This year you obtain the standard and have the sign and next year you have to take it down? It is just costly, and it does not mean anything for a real life” (Ms. T.T.H., born 1967 ‘Plate Cultural Family’, 2016). “In many cases families received a standard but there is a voice in the family of the neighbours who can criticize the household and what becomes from the culture is uneasy feeling for both insiders and outsiders. To hang these signs is just a form but it is also causing a harm” (Mr. D.S.M., born 1955 ‘Plate Cultural Family’, 2016)” (Ibid.).

Other places also reported the same criticism. According to an article in Thanh Niên Newspaper, 85% of Vietnamese families are reported to be ‘Cultural’ but it only masks what happens behind the closed door of the houses. As standards are imposed top-down, they are too general and are judged arbitrarily. The localities want to look better than they are, so there are high numbers in achieving this standard (Đặng Tươi, Mai Nguyễn, Mạnh Khang, 2015).

‘Cultural Family’ plaques/plates hang in many places because they were never dismantled despite the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in 2010 decided they should be removed as they created many problems at the villages. The Document issued by the Ministry of Culture says: “Some localities such as *Hà Đông* District, Hanoi and other provinces and cities, have improperly implemented the regulations and hung the ‘Cultural Family’ sign on the wall in front of each household; these actions had many different opinions, caused aversion and created disapproval of the people” (Document No. 785/BVHTTDL-VHCS, 2010).

The Cultural Family movement is suffering problems, and the same criteria which prescribed harmonious life now seem to create worse relationships in the quarters, wards, and in communes. The campaign suffers ‘disease of form’ which means that the prescriptions are rather empty words and not real effective meaningful policies that could solve Vietnamese problems related to education, healthcare, or land issues. These efforts to regulate

relationships and processes inside families are authoritarian practices which constrain a positive change in Vietnam towards better family policies, not least as they consume official resources and political efforts that could be put to better use.

In the next section I will look at the movement around ecology and environment. Many of the campaigns included the criteria ‘clean’, ‘green’ environment, so did the Building New Countryside’s criterion no. 17, ‘Environment and food safety’. Considering the importance of this area in Vietnam, it is important to look at the emulation movements in this area. The campaign ‘Green-clean-beautiful, protection of the safety of work’ was launched by the Vietnamese Trade Unions in 1996. Young Volunteers (‘Thanh niên tình nguyện’) who volunteer during the ‘Green Summer’ to improve the environment in the countryside are part of another initiative that relates to the environment.

#### **4. 7. 5. Emulation in Environment**

In Vietnam, the signs ‘green-clean-beautiful’ are present in many public spaces, yet this is in sharp contrast with the reality of large air and land polluters such as cement and other factories, coal-fired electricity generation, overuse of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, and lack of control of large industrial projects.<sup>116</sup> Air pollution in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City is usually in red numbers rather than green spectrum of measurement of pollution<sup>117</sup>. This goes hand in hand with food safety. Fresh fruit and vegetable products and meat in Vietnam are affected by use of hormones, fertilisers, chemicals and many other products are imported from neighbouring countries, particularly China, which means that the population question their safety and quality. The result is, for example, that new mothers are worried to buy formula for their newborns in Vietnamese shops (Personal discussion in Hanoi 2014).

Many Vietnamese are very proud of their country and one substantial part of this pride is the nature with its resources on which its inhabitants are largely dependent. In 2016, 66% of the population still lived at the countryside (World Bank, 2016). Demographically, Vietnam has a very young population with around 40% of people less than 24 years old (Index Mundi, 2018).

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<sup>116</sup> For details, see for example: Khor, Ufer, Nielsen and Zeller (2015); Jennings (2017); Finenko and Thomson (2014); or ICEM Report 2007.

<sup>117</sup> This can be monitored at one of many websites measuring air pollution in the cities, available online, for example at: <http://aqicn.org/map/vietnam/>.

Protection of the environment is a high priority in the VCP's public statements. But how does this translate into action?

In terms of legislative, the Vietnamese National Assembly issued the first Law on the protection of environment (Luật Bảo vệ môi trường) in 1993. The Law has been updated twice, in 2005 and 2014. The first Law established that the environment constitutes of many elements: “air, water, soil, sound, light, land, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, seas, residential areas, production areas, reserves, natural landscapes, places of interest, historical sights, and other material forms<sup>118</sup> (Law on protection of Environment, 1993)”. The Law defined many basic terms, for example environmental damage, pollution, accident, etc. The most recent Law, from 2014 (revised in 2016), is a complex document with 170 Articles. Environmental protection is explained in terms of: “Activities of preserving, preventing or restricting negative impact on the environment; responding to environmental accidents; overcoming pollution and degrading of environment, improving and restoring the environment; using rational natural resources in order to keep the environment fresh” (Law on protection of Environment, 2014). The law sets ‘environmental standards’ (‘tiêu chuẩn môi trường’) which include for example limits on pollutants. A State response to environmental catastrophes is included too. Provisions on ‘Environmental impact assessment’ are provided in Chapter 3, from Article 18 and relate to investment projects and their possible ecological impact prevention. This topic is highly relevant as one of the major overt legitimacy challenges in recent years was related to foreign projects and their negative ecological impact<sup>119</sup>. This thesis, however, does not attempt to study in detail Law on Environment, though its written form and its real impact are clearly very different. That was clearly visible in the case of these ecological issues that triggered demonstrations and a lively public debate, both unusual in Vietnam. I will discuss these briefly as they allow me to discuss broader issues of legitimacy and so the changing context of emulation movements.

### ***Bauxite Mining, ‘#IChooseFish’ and Cutting Trees Controversies***

The end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 were particularly important years for Vietnam. An unprecedented backlash grew up from the plan of the Vietnamese government to mine over 5 million tons of bauxite in the Central Highlands in Vietnam. The first concerns

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<sup>118</sup> The newest version of the Law from 2014 includes in the composition of environment also ‘living creatures’

<sup>119</sup> Here I refer to the 2017 controversy around Taiwanese Ha Tinh Steel Plant. For details, see paragraph below.



included the process of mining which created as an after effect toxic, so called red mud. This initial argument was greatly fortified and strengthened when a 98 year-old famous Vietnamese hero, General Võ Nguyên Giáp,<sup>120</sup> wrote an open letter to the then Prime Minister, Nguyễn Tấn Dũng, to protest against bauxite mining. General Võ Nguyên Giáp added one more important concern: national security in form of a ‘Chinese threat’ as thousands of Chinese workers were supposed to work on the project. This ‘concern’ goes back to history and carries a lot of weight in Vietnam, and was ultimately a concern of old patriotic values, fear of loss of independence and of the presence of ‘foreign invaders’. This was apparent from multiple letters, for example Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh (former Vietnamese ambassador in China) who wrote:

“For a long time, I did not have any information, only from the letter of General Võ Nguyên Giáp and several hundred of comments from scientists, cadres and people from all of the Vietnam I got to know that we agreed to let China mine bauxite in the Central Highlands. That is so dangerous! I see the dangers people are talking about: devastation of environment, invading forests, harm to lives of ethnic minorities, poisoning of rivers flowing through the Central Highlands (...) The most worrying issue is national security. We all know that China built a powerful naval base in Sanya, Hainan Island, not against the enemy invaders but to threaten Vietnam and to get ready to expel us from Truong Sa and quickly takeover of Hoang Sa Islands from the hands of Saigon’s authorities. Now when China will be mining bauxite in the Central Highlands, we will have seven to ten thousand Chinese workers or servicemen residing and operating there, creating a ‘China Town’ and a military base in our strategic location (to deliver weapons there is not difficult at all). In the North, China has a military naval base, in the Southwest fully armed base, what will happen to the sovereignty that we had to pay by millions of lives and blood and bones” (Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh 2009).

Bauxite mining was for the Vietnamese leaders a substantial challenge. Not only General Giáp but also other important personalities, scientists, politicians, bloggers reacted in media, by open letters or petitions, and law suit against the PM.

In 2015, another ‘ecological’ controversy emerged when the Hanoi authorities ordered the cutting down of 6,700 trees in Hanoi as a part of a larger plan of replacement of greenery (total number 29,000 trees) in the city with a budget of over VND 73 billion. That was despite

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<sup>120</sup> Party member and after Ho Chi Minh perhaps the most popular person in Vietnam, General Giap passed away in October 2013 at the age 102.

the fact that the survey of Department of Construction in Hanoi found out that the rate of trees in urban areas was too low. The Hanoi authorities explained the decision as necessary arguing that these trees are not suitable for urban areas, and in many cases, could be harmful as they were old and could easily fall and attract mosquitoes and insects (Kiên Trung 2015).

This explanation was not satisfactory for many Hanoians who publicly criticised the decision, signed the petitions and formed groups on social media<sup>121</sup>. After the outcry, the Chairman of Hanoi's People's Committee started to question the Department of Construction which was reprimanded for not asking sufficiently about popular opinion (Đ.Tâm 2015). The investigation was started shortly after the scandal in March, and in May, the investigation was closed with the result of 'correct decision but wrong implementation'. The responsibility for the mistakes was attributed to the Hanoi Departments of Construction and of Information and Communication ('Hanoi Trees Cutting...', 2015).

A year later, in April 2016, Vietnam experienced perhaps its largest ecological catastrophe since the serious ecological impact related to the use of Agent Orange during the Second Indochina War. The sea shores of three Central Vietnam provinces (Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình and Quảng Trị) and provincial city Thừa Thiên–Huế became inundated with waves of poisoned fish. The theories surrounding the cause of the poisoning ranged from accusations of toxic run-off from the nearby Taiwanese Ha Tinh Steel Plant, of the Formosa company, through to Vietnam's inadequate waste water drainage systems, and finally to a recent 'red tide' of algae blooms. The Vietnamese government not only did not react promptly to investigate the issue but even tried to deny the real cause. Only on June 2016, after more than a year, did the Government office admit at a press conference that Formosa had discharged toxic waste (phenol, cyanide) into the water (Phạm Hiếu and Võ Văn Thành, 2016). An underlying motive again, was Chinese influence via Taiwanese Conglomerate Formosa Plastics and the over 20% share of investment of China Steel in the Ha Tinh steel project in Vietnam.

The ecological catastrophe hit the livelihoods of local fisherman and the fishing industry, as well as tourism in Vietnam. The 'dead fish' scandal immediately created a wave of protests and generated considerable public expressions of discontent. The response on

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<sup>121</sup> For example, group '6,700 people for 6,700 trees' ('6,700 người vì 6,700 cây xanh'), a group which attempted to collect 6,700 likes but quickly collected over 50,000 likes. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/manfortree/>

social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) was unprecedented and ‘#IChooseFish’ became a label widely used for expressing disagreement and anger. There were many public expressions in Vietnamese artistic circles - for example in Hue, a group of artists from Viet Art Space decided to take advantage of the concurrent 9<sup>th</sup> annual Huế Festival to hold an unscheduled performance on the Trường Tiền bridge, but the performers were arrested, investigated and finally released. Another powerful work in little exhibition Quay II in Hue was an installation titled, ‘The Silent Knives,’ (2016). The piece was made up of the distinctive knives used by fish sellers, whom the organizer Tran had interviewed about the fish crisis and how it had affected their businesses. Each knife included the seller’s name on the blade and was returned after the show (Ben Valentine, 2016).

The demonstrations in Vietnam were large, fishermen families and many other groups of people protested, often subjected to violence by the police. Almost 140,000 Vietnamese signed a petition asking the Obama administration to launch an independent investigation (Trung Nguyen 2016). This major challenge to regime legitimacy is a key to understanding the broader issues of legitimacy in Vietnam. In the following section I will look at the emulation in Environment sector to investigate the activities of environmental emulation movement.

### ***‘Green-Clean-Beautiful’ and ‘Young Volunteers’***

I had to quickly abandon a preliminary assumption that ‘Green-Clean-Beautiful’ stands for some ‘clear cut’ emulation movement in the environmental sector. This initial assumption was based on the numerous daily encounters of the signs ‘green-clean-beautiful’ in Hanoi.<sup>122</sup> These signs can be spotted in various places, schools, universities, dormitories, garbage trucks, public places, markets, etc. The Campaign ‘Green-Clean-Beautiful and Occupational Safety and Health’ (‘Xanh - Sạch - Đẹp, bảo đảm an toàn vệ sinh lao động’) was an emulation campaign first launched in 1996 by the General Confederation of Labor (Vietnam’s official Trade Unions). This campaign, however, is rather a campaign aimed at the working environment and occupational safety. Yet, still, ‘Green-Clean-Beautiful’ is a slogan widely used for the needs of environmental protection. To my surprise, the environmental sector (under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment) developed its own separate emulation movement on the basis of two existing national movements (SFHE and BNC) and

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<sup>122</sup> My own experience from the years 2008-2015.

does not really address the problems in environmental sector that have emerged. Looking at the official documents, we find that emulation in environmental matters currently has 4 contents for the period 2016-2020 which are aimed at better organisation of emulation within the sector<sup>123</sup>.

The emulation movement in the sector is promoted via a ‘Vietnam Environmental Award’ (‘Giải thưởng Môi trường Việt Nam’) which has since 2011 been awarded (each 2 years) by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Each second year, the Ministry awards 35 corporate entities and 15 individuals. However, in June 2017, the prize was awarded for example to a company Petrolimex, National Petroleum Group (‘Tập đoàn Xăng dầu Việt Nam’) for an investment in oil spill incident technology. Thanh Niên Newspaper reported in January 2018 that the branch of the same company in Quảng Trị had caused at the end of 2017 pollution of a groundwater in the area as one of its petrol tanks had leaked (Nguyễn Phúc 2018). Petrolimex has more environmental ‘scandals’. In 2016 in Ho Chi Minh City, many vehicles broke down after filling-up with petrol A95 at Petrolimex Saigon Petrol Stations. The cause was a high amount of plastic in the petrol and the company had to compensate many customers (Kỳ Duyên 2016). In 2001, one of the oil tankers of the company was in an accident, but although Petrolimex did not cause the accident, the oil spill in the sea at Vũng Tàu area was several thousands of tonnes (Đ. Nhi, 2001). This makes one question the credibility of the prize.

Perhaps the largest ‘green’ campaign in Vietnam is organised by the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union via the Vietnam Student’s Union (‘Hội sinh viên Việt Nam’) and is called Green Summer, however, this campaign is officially not a part of emulation<sup>124</sup> and also, it is focused on many areas that are not typically environmental.

Green Summer started as a ‘Cultural Summer’ or ‘Lights of Culture’ at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Pedagogy, in the 1990s to tackle the problem of illiteracy. Volunteer summer was first launched in 1994 in Bình Chánh District, where 700 volunteer students organized classes for 3 months. In 1995, the campaign was extended to all of the districts in Ho Chi Minh City, and by the end of 1996, Ho Chi Minh City met national literacy standard. Green Summer was officially launched in 1997 to spread the movement between provinces (An Nhiên 2015). The activities of the youth extended to environmental protection, cleaning

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<sup>123</sup> For details see Nhật Minh (2016)

<sup>124</sup> The campaign is not on the Guidelines of emulation activities of the Vietnam Student’s Union (No. 05 HD/TWHSV, 2018)

around roads, response to climate change (help at the affected areas), building a ‘civilized lifestyle’ and new countryside, maintaining traffic order and safety, etc. In 2017, the participation in any type of volunteering was almost 180,000 young volunteers nationwide. Green summer itself attracted, according to numbers of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, more than 87,000 people (Many Practical Activities...’, 2017).

Considering the amount of challenges that environment causes, it is striking that I have not found any dedicated environmental movement which would deal with the ecological issues. This problem will be considered later in the analytical chapter. In the last selected area of emulation, I will now examine the security movement.

#### **4. 7. 6. Emulation Movements in Security**

Security traditionally plays a crucial role in various authoritarian regimes throughout the world. Vietnam is not an exception despite its liberalised its economy and opening up to globalisation. There are two principal aspects of security that are important for states: domestic and international security. In Vietnam, however, these two are often mixed together and the border between them is blurred. This was clearly visible on many occasions when Vietnamese society started to demonstrate against Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea. The Vietnamese government usually suppressed these demonstrations paradoxically pointing to the ‘disturbing of security and order’. According to the narrative of the Vietnamese Communist Party, ‘evil forces’ (‘các thế lực xấu’) or ‘hostile forces’ (‘các thế lực thù địch’) abuse people’s patriotism.

#### ***Existing Security Problems in Present-Day Vietnam***

Vietnam normalised relations with China in 1991 after the Cambodian question<sup>125</sup> was settled. Despite unresolved issues concerning the land border, the primary point of friction is the demarcation of sea borders in the Gulf of Tonkin, this conflict is known as a dispute over the Paracel (Hoàng Sa) and Spratly Islands (Trường Sa), in the regional context of the ‘South China Sea dispute’. In December 2007, anti-China protests burst out in Vietnam when China established Sansha Town (Tam Sa in Vietnamese) in Hainan Province which was supposed to

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<sup>125</sup> Vietnam and China had a major dispute concerning Vietnamese 1978 invasion of Cambodia following the persecutions of the ethnical Vietnamese during the Pol Pot Regime (Womack 2003).

administer islands in the South China Sea, including the Paracel and Spratly Islands (Khổng Loan 2007). The Vietnamese leadership denounced the Chinese step as a violation of Vietnamese sovereignty, yet the protests in Vietnam were suppressed despite being considered ‘patriotic’. Each year since 2007 the Vietnamese have protested against China. In 2008, Vietnamese protested in the big cities against the Chinese investment of \$30 billion in oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea (Phạm Hùng Vỹ 2008). In 2009 and 2010 Vietnamese protested against Chinese bauxite mining in the Central Highlands. In 2011 large Vietnamese protests sprung up in the two largest cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The protests were organised on social media and were disbanded soon after they started. According to the Vietnamese language service of the BBC, the Deputy Minister of defence at a time Nguyễn Chí Vịnh, told the BBC that:

“[the protests are] not necessary despite they are patriotic. People have to believe that the state will have the solutions, will have enough of responsibility to both protect the territorial sovereignty and maintain peace and relationship with China” (‘Anti-China Protest...’, 2011).

In 2012, hundreds of Vietnamese expressed their opposition to a further Chinese encroachment on Vietnamese territory in the South China Sea (Gia Minh, 2012). In 2013 a few hundred Vietnamese protested in Hanoi after an incident in which a Chinese ship hit a Vietnamese fishing vessel (‘Vietnam arrested 20...’, 2013). In May 2014, Vietnam experienced (at the time) the largest series of protests so far over Chinese aggression in the South China Sea. Not only Northern and Southern cities but also central Vietnam joined the protests, which increased the numbers of protesters from hundreds to thousands. Protests broke out again after China deployed oil rig HD 981 to the South China Sea’s disputed area (Mặc Lâm 2014). In 2015, Vietnamese protested when Chinese president Xi Jinping came to Vietnam for an official two-day visit (Petty 2015). In 2016, several thousand people protested against the above mentioned Formosa Steel plant spill which caused massive death of fish in Central Vietnam (Mac Lam and Xuan Nguyen 2016). The Steel project has a direct connection to Chinese investment (Weilyn Loo 2015) The Vietnamese organised smaller protests in larger cities against China and South China Sea aggressions, in 2016 and 2017.

The pattern of these protests is usually the same. People organise protests which are described in terms of patriotism, largely with the help of social media, protests are suppressed, disbanded by the police, some people are arrested and usually released after several hours. However, there is usually a blogger who is prosecuted and receives a heavy sentence, for

example, in 2017 a famous Vietnamese blogger and dissident Mother Mushroom, Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, who was very active in the ‘dead fish’ scandal, received a 10 year sentence (‘Mother Mushroom...’, 2017).

Against this background, I now turn to existing security emulation movements to look at the types of problems they were intended to address.

### ***‘All People Protect the Security of the Fatherland’ (APPSF) Movement (2007)***

According to the official Vietnamese narrative, the idea of the need for the population to become formally involved through emulation in national security dates back to the Second Indochina Conflict. In 1967, the Ministry of Public Security issued Decision No. 426/QĐ which established a Department in charge of the Movement for the Protection of Security and Public Order, and the building of the commune-level police force (today ‘Cục Xây dựng phong trào toàn dân bảo vệ An ninh Tổ quốc’ (V28), Ministry of Public Security). This department was supposed to plan and organize the Popular Movement for Protection of Security (Nguyễn Đình Thuận 2012). In 2007, the Deputy Minister of Public Security launched a ‘National day for the protection of public security’ (Decision No. 521/QĐ-TTg, 2005). In 2011 the Secretariat of the VCP issued Directive No. 09/CT/TW ‘On Strengthening of leadership of the Party towards the All-people movement for Protection of the Security of the Fatherland in the new period’. This document was clearly aimed at domestic security. Domestic security is in the document elaborated as: “internal political security, ideological-cultural security, economic security, and information security, especially internet security” (Directive No. 07/CT-BCA-V28, 2014).

The major concerns expressed in the last document above are related to ‘peaceful evolution’ (‘diễn biến hoà bình’), ‘hostile forces against Vietnamese revolution’ (‘các thế lực thù địch chống phá cách mạng Việt Nam’) and ‘social evils’ (‘tệ nạn xã hội,’).<sup>126</sup> The tasks of the movement are to strengthen the police force at all levels and mobilize people to actively participate in detecting and denouncing crimes. The Movement should be, according to the document, associated with the above-mentioned goal that ‘All people unite to build cultural life in residential areas’ (Directive No. 09/CT/TW, 2011). In 2014, another document

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<sup>126</sup> ‘Peaceful evolution’ is a term developed originally during the Cold War. Currently it is used by China, Vietnam and other countries to express the idea, that capitalist regimes try to undermine socialist regimes by ‘peaceful means’, particularly by implanting Western ideas, lifestyle and political style in socialist societies. Social evils are these particular lifestyles or behaviours, for example: prostitution, drugs, gambling, etc.

concerning the Movement was issued by the Politburo. The title of the document ‘On strengthening of Movement - All people protect security of the Fatherland, meeting the requirements for security and order in offices, enterprises, and schools’. Document No. 07/CT-BCA-V28 starts with the usual summary of improvements in security situation and then moves to quickly point to shortcomings: “Security forces in some agencies are lacking both in numbers and professional skills (...) Some parts of cadres, public and civil servants, workers, and students and pupils are still confused about the conspiracy of ‘peaceful evolution’ (...)” (Directive No. 07/CT-BCA-V28, 2014).

The solution to this situation is, according to the document, to set up particular units [from the police force] in localities which will be responsible for strengthening of propaganda and Party policies. Provision No. 5 in the document touches directly the above described problem of the South China Sea. Vietnamese society should clearly understand violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly in Vietnamese seas, but people should not be participating in unlawful demonstrations and disturbing security and order (Ibid.).

According to the Party documents, the movement should be particularly strong in strategic and border areas. The Central Highlands and mountainous areas in the North traditionally inhabited by the minorities are one focus of the Party. For example, Đắk Nông Province reported on its website about successful implementation of the APPSF Movement. According to the article, the APPSF movement has many forms, for example: “People’s Security Group in Chư Jút (‘Tổ an ninh nhân dân ở huyện Chư Jút’); Security gong in Đắk Song District (‘Tiếng kèng an ninh ở huyện Đắk Song’); People’s Coffee Protection Patrol in Đắk Mil District (‘Tổ tuần tra bảo vệ cà phê ở huyện Đắk Mil’); Women’s club managing and educating children about crime and social evils in Krông Nô District (‘Câu lạc bộ Phụ nữ quản lý, giáo dục con em không phạm tội và tệ nạn xã hội ở huyện Krông Nô’); Club for the prevention of domestic violence and prostitution in Tuy Đức District (‘Câu lạc bộ Phòng chống bạo lực gia đình và xã không có mại dâm ở huyện Tuy Đức’); Model 2+1 (two good people help one person who is not good yet) in Dak R’láp District (‘Mô hình “2+1” (hai người tốt giúp đỡ một người chưa tốt) ở huyện Đắk R’láp’)” (Minh Quỳnh 2015).

Another report giving information on how the movement was practically applied comes from *Nghệ An* Province, Tân Kỳ District, Tân Phú Commune. There the People’s Police installed a security gong (long metal bell with the hammer), called a ‘peaceful alarm’ (‘tiếng kèng bình yên’). The article explained, that the District had in its neighbourhood 6 communes from another district with many companies, state offices, business establishments,



karaoke shops, internet shops, beer shops, market places, etc. There were certain types of criminal activities in the area like “gambling, theft, intentional injuries, and assaults on people who execute public duties” (Hãng Nga 2017). The police had to act by installing peaceful alarm, lighting in the area (cost VND 90 million),<sup>127</sup> and police force or self-managed people’s patrols at night. The local police coordinated with local authorities and mass organisations to promote the movement APPSF. At 10PM in the winter and 10:30PM in the summer the ‘gong is reminding people, to go home and check whether their door is locked’. It also informs entertaining and business establishments to finish their activities and related noise to avoid disorder. Village-organised patrols and police control the situation, and when they discover strange objects or behaviours, the patrol would inform the guards of the gong to mobilize people to participate in arrests. Thus, according to the article, communes were building strong security networks at the grassroots to ensure that the law was not violated (Ibid.).

***‘All people Participate in Protection of Territorial Sovereignty and Security of National Borders’ (APPPTSSNB) Movement (2015)***

In 2015, then PM Nguyen Tan Dung signed Directive No. 01/CT-TTg which established a movement aimed at the protection of Vietnamese territory and its borders. Once again, the responsibility of protection of borders, as many other things, was shifted on Vietnamese society, and the Directive used the term ‘self-management’ (‘tự quản’) for household involvement in border protection. Border guards of the provinces in Vietnam composed of not only the forces of the People’s Army but also self-managed units of villagers who voluntarily or ‘voluntarily’ help to protect the borders, sea routes and border markers. According to an article published in *Quảng Bình* Province newspaper, the propaganda of the movement played an important role, and the border guard had organised more than 23,000 sessions for 125,262 people. *Quảng Bình* Province had in its registry “2,340 households and 6,789 people [who] are in charge of self-administering 140.6km/201.8km of border; 749 households and 2,075 people are registered to self-manage 43/61 national border markers” (Nguyễn Hoàng 2016). These are provincial borders but also the borders of the communes were guarded by militia and people’s self-managed forces (Ibid.). In addition, people also patrolled sea routes with ‘self-managed boats’ (‘tàu thuyền tự quản’) and guard harbours

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<sup>127</sup> Equivalent to \$3950.

which were consequently called ‘save harbours’ (‘bến bãi an toàn’). The result of marine protection was “195 cases/1845 Chinese vessels found to violate Vietnamese sea sovereignty” (Ibid.).

Similar reports can be found on the websites of other provinces. The Vietnamese leadership mobilizes people to understand territorial integrity and sovereignty issues and promotes the active participation of households. This, of course, includes protection of Vietnamese waters from Chinese ships that illegally intrude on Vietnamese territory.

#### **4. 8. Emulation Movements in Present-Day Vietnam: Conclusions**

This chapter has provided an account of emulation movements in Vietnam from some ten years after Đổi Mới, when in the late 1990s the VCP called for the renewal of emulation and brought it back to life. We can say that emulation movements woke up from a dormancy phase in the late 1990s and became significantly active again at the beginning of the 2000s. This new wave of emulation can be, and was, called ‘Emulation Renewal’. We saw that in 2003, a new Law on Emulation and Rewards established the details of rewards, emulation, organisation, financing, etc. The VCP acknowledged that it needed to change emulation movements so that they would fit the new modern Vietnam. Emulation was not renewed for the goals related to economic performance, apparently unnecessary as Vietnam was experiencing significant growth. Instead, other goals were to be achieved by emulation movements, and these are connected to the functions of emulation movements in the new period which will be analysed in the next chapter (Chapter 5). The emulation in present-day Vietnam differs substantially from what we saw historically.

The largest movement in current Vietnam is ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Example’. It shows clearly that the VCP is dealing with its own inner problems, loss of ideological commitment, discipline and loyalty. Emulation movements highlighted other problematic areas. As we showed when discussing examples of the largest challenges accepted by the Party, these are the environment and China issues. Emulation movements in these areas are largely formal and deal with the specific issues established by the VCP. Discussion of education movements showed the misunderstanding or intentional focus on ‘narrow’ problems while neglecting systematic problems. In the case of the smaller movements I showed first, how the VCP tries to penetrate the lives of Vietnamese and control

them, and second, how the VCP often appeals to people to assist with its proposed solutions to everyday problems.

The chapter showed that through the major areas of emulation in Vietnam (ideology and corruption, education, countryside, cultural life, family, environment and security) we can assess how and whether the VCP deals with pressing problems. Emulation movements diversified, lost the military predominance, and seem to serve different purposes. These purposes will be elaborated in the following chapter which also serves as an extension of the conclusions of this chapter.

## **5. Functions of Emulation Movements in Vietnam: A Provisional Mapping**

This thesis made an initial assumption that emulation movements in Vietnam have certain functions which are somehow favourable for the regime. I also assumed that these functions would be somehow related to legitimacy issues, considering that emulation movements are supposed to be, for the ruling VCP, a tool with both ideological and practical meanings (that is, that it is both related to values and self-perceptions, as well as to results). In the previous two chapters I explored historical and current emulation movements in Vietnam to be able to identify, perhaps provisionally, functions that emulation movements in Vietnam had and have. Comparing these functions and exploring their analytical value (see the next Chapter) is an important exercise which can help us to understand Vietnam historically and today.

### **5. 1. Functions of Historical Emulation Movements**

When Ho Chi Minh declared independence in 1945, he created a crucial point in Vietnamese history and marked a ‘new Vietnamese beginning’, though the nature of this beginning is of course contested. However, this beginning was not to be easy, given the colonial power - France - and the complexities of global politics in the immediate post-WWII period. France, for example, had to come to terms with the history of the Vichy regime, the fact that Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam) was her wealthiest colony, and the evolving positions of the US and the USSR as the Cold War gathered pace, and many other issues.

At the time the First Indochina conflict started (1946), it seemed clear that the Vietnamese would need to step up and fight for their country. Yet the situations in the north and south were very different. More than that, for any anti-French struggle, Vietnamese would need allies, strategy and a vision. Ho Chi Minh and his followers saw the solution in adopting Lenin’s thoughts and tools, and one of these tools was socialist emulation, though it had a long tradition in the USSR and more recently communist Chinese practices. As I have shown, ‘patriotic emulation’ in Vietnam was in many ways adopted at the ‘right time’, when enthusiasm from achieved independence and the willingness of very many people to fight or work for the victory was still very high. That was clearly confirmed in David Marr’s book on Vietnam in 1945 which showed that the enthusiasm was widespread and spontaneous (and not constructed by the Party) (Marr 1997). Not only was this good timing a factor in favour of

emulation but the Vietnamese historical experience and tradition, which praised heroism, also helped to give emulation an enthusiastic reception. This meant that Ho Chi Minh did not politically need to put as great an emphasis upon control and, instead, he could rely functionally on emulation movements to contribute to the legitimacy of the new regime.

In previous chapters we saw that emulation movements started in the Soviet Union to increase production and create a new socialist man. Yet, whilst these were the main declared goals, we saw that Lenin in his writings mentions other political goals, for example: mobilisation of society, indoctrination and purification of the Party. In the Vietnamese case, mobilisation was primarily needed for the war with France rather than to gain political support for the regime, and so indoctrination was a secondary addition, used for both introducing imported ideas of communism in Vietnam and to gain the material support from the Soviet Union and China that was in Ho Chi Minh's eyes necessary for winning independence. Purification of the Party was not in the Vietnamese case on the agenda as the Party-State was being built up before 1954, though after then the balance shifted. Analytically, we need to differentiate the functions of emulation movements in order to justify this argument empirically. So, looking at the historical trajectory of emulation movements between 1948-1975 in Vietnam, I argue that we observed two distinct general groups of functions which are identified as ideological and practical tools. Whilst emulation movements can be assessed in this way, they often if not usually show a mixture of both functions. I now discuss these functions.

### **5. 1. 1. Ideological Tools: History**

*Promotion of Values:* Emulation movements were from the beginning targeted and specifically tied to certain sets of values, often with powerful emotional implications. In Vietnam, this was evident in the expression 'patriotic emulation'. For the beginning phase of emulation, patriotism was particularly tied to three goals, expressed in the first three campaigns: elimination of hunger, illiteracy and foreign invaders. This theme was repeated in later movements. The next four movements in the 1960s promoted same set of values in the context of different enemy: the US. Production tied to well-being was represented by Đại Phong Movement in agriculture and Duyên Hải in Industry, Education was represented by Bắc Lý Drum Movement and the fight for independence was expressed in 'Three Best' Movement. The movements from 1964 to 1975 were primarily military, and whilst emulation

went ‘quiet’, with the intensification of the conflict, the focus was placed on the value of independence as a precondition to the other values. The primary value of ‘patriotism’ included many sub-sets of values. For example, independence, better education or suppressing of famine was not possible without personal sacrifice or voluntary work for the nation. If we step back, the overall picture shows that Marxist-Leninist ideas were slowly mixed in and that the foundational ‘core’ related to powerful values that were relatively autonomous to Marxism-Leninism. In this way, for example, historical heroes with no class connotations could be and were linked to contemporary Vietnamese exemplars of the struggles against the French and the Americans.

*Indoctrination:* Ho Chi Minh’s vision, the securing of an independent Vietnam, had to be achieved through an adaptation of imported doctrine in ways that often required ignoring significant parts of it. We saw, for example, that the DRV leaders targeted the countryside and used ancestral cults, rites and many aspects of ‘tradition’ to suit their purposes and construct doctrine. The majority of the Vietnamese population never heard of patriotic emulation, Communism, a Vanguard Party, revolutionary morality, class struggle or later cooperatives and Five-Year Plan. They had heard, however, of historical heroes such as Lê Lợi, Trần Hưng Đạo, Ngô Quyền, Lady Triệu, and the Trưng sisters. The new concepts were quite smartly related to traditional values, specifically, heroism, spirituality, sacrifice, contribution, communitarian principles were translated into the Vietnamese communist vocabulary related to the ‘masses’. Society was also learning the principles of the new doctrine. The important new factor was a breaking of traditional hierarchies; from then on, anyone, even the poorest peasant, could in the new DRV become a ‘hero’. This contained an unwritten promise of loyalty to the Party and its political line.

*Spread of Ho Chi Minh’s charisma:* As Ho Chi Minh put it, ‘emulation was patriotism’, which meant that wide masses of people were supposed to emulate to save Vietnam from the French colonial grip. Massive participation also meant that people got to know about Ho Chi Minh as his personality and emulation were in Vietnam inseparable. We saw that emulation heroes’ physically meeting with Ho Chi Minh was the special occasion which was considered as the peak of the emulation hero’s life-cycle. Ho Chi Minh travelled and spoke to collectives and individuals, as much as he could. He was close to people (‘gần dân’). The charisma of Ho Chi Minh was undeniable, and his modesty and hard work appealed to many people. On top of it, it was he who promised and delivered, that was observable (and propagandised) in the first three emulation campaigns. Ho Chi Minh’s

participation at the National Patriotic Emulation Congresses, his articles and letters to different groups of people, his travels and talking to common people, his personal style, were all widely publicised and propagandised, exploiting the powerful potential of the values in play to mobilise popular and cadre emotions.

### **5. 1. 2. Practical Tools: History**

*Mobilisation:* One of the primary goals of emulation was to mobilise people for the fight for independence. The readiness of people to fight was already high as the revolution in Vietnam substantially raised enthusiasm and the feelings of hope that Vietnam could be independent. The DRV government needed to sustain this readiness and enthusiasm, and the ‘friendly competition’ of emulation seemed to be a good way to achieve this effect, especially with the promise of becoming a ‘hero’ or ‘emulation fighter’, and to meet Ho Chi Minh. In the Vietnamese tradition of heroism and admiration of heroes, this was an important motivation. Who could not directly fight, could also contribute to the war in other ways: by increasing production in agriculture, they could help Vietnam feed Vietnamese soldiers, by increases in industrial production, they could help Vietnam to self-supply the weapons and other military equipment. As Ho Chi Minh put it, even children could help their parents. All generations of Vietnamese could be mobilised to work towards Vietnamese independence and all generations could strive to achieve a title of ‘fighter’ or ‘hero’. Though some resisted, many people in Vietnam often provided real and heartfelt consent.

*Responsibility sharing:* The new government was well aware that it needed the masses, for otherwise it could not achieve the promised goals. The destiny of Vietnam was in the arms of Vietnamese people who needed the powerful motivation of feeling that they had to take responsibility for their country. Teachers or those with some formal education voluntarily taught in Popular Classes, Young people voluntarily entered the army or militia, farmers needed to grow rice for soldiers, and engineers like Ngô Gia Khảm, who sacrificed his health to develop a hand grenade. Emulation was theoretically voluntary. In reality, many people were enthusiastic and contributed voluntarily yet there were also pressures to participate, that were perhaps best expressed in the above-cited slogan of Ho Chi Minh slogan: ‘emulation equals patriotism and those who emulate the most, are the biggest patriots’ (Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.). The war and the way it was fought contributed to the overall emotional commitment and consequent atmosphere of willingness to share this responsibility

for the country. The communist concept and propaganda of ‘people as the true power-holder’ fitted well with all these appeals. This function of sharing of responsibility is thus both ideological and practical. Even if to a large extent at this time and for reasons just discussed this responsibility was shared voluntarily, in later periods when the wars ended, and conditions were therefore different, this principle was still promoted in Vietnam.

*Building the Party, Mass Organisations and Administrative:* Emulation movements were one of the tools which provided the mechanisms for selection of loyal adherents of the new emerging regime (Party and state cadres). Those who showed talent and/or enthusiasm to emulate in war or production and received emulation titles were more likely to gain some position within the state apparatus. People at the villages were also incentivised to join Mass Organisations to be able to apply for emulation titles and receive bonuses and rewards.

*Link between Party and People:* An important function that emulation movements offered entailed providing a link between the Party and people. In principle, the coverage of emulation campaigns could be almost universal. This link was important as the previous regimes (monarchy or French colonial administration) did not really build this link. For farmers or workers this new attention was it seems for many at the start a positive sign. This link also has to be considered in the context of Vietnamese traditional relationship to authorities, for they are often accepted and admired without questioning. This is well described in Tréglodé’s book: “(...) people were usually happy to accept whatever the authorities (emulation cadres, the local Party cell, etc.) proposed, since they were ‘in the know’” (Tréglodé 2012, p. 75). The link between people and Party was often mediated through the new Emulation Fighters or Heroes, whose attributes could be presented as ‘living proof’ of what was expected of the population by those in power.

*Achieving Practical Results:* In the USSR, as we have seen, the practical goal of emulation was presented as raising industrial production. We also saw, however, that Vietnam was different in this aspect, as it was fighting for its identity. In Vietnam, the primary goal was to win the armed conflict with France but simultaneously, to deal with famine and tackle ignorance. The function of delivering practical results was fuelled by the powerful emotional devotion of the Vietnamese people to patriotic values and to the ‘mission’ these values represented.

These similar tasks continued in varied forms throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. The enemy changed and that helped to sustain these powerful emotions during the years of



socialist construction. Emulation movements deepened the principles of the communist doctrine, for example by including more emphasis upon collectives. Slowly and rather discreetly, another goal was added to the previous goal of fight for independence: building socialism. Thanks to aid from the USSR and China, Vietnam could focus on these two tasks.

In the next section we will see how functions changed based on varying situation and varying needs of the VCP. These changes are important because they will help us to understand ‘what happened’ in Vietnam between now and then.

## **5. 2. Functions of Present-Day Emulation Movements**

We saw that emulation movements in contemporary Vietnam are very different from historical ones. The country is not in the position where it has to fight for its identity, even if this emotion is still very strong in Vietnam. As a modern ‘Asian Tiger’ (Pincus 2008 and 2015), Vietnam must deal with more complex problems. The functions of emulation movements have had to change to suit this new situation. As we will see, the present-day functions of emulation movements are often derivatives of the historical functions and in many ways, reflect the problems that Vietnam faces today.

### **5. 2. 1. Ideological tools: Current**

*Promotion of Values:* the first component of the ideological function of current emulation movements is the same as the historical one, the promotion of values and correct behaviours through the movements and campaigns. We saw that the Party-state decides about what emulation areas, campaigns and themes will predominate in Vietnamese discourse. As such, there are clear messages as to what is right and wrong in terms of values and behaviours of particular groups in society and society as a whole. Popular values, as well as those of the regime, necessarily changed or shifted with the change to a market economy. In the next chapter I will analyse how successfully the VCP handles these changes and shifts and how it relates to legitimacy.

*Remedy for the degradation of Communist doctrine:* this function relates to ‘the new situation’, a period in which the VCP has struggled with the general decline of the communist doctrine as both China and Vietnam have seen rapid economic growth with market economies

that replaced central-planning. When the VCP gave the green light to the economic reforms in 1986, the fear was obvious, embedded in traditional Communist thinking, that the economic liberalisation would create political forces hostile to the Party and lead to pressures to liberalise politically, and potentially, to an unwanted political transition. These fears are still present in Vietnam (Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party, 2012). Part of the response is to seek to modify official ideology and preserve its perceived function of supporting the regime.

As I showed (Chapter 4, Section 4.7.6.), the VCP labels this danger ‘evil forces’ which are bent on conducting a so called ‘peaceful evolution’ leading to the degradation of ideology, Party and the regime as a whole. The National emulation movement ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Moral Example’ and its sub-movements are a good indicator of how the Party attempts to reverse the degradation of communist ideology.

A part of this function is also Party ideological internal and self-control. We saw that perhaps the largest emulation campaign in Vietnam is ‘Studying and following Ho Chi Minh’s example’ which is primarily aimed at the Party itself, its cadres, members and state employees, even if it is also part of school and universities’ curricula and the wider narrative within society. The central Party struggles to discipline its own members in localities, who are often rather autonomous (see the complaints found in official documents about problems in implementing emulation movements themselves – Chapter 4, Section 4.7.1.). Many local politicians do not behave according to the moral prescriptions of the Party which is presented by the Party as severe problems which could potentially lead to the challenge to the regime. If this is the problem, what are the prescriptions? Party members and cadres should avoid corruption and waste, they should be close to people, take personal responsibility, try to self-improve, teach others the right views on the Party, etc. Party members and civil servants are thus pushed to study Ho Chi Minh’s ideas and behave according to them. As remarked above however, this runs up against a general issue with emulation movements, which is that it is never quite clear how exemplars for emulation became such models, for they are idealised models. If a cadre in a senior position knows from their lived experience that they have had to pay out significant amounts of money in bribes to secure that position and nourish the required relationships (*quan hệ*), then behaving in ways that really fit with Ho Chi Minh’s ideals would be absolutely inconsistent with keeping their position.

*Perpetuation of Ho Chi Minh’s charisma:* Another ideological function of emulation movements is the perpetuation of Ho Chi Minh’s charisma and revolutionary ideals. The

legitimacy gained from this particular source appears to be a vital stabiliser for the Party. Thanks to Ho Chi Minh's popularity in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's ideology became and remains an important asset for the Party as it produces positive legitimacy dynamics.

There is no doubt that the VCP currently puts great effort into preserving the picture of Ho Chi Minh as Uncle Ho, the national hero. The mission of revolution is also still perpetuated, at least rhetorically: now, it is said, the revolution is in another phase, a phase of renewal. Ho Chi Minh is, in contemporary Vietnam, in large part, a symbol, as I wrote in a previous chapter (Chapter 3, Section 3.1.). He became and was made into this symbol during his own lifetime, but his aura was multiplied after his death in 1969; and he became a nation-wide celebrated symbol of revolution and 'everything good' that Vietnam as a country achieved. In the Party's narratives, Ho Chi Minh and his writings had the answers to any problems that emerged in Vietnam in the new period. Eventually, he became a model of a moral person in the times when morality is threatened by 'social evils'. Under his 'label', the Party does many things today. Deploying the emotional powers associated with him is a core function of emulation in Vietnam.

### **5. 2. 2. Practical Tools: Current**

*Mobilisation:* While historically, the DRV needed the Vietnamese to be active to win the wars and mobilisation was in many ways spontaneous (or to put it another way came from practices that worked because they met contemporary needs, widely shared, and fitted with powerful emotional traditions) the same cannot be said about the Party's current need for mobilisation. Mobilisation in contemporary Vietnam aims to ensure that people in Vietnam are occupied and are good emulating citizens. Secondly, people are mobilised to self-sufficiently deal with some minor issues in the life of community. Surrogate consent seems to be predominant, yet, even that consent serves some goals. Centrally, I argue in this thesis that it allows the Party to shift the balance of its ruling tactics from coercion to a search for legitimacy and legitimacy effects.

*Sharing responsibility with the population:* One of the major functions of emulation movements is responsibility-sharing, and this was inherited from the past. It stems from the long-promoted idea that it is patriotic to contribute to the country in whatever respect the country needs it. The VCP creates the picture of the engaged citizen who is responsible for all sorts of areas that are in Western countries secured by the professionals employed by the

state. Party-State in Vietnam thus uses common people as a helpful force in securing of its right functioning. Even in the periods of peace, there are many responsibilities, so, it is argued, people are responsible for financially contributing to patriotism because it is patriotic, that means in turn, that they should largely contribute to the existence of emulation movements, and so their donations are a substantial part of the emulation budget (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1.). Apart from financial responsibilities, there are work-related contributions and responsibilities. The way in which emulation is organised therefore can be seen as having this function.

### *Physical Control of Population*

The regime's control of the population can have many shapes and faces. It can be control in the sphere of ideas and values, but it can be also physical control. Based on examination of selected movements we could see that the VCP tries to regulate not only work life but also extra-work activities, family life, health, and generally the spheres which are very personal. The system that the VCP imported from the USSR was designed to be controlling, as such, households in each street in Vietnam are grouped into so called 'street groups'. When a street group participates in an emulation movement, households engage with the local Party-State and local chapters of the Mass Organisations in ways that can be recorded and later referred to. In this way the idea is that the households will control each other. The Security Movement, for example, (Chapter 4, Section 4.7.6.) is clearly designed to control, as people's patrols basically mean that neighbours volunteer to 'keep order' and control each other. Control can be imposed also based on the fact, that common people or state employees are kept occupied so that they do not have time for the activities which would undermine the regime. Emulation movements are based on the principle of volunteering therefore they often require the time after work. Again, participation can be recorded and, as we saw, whilst voluntary non-participation can be taken to be 'unpatriotic'; this also opens opportunities for bribes (to avoid bad reports).

*Achieving Practical Results/Agenda Setting:* As previously stated the VCP considers emulation to be a tool for leadership and administration (the word Vietnamese leaders use for ruling or governing).<sup>128</sup> Emulation movements are supposed to supplement and perfect

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<sup>128</sup> In the last chapter of this thesis I will engage with this topic further. The difference between ruling and governing will be of crucial importance. In Vietnam, in the context of the prevalent discourse on 'power', thought of as domination (coercion, control, fear), 'ruling' (preservation of a position of power) seems to be more important for the VCP than 'governing', which would arguably require the existence of 'legitimate authority' which (from its definition) cannot rely just on domination. For this discussion, see Chapter 7.

official policies in response to the immediate requirements that new periods and situations bring. This shows that emulation movements are meant to fix real problems. This function is, according to the VCP, one of the primary functions of emulation movements (Chapter 4, Section 4. 3.). In Chapter 4 we saw that emulation movements are struggling to fulfil this function. At this juncture a discussion on another related function starts: Agenda Setting. Emulation movements seemingly try to deal with the very specific issues that are brought about by the VCP.

Bringing these arguments together leads to Table below.

Table 2: Functions of Emulation Movements

HISTORICAL FUNCTIONS	CURRENT FUNCTIONS
<b>Ideological</b>	<b>Ideological</b>
Promotion of values	Promotion of values
Indoctrination	Remedy for the degeneration of Communist doctrine/Party’s ideological self-control
<b>Practical</b>	<b>Practical</b>
Mobilisation	Mobilisation
Responsibility sharing	Responsibility sharing
Building Party, Mass organisations and Administrative	Physical control of population
Link between Party and People	
Achieving Practical Results	Achieving Practical Results/Agenda setting

(Source: Author)

### **5. 3. Functions of Emulation Movements in Vietnam: Conclusions**

In this chapter, I created a list of functions which is based on two main functional types: ideology and practice. We saw that in the case of historical emulation movements, the functions suited the conditions Vietnam faced after the Second World War. In the case of functions of the historical movements there was a balance between the individual functions - it seems that they mutually supported each other. If we look at the other set of functions, the one of the present-day emulation movements, we can see the shift towards a less balanced list of functions. While historical functions were projected to 'build', 'encourage' and 'teach', the present-day functions are 'fixing', 'constraining' and 'controlling'. This shift is best visible when we observe concrete emulation movements (historical and current), analysing and comparing how they served their functions. This is the subject of the following chapter.

## **6. Analysis**

In this Chapter I will bring together the discussion of theory in Chapter 1, the historical discussion of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, and the exposition of probable functions of emulation in Chapter 5. These Chapters allow me to develop and present my analysis of emulation movements in Vietnam and their political meanings. My analytical entry point is to discuss ‘legitimacy dynamics’ as this brings out the interactions between Party and population, in a sense of action and response. In the next Chapter I will contrast this analysis with the results of a second piece of research on contemporary Vietnamese politics, which also approached issues of legitimacy and relations between the Party and the population, but from a different direction and with very different data.

The Chapter starts (Section 6. 1.) with an extended analysis of the past emulation movements, then (Section 6. 2.) moves to examine legitimacy dynamics in current emulation movements and Section (6. 3.) compares the historical and current situations.

### **6. 1. Historical Emulation Movements in Vietnam (1948-1975): Legitimacy Dynamics**

This section now analyses the past emulation in Vietnam with the help of the theories and concepts elaborated in the theoretical chapter on legitimacy and the framework of emulation functions presented in the previous Chapter. As I discussed in Chapter 1, I will seek signs of legitimacy defined by Beetham, Weber, Lamb and so ‘legitimizing strategies and effects’ in emulation movements in Vietnam. That includes an understanding of relevant values in play, consent, and identification of the presence and roles of charisma, routine, habit, seduction, persuasion and manipulation. The broad conclusion of this section is that Ho Chi Minh, and the country’s success in defeating the French reflected a powerful merging of traditional values and symbolic meanings, so the Ho Chi Minh’s charisma was, initially, far from being profoundly radical, and so poses questions about Weber’s sense of charisma as being associated with through-going change of old structures. Later, however, as the Party sought to marry Ho Chi Minh’s position to more conventional communist projects, such as Land Reform, this created tensions as the population increasingly resisted, questioning the foundational meanings of the DRV state, yet these very foundations implied a ‘search for legitimacy’ by the Party that would limit its ability to have recourse to coercion. From 1964,

however, the Second Indochina War saw emulation campaigns attempt to preserve the link between nationalism and socialism.

### **6. 1. 1. Norms and Values**

There is no doubt that Vietnam in 1945 experienced a ‘new beginning’ as the August Revolution was a milestone in Vietnamese history. This is not, in all the relevant literatures, a contentious issue. The importance of this event for Vietnamese, however, has to be explained in the context of identity issues. For centuries, Vietnamese people had lived under the reality of threat of domination by powerful empires and countries (China, Siam, Cambodia, France...). Frequent attempts, often successful, to reverse this situation of domination, created heroic cults, such as those of Lê Lợi and Trần Hưng Đạo and the Trưng Sisters. The identity that gradually emerged in Vietnam was a collective identity, formed in opposition to various common enemies and intruders (Taylor 2013). By the time of the French conquest, and pushed further by it, this rather turbulent and rebellious past had had several consequences: ordinary Vietnamese had developed a strong sense of self-reliance, discipline, patriotism and loyalty, readiness to sacrifice, fight, and also flexibility when it came to rules which was efficient in war situations. That had happened before emulation movements started. It was then plausible to argue, as the designers of emulation movements did, that Vietnam had developed into a ‘nation of soldiers’, that appeared apparent throughout the centuries when no matter what age or gender, Vietnamese often bravely carried the weapons and guns, dig tunnels or lived in difficult circumstances while defending the country. Whilst historians may debate details, it is quite clear that emulation movements and their values and ideas, as they were designed and organised, readily drew upon strong beliefs and ‘lived realities’.

Throughout the centuries, their histories could tell them that the Vietnamese had tested different techniques to get rid of dominant powers. The stories of success, and their associated facts, often included ‘clever tactics and strategies’ which were needed as Vietnam was always on the ‘smaller’ or ‘less developed’ side of the conflict (the Cham who they overrode in the centre of Vietnam as part of their ‘southern advance’ (‘Nam tiến’) might have disagreed). There are numerous stories that celebrate Vietnamese heroes who won battles which were considered by others to be lost.<sup>129</sup> To emphasize again, a key to success here was bravery,

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<sup>129</sup> A good example of such a hero would be General Tran Hung Dao and his three victories over the Mongolian armies (Taylor 2013, p. 123)



education or readily created know-how and collective effort. These were, histories taught, used in alteration: on one occasion, individual clever know-how secured the win, on another occasion, collective action, for example an uprising, led to that goal. The emulation movements introduced by Ho Chi Minh in 1948 were presented in Vietnam as a combination of all of these accepted keys to success as they combined collective action, appeal to bravery (everyone can become a Hero) and appeal to education and better know-how. Marxist-Leninist doctrine at this point was hidden, and, this appeal was an appeal to patriotism, wrapped in the newly introduced vocabulary of emulation and, as time passed, the Vietnamese version of Marxism-Leninism. From this perspective, the Vietnamese revolution as a new beginning did not necessarily mean an abrupt overthrowing of custom and tradition (as Weber's charismatic authority was prescribed to do). Instead pre-colonial values and customs were actually mixed in with the new doctrine to power the transition. That is not to say that all of the old values were kept; France's colonialism left in many Vietnamese animosity for some the values that France represented, and a respect for others, whilst monarchy in Vietnam was largely discredited by its overall weakness and lack of action against France (though see the discussion above on the 'Loyalty to the King' movement – Chapter 3 Section 3. 3.). The values that were celebrated tended to be tied to the victories, heroism, Vietnamese independence and building the country. Ho Chi Minh emphasized traditionally important education but shifted this to a mass rather than elite focus, for according to him 'ignorance – dốt' was a central reason why the French had been able to dominate Indochina. All these were labelled with the word patriotism.

Ho Chi Minh established three dominant values as a basis for emulation: prosperity and well-being; education and independence ('Eliminate hunger, illiteracy/ignorance and foreign invaders'). The biggest advantage of delimitating the core Vietnamese values in this way was that they were not new, for these values were old and traditional values for which generations of Vietnamese had fought for centuries, and as such, they could easily be presented as the embodiment of 'collective will'. At the beginning, the Việt Minh presented itself as a plurality in unity in an attempt to attract supporters from other political groups and mobilize them for the common purpose of 'protection of independence'. Plurality in unity eventually changed into just unity and the VCP pronounced itself to be representing this unity in the same way as all other communist parties elsewhere did. This transition, both real and threatened, did not initially pose problems as many Vietnamese found a unity in the hatred of French domination, though later the problems came with Land reform. Despite that, the new

government of the DRV in 1945 became a representative of this hatred and the program which was supposed to terminate French colonialism.

Ho Chi Minh was persuaded that he found the answer on how to ‘eliminate invaders’ long before in 1920s in Lenin’s *Theses on National and Colonial Question*<sup>130</sup>. As he wrote later:

“There were political terms difficult to understand in this thesis. But by dint of reading it again and again, finally I could grasp the main part of it. What emotion, enthusiasm, clear-sightedness and confidence it instilled into me! I was overjoyed to tears. Though sitting alone in my room, I shouted out aloud as if addressing large crowds: “Dear martyrs compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!” (Ho Chi Minh, 1960).

The values which emulation movements and the DRV government promoted were not contested by the mass of the population. As such they were a source of legitimacy because different groups of people genuinely supported them. What was politically contested, however, was how to achieve them. Nationalists, for example, were very cautious about the communist path, especially when it meant alliance with communist China. At that point, however, Ho Chi Minh and the DRV leaders managed to focus on the ‘masses’ to gain their support and loyalty for their leadership. The idea of loyalty to one ruler was definitely not new in Vietnam. Loyalty to the king was not only the name of the movement against the French from 1885 but also a political principle that had been applied in Vietnam for centuries (as I said before, even even supported by French). When the monarchy with the weak king Bảo Đại disappointed people by compromising with the French, it was not surprising that a revolutionary single party could gain loyalty and become a new ruler in a country which was struggling with a plurality: of political parties, French colonizers, and royal dynasty Nguyễn. Simple Nationalism and Monarchy had, according to many, failed.

In Beetham’s terms, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh managed to represent what was a collective will: to break colonialism, eliminate illiteracy and increase living standards. Ho Chi Minh was not immediately promising a communist future but instead he promised an independent Vietnam through a path that engaged millions of Vietnamese: through the

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<sup>130</sup> Lenin’s Theses were an attempt to apply Marxist doctrine on agrarian pre-capitalist societies in Asia and elsewhere; in practice the path to communism for these agrarian societies has two phases, one is to create a broad front from all of the nationalists (bourgeois democratic movement which contains peasants), and communist groups to defeat colonialism, then skipping the capitalist phase and instead by propaganda all of the peasants will be re-educated for a revolutionary purpose and only in the second phase was the Marxists class struggle and dictatorship of proletariat (Lenin, 1920).

promotion of the right values, emulation served well as a tool which was increasing legitimacy.

### **6. 1. 2. Indoctrination**

Ho Chi Minh and the Việt Minh gradually imported and developed a new doctrine. Even if the changes were fast, they were not entirely abrupt. In a clever way, by connecting the old and the new, the ideas and concepts of a Vietnamese communist regime gradually penetrated Vietnamese villages. We saw that Ho Chi Minh employed many traditional features, including symbolism, in emulation movements. These were, for example, traditional lucky numbers, folk pictures *Đồng Hồ*, symbols which Vietnamese like (the paper fan), emulation hero's altars and connection to worship of ancestors, spirits, etc. This all helped to bridge differences.

Again, in Beetham's terms, the new Vietnamese government achieved a presentation of itself as the core and foundational defender of Vietnamese independence, appealing for mobilisation around values of patriotism, including personal sacrifice, collective action, education, etc. These values were very well known from the past and the contemporary promise of their availability for common people was acceptable for many. Mobilisation around these values was strong as all were ultimately tied to the highest value of them all: preserving independent Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh managed to promote these values in connection with the new ones. In the process of establishing of emulation movements, people were learning a new and Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist vocabulary. Some of the expressions were new, for example 'economic plan', or 'class struggle' which was imprinted the collective mind during the Land Reform. Some expressions were known in principle: communal life with its traditions of communal land ('*công-dien*') could be made to seem close to collective life; historical heroes were close to emulation heroes; large scale mobilisation against external aggression was close to large scale mobilisation of emulation movements. The new expressions and principles of Marxism-Leninism were introduced gradually, one after another, and they were always connected to many traditionally accepted values of patriotism. Ho Chi Minh appealed to the need for the new life, but that new life was still based on tradition.

The emulation movements gradually 'taught' people that things are more efficient when done in collectives. The collective was necessary for defeating France and also for

work, such as farming. As we wrote before, Vietnam had a good basis for thinking in terms of ‘community’ from the past before the French conquest. That does not necessarily link to the sense of group work but it could be, in the sense of high placement of ‘community’ (as opposed to individual). As we saw on the case of the Duyệt Hải Wave, Ho Chi Minh in his speech at the factory emphasized again that individualism is not acceptable. At that point Ho Chi Minh was highly respected as he had promised the end of colonialism and he had delivered, he had overall both authority and legitimacy despite the scar from the Land Reform. The same message went from the exemplary Bắc Lý School. The success was possible thanks to the commune’s inhabitants and the teachers, who together as a collective built the school and improved teaching techniques.

Patriotism was placed at the centre of emulation during the 1950s, and the shift in rhetoric came with the first Five Year Plan (1961-65) when ‘socialist construction’ became as important as patriotism. As we saw, Lê Thanh Nghị at the 1962 Third National Emulation Congress emphasized that all of the success in patriotic emulation movements is thanks to the new socialist regime. Love for the country and love for socialism became linked together in tandem to, it was said, secure victory. (Chapter 3, Section 3.9.6.). By making this connection, the Vietnamese communist leaders attempted to bridge the gap in legitimacy which started to emerge after French colonialism ended in 1954.

To summarize this, patriotism and socialism now became twin brothers and ‘patriotic emulation’ was the label that represented this connection. The Party tried to ensure that Patriotism, which had large support in society, helped to secure legitimacy also for the new doctrine in 1960s. This however, we cannot be so sure about. We do not know enough about popular views in early 1960s, and more research on this topic is needed.

To support patriotism as a source of legitimacy, the DRV seemed to employ many strategies that created additional legitimacy effect.

### **6. 1. 3. Emulation Movements: Seduction, Persuasion and Manipulation**

Seduction is the art of ‘making other people think it was their idea’ (Lamb, p. 20) and whilst persuasion is a more vocal ‘brother’ of seduction, manipulation is a specific form of persuasion which influences our emotions or distorts our understanding of what is beneficial for us while making us to do something. We start to see these elements within ‘legitimizing

strategies' throughout the emulation movements in Vietnam. An analytical key here is the nature of emulation itself, which seeks to secure copies of some pre-existing model or exemplar.

We saw above in Chapter 2 that Lenin's writings described communist Saturdays in terms of 'initiative' or 'great initiative' and then practically prescribed that other 'spontaneous actions' should happen exactly like this. The prescription of 'spontaneous actions' that are mimicry is, obviously enough an oxymoron but expresses the principle of seduction and persuasion. Another example from the same chapter is the action of Alexei Stakhanov in the USSR. Some sources claim that it was Stakhanov's own idea and some that he was inspired by Stalin's speech to work overtime far past his quota. We do not really know the real motivation, but Stalin's propaganda offices presented it purposefully as Stakhanov's own initiative. Others were then to compete to mimic him as an emulation model.

In Vietnam too, though we can see traces of seduction and persuasion, it is impossible to know the extent, not least as we lack clear information on popular motivations and perceptions. Some people were clearly seduced by the prestige of the emulation titles and rewards or by the respect with which emulation heroes were treated. Given the histories we can find, it is also clear that many were not seduced. As I showed, emulation was related to raise in social status. We saw many stories of emulation heroes who became publicly admired personalities, and met with high politicians, often including Ho Chi Minh. I showed how the system of 'test communes' led to the seduction of people from the communes. This seduction was related to the increase in their well-being, presents for the communes and general fame. We saw the use of favourable numbers in the names of emulation movements, and of connections to tradition to attract attention of people. We could see persuasion techniques on the case of Đại Phong Cooperative. Phạm Ngọc Định, a head of cooperative described the success of persuasion as encouraging people to work as two and even at night followed by the eagerness of people to do that (Chapter 3, Section 3.9.3.). Ho Chi Minh often wrote articles about the successes of villages or units in the newspapers, presenting the rewards that people have if they emulate. We saw this for example on the case of Đại Phong Commune which not only grew but also achieved middle-class living standards. On top of it all the cooperative received a tractor and attention from the state (Chapter 3, Section 3.9.3.). If we look at the Ho Chi Minh rhetoric around emulation movements, we can see the thrust of persuasion very often. His saying 'emulation is patriotism and patriotism means we have to emulate' carries the message that everyone who is a real patriot needs to emulate. Another slogan is even more

seeking to be persuasive as it clearly shows the reward for emulation efforts: ‘Every person emulates, every sector emulates, we will definitely win, enemy will certainly loose’. Here Ho Chi Minh clearly appeals to the broad mass of audiences, assuring them that the main reward, victory over the French, will be achieved if everyone emulates. As the victory over the French was the reason for Ho Chi Minh’s strong mandate and people’s main motivation to act for their country, however, this opened the door to application of Marxist-Leninist doctrine in Vietnam. Persuading people to emulate with the anticipation of reward of better future was a very powerful strategy for the DRV government. It was slowly connecting patriotism and socialism so that the legitimizing effect transfers to the ‘socialist side’. This ‘spill-over effect’ was a clever tactic from the DRV government.

In the history of emulation movements in general and in Vietnam in particular we can see many features of manipulation. One of the primary manifestations of manipulation was the appeal to ‘sacrifice’ and ‘selflessness’ in emulation movements. That often involved sacrificing of health or family members for the alleged higher values. Personal interests, people were told, needed to be put aside. We can see how regime leaders appealed to the common people regarding the need to sacrifice, showing pictures of injured patriots who were celebrated for their actions and who were supposed to be emulated. The good example from China was the biographies of heroes presented by Sheridan (1968).

In Vietnam, appeal to the emotions in connection to emulation movements and patriotism is strongly visible if we look at the forms used for the stories of the concrete people, emulation heroes, as they retold their stories many times to different audiences and these tellings were retold through propaganda. We presented for example the case of La Văn Cầu who continued fighting after he let his colleagues amputate his arm when injured in the 1950 Border Campaign. We also mentioned the story of Ngô Gia Khâm, the chemical engineer who suffered face and hand burns in an accident when making hand grenades. These were two of the first seven emulation heroes who were celebrated at the 1952 First National Emulation Congress and widely publicized. La Văn Cầu spent nine months after the Congress travelling and telling his story to army units, guerrillas, etc. The young girl Võ Thị Sáu was a similar case but given her young age the story was even more emotionally engaging and aimed at younger audiences. The emotional power of these stories when combined with the appeal to emulate their brave actions was for many Vietnamese a very emotionally strong incentive to join in and contribute to the struggle.

Even if we can only find indirect evidence of legitimacy effects, this allows us to conclude that they were certainly a part of the positive legitimacy dynamics produced by the historical emulation movements.

#### **6. 1. 4. Spread of Ho Chi Minh's Charisma**

On September 1945, when Ho Chi Minh read the Proclamation of independence of Vietnam at Ba Đình Square, many people were wondering who he was. As Ho Chi Minh got into general cognizance, he appeared to be a man of personal integrity. Not only his modest way of life but his passion to liberate Vietnam and his hard work appealed to many people.

The following passage considers Weber's characteristics of charisma and its role for the Vietnamese legitimacy.

Weber's account of charisma is tied to a heroic personality or exemplary character of an individual person, and whilst this could fit the description of Ho Chi Minh as we now have it, this was not immediately the case when he became president of the DRV. Only through his actions, speeches and numerous travels to various Vietnamese provinces and areas did he become known and respected. He was the person who had proclaimed independence 1945 and over the next few years he gradually became a national hero. As such he represented the promise that he would protect independent Vietnam from colonialism. Yet Weber suggested that charisma is not accessible to ordinary people, which stands in contrast to the way in which, when emulation heroism started, it created the effect of charisma replicated in many emulation heroes, who somehow carried as real human beings the values Ho Chi Minh represented, above all 'patriotism'. The symbolic meetings of emulation heroes and models with Ho Chi Minh and other personalities close to him was an important ritual that confirmed the bond between the regime and a person or collective who would in the future manifest and distribute the 'good word' about the regime. As we saw, the new Vietnamese government made sure that emulation heroes visited large groups of people to tell them 'in the flesh' about their own story. From the stories printed in the Vietnamese media more recently we know that the Vietnamese leadership makes sure that emulation heroes (for ex. Nguyễn Thị Chiên), despite having passed away, are promoted as that 'little piece of Ho Chi Minh's charisma', which they represent.

Weber's charismatic personality also overthrows custom and tradition. What Ho Chi Minh attempted and managed to overthrow was the existing order, but this did not mean all customs and tradition but more the regime and values set by the French with the collaboration of the Vietnamese monarchy and others. These values were individualistic in their nature and in Ho Chi Minh's eyes were causing the disconnect between members of Vietnamese society and as a result also were causing an inability for the Vietnamese to act together. The monarchy was connected to rigid hierarchies where being born in a high social position meant that large groups of people were living in insubordination. All this had to change. What could be kept from tradition and customs, and were highly valued, were patriotic values from the past and the spiritual life of the villages, which often included cults of past national heroes such as Trần Hưng Đạo.

After the DRV was proclaimed in the North in 1945, Ho Chi Minh and his adherents started to create new norms and rules via Presidential Decrees. Call for emulation and establishing of the committee, as well as the committee's membership, the Institute of Medals and other emulations organs were all established by Presidential decrees. Many French taxes and regulations were abandoned. The new regulations were created on the spot, when they were needed. This is clearly visible in the appointment of Hoàng Đạo Thúy as a Secretary General of the Central Committee for Patriotic Emulation. (Chapter 3, Section 3.7.1.) As we showed above (Chapter 3 Section 3.7.4.), the form of the official state documents, specifically the lack of any unified form, and a visibly improvised shape, reflects this 'situational' creation of new norms. This is another feature that fits with the Weber's charismatic authority when he talks about 'case to case decisions'.

Another aspect, that is important in Weber's account of charisma is the notion of 'mission'. Charismatic personality is on a mission, and so are others from the leader's 'charismatic community' and their followers. In case of Vietnam, the mission was to break the colonialism and corrupted monarchy to create a 'new life' which was specified as more just, richer and overall with the people as active participants instead of passive objects. Emulation movements served this purpose well as they were presented as a tool to build this new life and for the peasants how to be active subjects. Emulation was based on voluntary work for the country, required selfless acting and sacrifice. As we showed, Ho Chi Minh in his speech to emulation fighters from Duyên Hải argued that individualistic thinking about personal promotion, material enrichment and careerism did not have any place in the new regime. As a part of the mission, emulation served also the purpose of redistribution of food



(‘Eliminate Hunger’ movement), volunteering teachers were teaching within Popular education classes (‘Eliminate Illiteracy’), People of all ages and genders joined the army (‘Eliminate Foreign Invaders’, ‘Three Most’ or ‘Three Ready movement’). In other words, volunteering was a basis of emulation movements and people volunteered for the mission of independent Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh’s charismatic legitimacy was deeply rooted in this mission.

Weber distinguishes in his writings between change from without and change from within. Charismatic authority is categorized as being experienced as change from within, which means that the change is a result of the suffering experienced by people, and the meaning given to this by the charismatic leader, instead of appearing to be some solution that authority presents to an existing turmoil. The suffering of many people in Vietnam in the years before the 1945 August Revolution was enormous. Both the French and Japanese used resources from Vietnam and drained food supplies, and the resulting famine killed many. Ho Chi Minh’s charisma gave meaning to these experiences.

By contrast, change that can be said to come from without happened later in Vietnam as the DRV government launched the movements which improved (at least that was an official narrative) many aspects of Vietnamese life (famine, illiteracy, etc.) before moving on to Socialist Construction. Weber wrote that charismatic authority is short-lived. This change from without could be then interpreted as decline of charismatic authority and routinisation of charisma. However, Ho Chi Minh’s popularity in the years immediately after the 1945 August Revolution was rather gaining than losing. What we could see in Vietnam thus was parallel processes of routinisation and strengthening of charisma. However, it could be also interpreted as the routinisation had not started yet as the transitional phase was still continuing, Ho Chi Minh was gaining his momentum. This was especially visible during the moments when Vietnam achieved some important victories over the French and later over Ngô Đình Diệm’s Republic of Vietnam. These moments were reassuring people, that the path taken in 1945 was the right one. Questions clearly arose later, with Land Reform, and then collectivisation and Socialist Construction before 1964 and the state of the Second Indochina War again invigorated the value of patriotic arguments.

So, if we examine closely the historical trajectory of events in Vietnam, we would have to question what Weber means by ‘short-lived’, and this suggests that charisma as a source of legitimacy and legitimacy effects coexisted with other sources, and the relationships between them varied over time. For clarification of this problem we can see the position of

charismatic authority in Vietnam as different in two distinct 'missions'. The first one was charisma tied together with the struggle against French colonialism which officially ended in 1954 when the French were defeated at Điện Biên Phủ and Vietnam was divided into two. The second mission was to build socialism to create some type of 'better political order' or 'new life', during which in 1964 the Second Indochina War started. These two missions were tied together but especially at the beginning of the DRV, the second mission was presented only in the small doses; the dose was then increased from the 1950s

This interpretation means that the charismatic authority of Ho Chi Minh needs to be seen in historical time and as a process: the charisma gained from the termination of French colonialism helped the charisma which took Vietnam on the communist path. A central question is what this change in the role allocated his charisma did to affect his charisma. The routinisation in Vietnam thus is not so much an event as part of a wider process. If we were to interpret it as a process which started after Ho Chi Minh passed away in 1969 we need to deal with the problem of why we can see signs of routinisation far earlier. This discussion comes down to ask what Ho Chi Minh's charisma did for the legitimacy of the Vietnamese communist regime, and when, and what effects this use did upon that very charisma, which is the point underlying Weber's focus upon routinisation.

The 1945 August Revolution was a historical mile stone and Ho Chi Minh with his charismatic community ('Việt Minh') had been preparing for that moment since the early 1940s, if not earlier. The 'mission' that at that time attracted the majority of the population in Vietnam was anti-French in its nature. The August Revolution was the first serious attempt to end colonialism in Vietnam since the 1880s and as such had tremendous popular support. A person who made this 'mission' his own life mission, Ho Chi Minh, despite not being very well-known, quickly gained attention and authority. This personal authority can be characterized as charismatic as the mission had the ultimate goal of breaking the old French order and had a substantial number of followers (though somewhat conservative in Weber's terms). As the French refused to give up on Indochina, and armed conflict broke out in 1946, that, however, only strengthened the ties between charismatic authority, community and followers and mobilised new participants. The campaigns that started immediately in 1945 aimed at areas which needed to be addressed before the Vietnamese could even think about the end of colonialism. The new DRV government needed to keep momentum, which meant that people needed to be mobilised. While mobilisation immediately after the August

Revolution was to a large extent spontaneous, in later phases it was important to encourage it. Emulation movements introduced in 1948 provided such encouragement.

The legitimacy that the new DRV government had thanks to the mission of ending French colonialism was very strong. Ho Chi Minh used this legitimacy by introducing the first emulation movements with the motto: Eliminate hunger, illiteracy and foreign invaders. Therefore, while emulation movements were on the face of it a completely foreign import, Ho Chi Minh adapted them for his own needs and granted them legitimacy. As we saw, the motives of the first three emulation movements were repeated in later movements: in terms of topics, movements always included military movements, educational movements and movements for increasing production (particularly in agriculture). When French colonialism ended in 1954, the southern Republic of Vietnam, supported by the US and then as American troops came to Vietnam in increasing numbers after 1964, directly the US, provided new 'foreign invaders' and with that renewed the old source of legitimacy until 1975. Emulation movements like 'Three Ready' or 'Two Excellent' facilitated this connection with the same appeal for the patriotism (but additionally also socialism).

In Beetham's understanding of the problem, Ho Chi Minh became an authority which was generally believed to be the rightful authority as he exercised his power towards the ends that large a part of society supported. As it was a new Vietnamese beginning, the norms were created anew but they were underpinned by, and appeared to manifest, core values Vietnamese society believed in.

### **6. 1. 5. Mobilisation and Consent**

Consent (both surrogate and real) was expressed in the willingness (or lack of opposition) of people to fight, grow, breed, mechanize, and enter the collective or brigade.

David Beetham identified mobilisation in communist regimes as a form of 'surrogate consent' which publicly expressed commitment to the rule of the Party. In Vietnamese historical emulation movements, however, the consent was predominantly real as many people genuinely believed in the three values Ho Chi Minh represented and articulated. As I wrote above, the first emulation movements were designed to mobilise people to the three purposes which all quite plausibly needed addressing at the time. The situation with hunger was unbearable and the concrete measures taken by the DRV government were a matter of

necessity. The Movement for elimination of hunger for example, was incentivized by rewards for those who were able to grow more rice or breed more cattle, who improved the dykes or conserved the water. The reward system was a way to show appreciation for the efforts of peasants and at the same time improve the hunger situation. Of course, positive focus on the agriculture was welcomed in a predominantly agrarian country and in face of the French treatment of peasants<sup>131</sup> this was a welcomed change. Peasants could now gain some privileges and respect if they worked well. The hunger problem improved despite the continuing war with France, and was caused by many factors like Chinese aid, saving, redistributing via emulation and emulation perhaps also contributed.

As we saw, in the late 1950s, the government started to encourage and push peasants to join cooperatives. The Đại Phong Emulation campaign from Quảng Bình Province was a part of this process. Propaganda of Đại Phong had and even today has a large coverage as the newspapers write about the stories of past Emulation Heroes, see for example (Kiều Mai Sơn 2016; Việt Quang 2016; Phạm Hải Yến 2009b, etc.).

The ‘show’ of success was always important for the motivation of others and an appeal to emulation of this success was secured by the rewards and visits of important personalities. As we saw, Đại Phong Cooperative received a tractor from Ho Chi Minh (Dương Sông Lam 2013). People presumably participated in the cooperatives for different reasons, some just did not want to have problems, and some were inspired by the awards or options to gain the reward, respect or even positive attention from the authorities. While the consent of people to join cooperatives might have been surrogate, the consent to the three ‘higher goals’ was real (Marr 2013). This idea of mobilisation and subsequent reward must have been seductive for many as in the previous regimes, there were no rewards for hard work and not everyone could experience a sort of Vietnamese ‘American dream’ like emulation heroes did (Tréglodé 2012).

As it was observable in Europe, people are generally devoted when it comes to protection of the values they believe in and especially when it comes to the very existence of the nation. Vietnamese consent to/mobilisation around the values of patriotism was undeniable. Losing their land to a cooperative controlled by local cadres was quite another.

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<sup>131</sup> For details see for example book written by Ngo Vinh Long (1991) *Before the Revolution. The Vietnamese Peasants under the French*.

### **6. 1. 6. Responsibility Sharing**

Historical emulation movements provided a tool to encourage people to contribute to the war of resistance against the French. We saw that from the beginning of patriotic emulation, the government appealed to people with words like ‘all of the people must eagerly volunteer’, ‘everyone has to participate in patriotic emulation’, ‘it is up to people’, etc., see (Chapter 3, Section 3.6.). In the context of French colonialism where people were mostly ‘used’, this appeal to their importance and reference to indispensability was a positive.

In the situation that Vietnam was in, there was no other way that Vietnam could have won without the mass participation of the Vietnamese. Suggestively, this however, also taught people the feeling of responsibility for the future. In today’s Vietnam, the VCP still benefits from these lessons.

In terms of legitimacy and legitimacy strategies, responsibility sharing was important, even if some peasants were dissatisfied with their new roles and tasks, and some were removed in remote areas (ethnic minorities), some feared (Catholics), Kinh ethnic peasants understood that there is a lot at stake, after all, under the French, and they were used to work hard. Many peasants were initially enthusiastic that they were witnessing a change towards better life for which they were ready to work and accept their responsibilities. In the new period after *Đổi Mới*, this shared responsibility is still important, so, when the mistakes are done, it is not just the Party who is responsible for them. Yet this, when the Party fails to solve problems it seems alone responsible for, such as corruption and a lack of political reform, again erodes the tensions between foundational values and lived realities inherent in the Party’s chosen emulation movements: in 1945, Ho Chi Minh was far more a national leader than a communist radical.

### **6. 1. 7. Building Party, Mass organisations and Administrative**

In Lenin’s writings one of the functions of Communist Saturdays is purification of the Party. Emulation was thus considered something like a ‘testing time’ for possible future members to show that they are devoted to voluntarily work for the party and the cause of revolution. Vietnamese Workers Party was in similar need, it needed to establish itself, raise the membership, build loyal administrative apparatus, and organise society in mass organisations. Even if emulation in Vietnam did not necessarily mean admission to the Party,

it was often the case, as the titles were considered as an important contribution to a person's resume (Tréglodé 2012). This was especially the case when an individual obtained the top title of 'Emulation Hero'. Emulation Heroes praised at the First National Emulation Congress gained important positions and Party membership, for example in the Central Committee, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, various Political and military Departments, etc.

In terms of Mass Organisations, whilst more research is needed, we saw that different strategies were employed to create the incentives for people to join Mass Organisations. Membership in Mass Organisations was the easiest way to participate in emulation and gain benefits as the Mass Organisations helped with the administrative processes around titles and rewards.

If social progress in the periods before was tied to education, social progress in the DRV was extended to potentially anyone, who was willing to work hard, sacrifice the most, produce the most, or come up with innovation that was valuable for the country. For many Vietnamese, this created motivation to participate, for those, who won the titles and climbed up the social ladder, it created a sense of loyalty, with that, consent, support and stability. Importantly, this created a positive legitimacy dynamic.

### **6. 1. 8. Link between Party and People**

Ho Chi Minh for his whole life emphasized that the Party had to be close to people (gan dan). As a part of their legitimising strategy the DRV leaders broke the traditional gap between authority and people and presented themselves not as equal but as those who talk to people and hear them. Not only the DRV leaders but a growing group of new Emulation Heroes and Fighters became a link between Party and people. Ho Chi Minh made sure that he visited the classes and mass meetings which were part of emulation movements in education, or Duyên Hải Factory where he spoke to the workers, etc. We also saw the description of the then Chief of Đại Phong Cooperative, Nguyễn Văn Hoàng, who described general Nguyễn Chí Thanh as leaving a deep impression on the people because of his working style, primarily for his close relationship to the people. Again, these links were important as they created a loyalty and trust. The visits and speeches were documented and spread via media thus creating further links. Related to the theories from the first chapter, in Weber's sense, Ho Chi Minh was extending his charismatic community. However, in Beetham's sense, he created a link which was so important for facilitating consent.

### **6. 1. 9. Achieving Practical Results**

Based on available data it is impossible to judge with certainty how much emulation movements contributed to the solving of the real issues DRV dealt with. It is clear that there was substantial agreement that these were significant issues, and the first three movements were clearly targeted to famines, illiteracy/ignorance and the elimination of French colonialism. How this translated into the politics of the situation has to be inferred from the content of political actions such as emulation movements and how these seem to have been crafted to meet the political goals of central political actors such as Ho Chi Minh. What seems to be important is a combination of the outcome (tackling or solving these issues) together with the official presentation of this success which was attributed to emulation movements and lack of alternatives. This focus on practical results and the sharing between people and Party of their origins relates to the question of the presence or absence of a ‘search for legitimacy’, and so the relative lack or recourse to coercion in a post-revolutionary regime (see my discussion of Levitsky and Way above). It reduces, as we have seen, the extent to which Party leadership alone should be given credit, and links Ho Chi Minh’s charisma to popular values, which are openly viewed and propagandised as traditional (and so nothing to do with the Party, Marxism-Leninism and Communism).

As I suggested before, the outcomes were most probably the result of as diverse factors as foreign aid, natural conditions, enthusiasm of the Vietnamese and their respect to authorities, and perhaps others but, the politics of the situation is illuminated by the way in which emulation fitted with the Vietnamese pre-Revolutionary experiences and the presence of relatively uncontested positive outcomes brought overall positive legitimacy dynamics. Some groups of people contested this narrative, however, later. That was the case of Catholics, as Marr wrote: “Nonetheless, at the end of 1945, most Catholics appeared to have identified enthusiastically with Ho Chi Minh and the DRV while remaining concerned about the ICP and anti-catholic feelings among some Viet Minh adherents” (Marr 2013, p.433). Many later left the North for the South in 1954.

### **6. 1. 10. Analysis of Historical Emulation Movements: Summary**

The list of functions of emulation movements presented in Chapter 5 helps us to generate an analysis that brings to light many important aspects of the beginnings of the new regime as well as legitimacy and legitimacy effect dynamics.

Perhaps the most important observation is about the political nature of the values that the DRV government with Ho Chi Minh as a president promoted, for these values, traditional and not 'revolutionary', were not contested and were generally supported not only by Ho Chi Minh and Viet Minh but also other groups and a large part of the ethnic Kinh (Vietnamese) population. At the same time, viewed as part of contemporary politics, these values, articulated by communists as part of a large political movement, were experienced as simple, understandable and clearly wrapped in a patriotic label, aiming at and well-suited to the majority peasant population. Something quite new, a new doctrine, was presented as something familiar, tied to selected elements of the Vietnamese pre-colonial tradition, culture, beliefs and symbolism and so not only had its own political power but also eased the process of transition. Ho Chi Minh's charisma, his personality and personal approach to people, as well as his energy and apparent firm belief in these values contributed to the growth of an unprecedented charisma, in terms of its power and its qualities. Mobilisation helped to carry and develop that charisma and the communist values of the new doctrine, and its inherent requirements in terms of regime survival, were this 'hidden in open sight' behind a patriotism. Via mobilisation, the peasants provided their consent to the activities of the DRV, and for the majority it is reasonable to conclude that this consent was predominantly genuine. Emulation contributed to the new membership of the Party and administrative, and to their loyalty. There was then the hiatus of the period of peacetime socialist construction from the late 1950s until 1964, which presumably eroded popular confidence, and then, when the Second Indochina conflict started, it was still the same patriotic values that were presented, sometimes in more developed form and with a different enemy.

We saw that the DRV used many power-techniques to create legitimacy. This of itself argues against the Levitsky and Way position on the easy recourse to coercion. Appeal was made to the traditional old values, to Vietnamese heroic sentiments, creation of habits to sustain mobilisation, persuasion techniques backed by reward system and the promise of prestige, personal growth, etc.<sup>132</sup> The factors which contributed to Ho Chi Minh's overall success were many, war situation with the common enemy, level of education of the

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<sup>132</sup> This thesis does not ask questions about the motivations of South Vietnamese soldiers during the Second Indochina War, many of whom clearly fought bravely and well. Its focus upon communist emulation movements obviously poses implicit questions about the nature of southern propaganda and its efficacy, and American advice and guidance. There is also need for research on the varying motivations and reflections of northern soldiers, many of whom also fought well and bravely, and whose uncles and fathers, and perhaps they themselves, had lived through the 1950s Land Reform and the collectivisation movements of the late 1950s and early 1960s.



Vietnamese population, aid from China, USSR and Soviet Block, etc. but overall as a part of the package, emulation movements contributed to positively in various ways to the strong legitimacy dynamics. Besides the establishing the mechanisms of control, the movements served to the goal of gaining of legitimacy of the new regime, and these two aspects should not be forgotten.

The most delegitimizing event in the historical emulation movements was without a doubt the fact of the underlying communist agenda, initially and perhaps most painfully experienced in the early 1950s Land Reform. It is difficult to assess the Land Reform's precise impact on legitimacy dynamics, we know that the regime apologized for it and survived it, but the damage was large, and the contrast between its language and that of earlier propaganda almost certainly shocking, however, whilst some the opposition was mostly eliminated (this is a partial confirmation of one of the Levitsky and Way's points), many of its targets recovered their positions in the subsequent 'Correction of Errors', so that in those areas the Party lacked the secure rural cadre base (Fforde 1987) – this of course partially denies the position taken by Levitsky and Way and helps explain the Party's need for legitimacy. However, the end of war was an important milestone which was suggestively offset the brutality of Land reform, but it was then followed by the collectivisation campaigns. The regime's officials at that time managed to successfully rule the country, but the question of whether they were or were not a 'legitimate authority' who represented the norms, values and consent of the people remained, explaining their need to use legitimacy effects and avoid coercion, evoking the foundational values and positions taken 'at the beginning' by and through Ho Chi Minh.

## **6. 2. Present-Day Emulation Movements in Vietnam: Legitimacy Dynamics**

Vietnam is a very different country compared to what it was when the first emulation movements were launched in the late 1940s. Not only that, Vietnam is a very different country compared to 1976 when the SRV gained its current name after the North and South were re-united. And again, Vietnam is a very different country compared to 1986 when the Đổi Mới was launched and Vietnam entered 'the new period'. With the transformation of planned economy to mixed economy, massive improvements in material life, peaceful development of the country, increasing level of education, migration to the cities, establishment of a middle class, high percentage of young population and, overall, different

problems to deal with. Yet, what has changed in terms of the country's ability to define and address such problems?

In 1948 the emulation movements were introduced to help to deal with famine, illiteracy and war with French colonialists, all large tasks in a situation of war and Party-State building. The leaders of the DRV dealt with foundational issues of regime survival. Today's emulation movements are in some ways different, for Vietnam wants to be a successful regime, not to just survive. The situation has changed substantially, and the Party is well-established, well-resourced and can deploy political tools, such as television and computerised population control techniques, that are on the surface far more powerful than in the 1950s. Problems to be addressed have diversified and become more complicated. In the situation of large changes, only large problems mattered, whereas in a situation of stability, apparently smaller and more complicated problems come up to the surface. What is also very different is society in Vietnam, society is richer, more educated and more demanding. Yet the central issue of how and by whom problems will be defined and addressed remains, and here the foundational tenets, that linked popular values to the Party-led actions, remain what they were: a focus upon values, upon a shared responsibility, and upon a valid and in part charismatic definition of leadership. Ho Chi Minh was no corrupt communist apparatchik, seeking gain for himself, his relations and his clique; or articulating values that stood in stark contrast to citizens daily experiences of cadres extracting bribes and manipulating the state for personal interest. Rather, his memory and meaning is of a valid and shared effort to seek agreed aims, which meant, as we have seen, that the forms early emulation campaigns took ensured that 'they worked' to secure legitimacy and, in a sense, a valid national agency (though this was not shared by all).

Today's Party-State needs to deal, in stark contrast, with degradation of communist ideology and Party corruption, weak government, fear from China and at the same time economic and ideological dependence on it, increasing inequality, competitive international markets, polluted environment, more demands on the quality of education and healthcare, easier access to information from society, etc. All these things are not only widely discussed in the official media, but, with the exception of corruption per se (though this is addressed through calls to emulate Ho Chi Minh's moral standards) are the stated aims of emulation movements.

Today's Vietnam is not at war, and the country reached middle-income status around 2009, and the VCP and its state seems to be well-organised and resourced, and relatively

stable. Vietnam in the 1990s experienced an important change towards opening of its economy and consequently society, yet, an anachronistic Soviet-style tool like emulation was officially reinvigorated in the process of so called ‘Renewal of Emulation’ in the late 1990s. The question is why? Why does the Vietnamese regime still have recourse to a costly tool which seems so abundant in modern Vietnam, often appearing somewhat quaint as essentially Soviet forms appear in a globalising market-driven society with free internet access? This section will consider this question and argue for the value of seeing the present-day functions of emulation movements as arising from the Vietnamese political issues of legitimacy and legitimacy effects.

### **6. 2. 1. Emulation Movements: Seduction, Persuasion, Manipulation**

At the beginning, in the late 1990s, of the renewed interest in emulation movements, the VCP acknowledged upfront that there is a ‘lack of motivation of individuals and collectives’. Part of the strategy that followed was to re-invigorate interest in Ho Chi Minh’s ideology to remind society about the charisma and the ‘rightness’ of the path that Vietnam was and remains on, they say. Existing rewards and especially the apparently substantial bonuses awarded for success in emulation which I introduced in Chapter 4, still appear designed to serve this purpose. As we saw, for example being awarded the title of ‘National Emulation Hero’ title meant a receiving a gross bonus of 4.5 times salary, and in the case of Medals, it could be up to 46 times a base salary. In a corrupt situation it may be that the net value is less, but details are not available.

Persuasion is an inseparable part of emulation rhetoric in the new period. The VCP produces various narratives to persuade people of its explanation of the situation in Vietnam and the types of problems Vietnam faces. A typical narrative here is to call for a rediscovering of patriotic tradition, spirit of solidarity and self-reliance. This self-reliance plays what I previously described as a ‘sharing responsibility’ function. Vietnamese are encouraged to feel responsible for the prescribed direction of the country and helping to solve the problems that the VCP sets in agenda. We will see below that agenda-setting is a tool through which the VCP persuades society of the necessity of dealing with certain concrete problems (while excluding others). Newspaper articles often describe the stories of first Emulation Heroes, their sacrifices and their ‘modesty’ in current life, appealing to the feelings of society (this is emotional manipulation). We saw this in the case of the reports of Nguyễn Thị Chiên selling

lottery tickets to make a living. An important part of her reported explanation was that she, as a small Party member, did not want anything from the state: ‘it is normal to do more work’ (Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.).

The re-connection of emulation with the personality of ‘Uncle Ho’ can be also interpreted as an attempt to engage with the feelings of people, as Ho Chi Minh is still very much admired in Vietnam. Many of these activities around and within present-day emulation movements remind one of habitual and routinized, yet empty behaviour, especially when we consider the criticisms of ‘formalism’ in emulation movements. The language used appears increasingly staid and weak, especially when compared with the vivid power of wartime propaganda during both the First and Second Indochina Wars.

Although these just discussed are a few examples of ‘legitimacy strategies’, this thesis has referred to many other subtle forms and instances, for example , attempts to persuade of different groups of people about their correct and proper roles in society, especially children and women, narratives about ‘peaceful evolution’ or ‘hostile forces’ and the necessity for people to fight against it, discussions that praise and seek to validate criteria such as Happy Family or Cultural Life, the necessity of sport through telling people that ‘everybody should exercise their bodies according to Ho Chi Minh’s example’, etc. Here the regime presents itself as the correct and legitimate source of definitions of social norms and a leader of society’s attempts to realise them. These strategies are all traceable through my examination in this thesis of the current and past functions of emulation movements.

## **6. 2. 2. Promotion of Values**

The values on which Vietnamese social norms are established in Vietnam in the new period have diversified, often in ways that are contestable (for example, attitudes to social differentiation and sexual mores) so that there is increasingly clear disagreement as society change. With that, it becomes more and more difficult for the VCP to sustain its efforts in monopolizing its dictate of a single set of normative values, and to balance between different sets of values. The old values of patriotism were successfully connected after 1945 (over time) with values from the new communist doctrine. However, another set of values was enabled in Vietnam by opening of its economy and that creates friction. On top of it, even as the old values of patriotism are still rather strong, at least in certain generations, the VCP sometimes contradicts them. And there are also indications that some popular values are

precisely emergent in ways that contest the regime and reflect discontent with it (such as the focus of the Thái Bình protests in 1997 on cadre corruption and illegitimacy).

This is clearly visible at the three major political areas that are forefront in the VCP's 'emulation language': security, environment and education. From the perspective of David Beetham's notion of legitimacy, the values that would be encompassed in a notion of 'collective will' are thus partially clashing, and partially they are simply not shared collectively. The VCP as a single Party whose rhetoric states that it itself has a monopoly on correct knowledge and so awareness and promotion of correct values does not know, it appears, how to deal with these clashes and changes. It is increasingly clear that the Party itself is not united actually on value issues, and the best show case of this is corruption. Building of a communist future was in Vietnam foundationally a rather secondary goal to gaining and sustaining independence and as we can see in current Vietnam and the fears of China, it is still the case. If protection of Vietnam is the 'ends of government' then the VCP increasingly struggles to defend itself as the authority who will secure this. In terms of public affirmation, mass mobilisation also struggles to be something more than 'formalism'.

International security, concretely 'China issues', seem to be currently the most challenging topic that weakens VCP legitimacy. The research here of patriotic emulation from the beginning of its existence in Vietnam, suggests that the reason is clear. The threat of China is perceived in Vietnam as a very real threat to Vietnamese territorial integrity and sovereignty, perhaps the most precious values from the set of values that, foundationally, create together 'patriotism' in Vietnam. There is a big contradiction between the professed content of emulation movements, and the related official policy of protection of borders and waters in Vietnam and firstly, the VCP's inability to act in face of China, and secondly the punishing of its own citizens who actively protest against Chinese behaviour in South China sea. The VCP has showed more than once that economic interest is instead what often drives decisions (Bauxite mining, and the Formosa Steel Plant are but two examples (Chapter 4, Section 4.7.5.)). This, however, in many Vietnamese eyes threatens what Ho Chi Minh and his followers fought for. The clash between the VCP and those who protest against China or those who support these protests is a clash about what is it to be patriotic and popular definitions this clash with those of the Party. As we saw in the case of General Võ Nguyên Giáp and others, not even the VCP is unified on this issue. The VCP is particularly trapped in this case as it is dependent on China in two important areas. Firstly, in the area of trade, as much as Vietnamese governments attempt to avoid the dependence on China, as we saw most

recently on the enthusiastic approach towards joining the TPP<sup>133</sup> (Dien Luong 2016). China is Vietnam's second largest partner in terms of exports (after the United States) and the largest import partner.<sup>134</sup> This creates substantial leverage for China. Second, in the area of ideology, there is an amount of dependence, as, because they are two of the five last existing 'communist regimes', the ideological relationship is an important one.

Based on degree of expressed opposition to the regime, the environment is a second area that increasingly creates a largely negative effect on regime legitimacy. The lack of a national emulation movement which would be targeted specifically to environment together with the inadequate environmental awards and lack of effective policies are indicative of a substantial problem in Vietnam, that the VCP lacks tools to deploy in response. There is no doubt that voluntary youth activities ('Green Summer') are an important contribution to the development of the Vietnamese countryside. Their activities in environmental protection are important and useful, but they cannot possibly influence larger air, land and sea polluters, many of whom have good political support and can evade laws and popular complaints. In medical vocabulary, the VCP leaders treat the symptoms not the cause. Emulation movements teach people to grow trees and make areas green, clean and beautiful, yet even in this simple showcase the VCP has clearly failed in the eyes of many. Compared with the national security issue, the population often has direct actual experience of the costs of pollution. In this context, the Vietnamese authorities cutting of thousand trees in Hanoi in one day created large protests. Or alternatively, in face of ecological catastrophe (dead fish), the Vietnamese government was seen as not acting. Ecological issues should be the focus of a governmental national programme; however, they are currently not and as Vietnam is developing, the large industrial projects and clientelist ties are given priority over the environment, and this is clear. It is possible that one reason that the VSP has not had recourse to emulation movements in this policy area is that it fears that, given corruption and the power of polluters, it would open a 'Pandora's Box' of popular unrest that it could not control.

The problem is clearly tied to clashing values. People start to realize that patriotism – especially on the part of the VCP - is not only related to protection from China, it also means

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<sup>133</sup> Trans Pacific Partnership was a trade agreement between 12 countries (including Vietnam) which border Pacific Ocean signed in February 2012 aimed at the deepening of the economic ties between the TPP countries. After the election of the US President Donald Trump, the US pulled out from the agreement. As a consequence, a new agreement between 11 remaining countries was signed called The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) ('TPP: What Is...', 2017).

<sup>134</sup> Data from OEC: <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/vnm/#Imports>

also securing a clean environment in their country and they perceive this issue as ‘apolitical’ which means that they do not generally fear to express their opinion. If the VCP and the regime it represents do not realize that the political issues of China and ecology are taken as symbols of a ‘new patriotism’ they could face significant challenges. We could see that the largest opposition, and thus the greatest challenge to regime legitimacy Vietnam experiences, when different generations and people with various social statuses/classes can feel strongly about a single topic, and that this engages with how the regime is perceived and what it does and does not do, not least in articulating problems and deploying tools, such as emulation, that its says can help to solve the problem.

This has happened in Vietnam in multiple cases. Perhaps the most opposition in Vietnam is related to protests related to the environment and China. As we saw in the case of bauxite mining, not only Vietnamese society at large but also important Party figures such as General Giáp, as well as scientists, students and their parents, could relate to the fear of Chinese activities within the country itself, and the consequences of this presence in strategically important area in Vietnam – the Central Highlands, where the crucial battles that saw the defeat of southern forces occurred in 1975. The same could be seen in case of the poisoned fish. Not only fisherman and their families from the affected provinces but also young people and people in the cities protested against the authorities’ lack of action towards the Formosa steel plant. Besides these, I have discussed land protests and there are also workers’ strikes that also challenge VCP legitimacy. If they were separate occurrences with usually a single generation of protesters, they might challenge the VCP less, however, as we saw in the case of Đồng Tâm Village, the challenge can be substantial if the law and practices around land do not change.

Further, as we have seen the emulation movements have seen the Party articulate and refer to foundational values that should legitimise the regime, or secure legitimising effects, linking particular issues to these broad narratives. It is the Party that can be seen setting up the high standards of Ho Chi Minh’s charismatic morality and behavioural norms, which issues such as China, the ecology, land problems and corruption then all suggest that the Party itself has failed to meet its own professed standards.

When considering the problem of values, we have to also discuss the education sector. To emphasize again, education is traditionally considered very important in the Vietnamese value system. There is no surprise, as we have seen, that the Vietnamese government launched emulation movement to eliminate illiteracy in 1948 or that the current leadership

promotes multiple emulation movements in education sector, not least of which is to deal with declines in morality reflected in many areas (such as in examinations, see above Chapter 4 Section 4.7.2.). The shift, however, is large: fixing illiteracy in the very early days of the regime and at the start of a war of national liberation appear very different from fixing the demand for a good quality and internationally-competitive education system. Emulation movements in the education sector clearly show how the VCP fails to address the real problems in modern Vietnam, having defined them as problems and deployed one of its main political tools, emulation movements, to solve them.

I introduced three present-day emulation movements in the education sector, and one of these focused on reducing cheating and the ‘disease of achievement’. The VCP decided that students in Vietnam need to stop cheating and that chasing the achievement while using cheating is simply wrong. This was interpreted as a disease of capitalism, rather than due to the lack of morality amongst teachers and officials in the sector and was therefore used ideologically. This defined the causes of the problem as ‘external’ to the VCP with its socialist values and ideology. Yet, if we look at both the ideological and practical functions of the emulation movements, this movement seems to be failing in both aspects.

First, the VCP shifted the financial burden off the state budget to individuals, parents, who have to pay substantial school fees, and ‘envelop money’ in many cases, so often the whole extended family has to contribute to children’s education which creates immense pressure on child and family and supports social differentiation. In the corrupt daily environment, also, where bribes are a daily routine, the system creates incentives to deal with the pressures through these bribes. The attempt to ‘externalise’ the causes of the situation is easily taken to show a failure of the VCP to acknowledge that it itself projects its regime as the source of change and progress, that it set up the system and so exposes itself to arguments that it is not ‘capitalism’ but the choice they made that is at the root of the problems and cannot be overlooked. But, with capitalism to blame, the search for legitimacy has resulted in a wide public awareness of problems, so, on the practical side, there are even more serious problems related to this emulation movement, named by people from the sector or by people who are part of education system as parents or students. The emulation movement, when scrutinised, does not stand up well: the particular problems that the VCP tries to address are problems of plagiarism and buying of academic titles. But taking its official rationale at face value, this movement appears to have a really low chance to efficiently deal with these limited issues considering the blame is put on capitalism, students or teachers who invigilate at



exams. There are no practical solutions ‘on the table’ as how to fix a situation where students basically have to ‘carry bags of money’ to schools and universities, and this suggests to many people that the system as a whole needs to be changed so that there is no necessity or option to pay bribes and there is an anti-plagiarism system in place. The ‘hot potato’ therefore ends up, again, in the hands of the VCP, this time as a general political problem relating to its regime and its capacity to do what the VCP has itself said needs doing.

It seems, that in terms of values, ‘collective will’ is in Vietnam not represented well. This has a large negative impact on regime legitimacy.

### **6. 2. 3. Remedy for the Degeneration of Communist Doctrine**

The historical emulation movements were a part of the big task of indoctrinating the population, but present-day current emulation movements, however, struggle with the very different problem, that of degradation of communist doctrine, the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s ideology. That can be observed in the movement ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Example’ (SFHE).

Different parts of this particular emulation movement seem to be both positive or negative impacts upon regime legitimacy. In terms of ideological functions, this movement covers the gamut of possibilities. The SFHE movement was designed to solve the crisis of the degeneration of communist ideology which has in Vietnam the shape that Ho Chi Minh gave it, that is Ho Chi Minh’s ideology. Why is it important? Firstly, Vietnamese independence related to the Revolution launched by Ho Chi Minh had huge positive effect on legitimacy and the VCP tries to renew this foundational effect by renewing interest in Ho Chi Minh’s ideology. After the economic reform (Đổi Mới), people and even Party members started to enjoy the market economy and its advantages. The market economy created opportunities and freedoms that they did not have before and on top of it, Vietnam entered a phase of rapid development. At the level of the whole country, it gave many the hope that Vietnam will become respected, in many senses, including what Vietnamese call being seen as ‘not small’.

There is no doubt that the campaign and movement sought to serve the purpose of reversing the degeneration of ideology. What is in Vietnam called ‘social evils’ serves as a warning for a society which is more and more individualistic, enjoys consumption, and has a louder voice when it comes to everyday issues, such as the environment, education, healthcare

or China. The VCP's calls for saving, unity, cultural life, happy family life or fight with degradation of morality are perhaps heard among some from the older generations but younger people, even if they have the sentiment of mutual help and working for Vietnam, often want the advantages of the free market. In the VCP's eyes, these are dangerous, because the loss of ideological base means a lack of control that could eventually lead to the loss of monopoly of power.

The VCP uses the term 'reorganisation of the Party' to address the degradation of the 'morality' of its own members. The problems go down to corruption which is a practical issue. Corruption, to be curbed, requires opening of the processes, transparency and efficient mechanisms to tackle it, not the ideological readings of texts that were written when Vietnam was in a completely different situation. Party ideological self-control is a part of this broader function. The SFHE movement is thus easily seen as 'missing the point', and, worse, deploys the 'big card' of Ho Chi Minh to little effect, thus eroding the charisma that historically his image carried with it.

The VCP seems to be ideologically torn. First, it allowed market economy to enter the Vietnamese environment, but if the current leadership is realizing that these two ideologies have to coexist, they seem to have concluded that it is better if they coexist under the label of the communist one (Ho Chi Minh's version). However, it is a fact that people in Vietnam overall like their market economy, and Ho Chi Minh's ideology was formed under conditions of central-planning and deep hostility to capitalism. According to the Pew Research Centre from 2014, 95% of Vietnamese support the free market system<sup>135</sup>; 94% believe that the next generation has a better future; and 88% people that they have better opportunities at home than abroad (Pew Global Survey 2014).

The communist ideology, however, is not as effective or seductive as the capitalist one. The prescriptions of the SFHE movement are clear: Party members and cadres should avoid corruption and waste, they should be close to people, take personal responsibility, try to self-improve, teach others the right views on the Party, etc. Party members and civil servants are thus to study Ho Chi Minh's ideas and behave according to them. However, various documents show that the VCP struggles with finances for the movement, lack of enthusiasm amongst Party members, standardisation and routinisation what should be taught and no

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<sup>135</sup> The question asked was formulated as follows: "if most people are better off in a free-market economy even though some people are rich and some are poor" (Pew Global Survey 2014).

practical impact, see for example (Directive No. 23 CT/TW 2003; Directive No. 3 CT/TW 2011; Directive No. 05/CT/TW, 2016; Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 11th National Congress of the Party 2012). Despite the campaign having started in 2006 and continuing to this day across three stages, it is in the self-evaluation of the Party rather ineffective (Ibid.).

There is no doubt that the VCP has benefitted from economic liberalisation, both in terms of support from society and in terms of many Party members' own opportunities at home, and also internationally. The problem with this source of legitimacy is that the popularity of capitalism could be seen as a threat as people (including party officials at the local levels) are forgetting communist ideals, or at least failing to follow them. If the historical emulation movements served indoctrination, then the current movements in Vietnam can be said to serve as a remedy for that very doctrine. In terms of legitimacy or legitimacy effect, this movement seem to be producing rather confused dynamics. There are too many examples of corruption to simply ignore it. These cases directly affect people, for example when it comes to land use rights and their trading amongst Party-state actors. These issues directly deflate legitimacy. Đồng Tâm Village is a good example of this deflation. The Party's SFHE movement directly prescribes cadres acting in accordance to promises (a principle advocated by ho Chi Minh), yet this principle was quickly broken when people from Dong Tam village who had been promised that they would not be prosecuted were later prosecuted. Of course, there are some positive effects of the movements related to the sentiment attachment of many to the values attributed to Ho Chi Minh, which are attractive to many people in Vietnam, but if even the Party members do not hold themselves accountable to these values, the positive effects of the SFHE movement will seem weak.

In sum, the Party as a whole, and so the regime, struggles with their own member's lack of respect for communist doctrine and its perpetuation. This actually unmasks a deep crisis which the VCP is facing. Foundationally, as we have seen, Ho Chi Minh as president expressed a need for the Party to possess the capacity to articulate problems, define solutions and deploy tools to implement them, such as effective emulation movements, and that seems to be the VCP's preferred solution to many problems. However, this capacity increasingly appears to be absent, and is lacking even inside the Party.

#### **6. 2. 4. Perpetuation of Ho Chi Minh's Charisma**

In the previous chapter we saw that Ho Chi Minh's charisma contributed to the legitimacy and the legitimacy effect of the new regime. In current emulation movements we can see that the VCP tries to use this charismatic feature to perpetuate that strong source of legitimacy. That is the most possible explanation for the renewed interest in 'patriotic emulation' in the late 1990s, and the way in which it is always put in the context of Ho Chi Minh's personality. The above-mentioned movement which started as an effort to further study Ho Chi Minh's ideology can be interpreted to have a similar function. Given that emulation movements are not really voluntary in present-day Vietnam, the repetition of Ho Chi Minh's heroic deeds and thoughts through the movement seems to be an important feature of this perpetuation. Perpetuation of Ho Chi Minh's charisma seems to be important for many reasons, one being that Ho Chi Minh is in many parts of Vietnam still very popular, even years after his death. He is a role model for many Vietnamese and the VCP uses this popularity to sustain the political sphere unchanged or reverse the 'slipping down'. The collective values and monopoly of the VCP as a representative of these values, as we see in mass mobilisation, is related to Ho Chi Minh.

On the one hand, the VCP seeks to increase legitimacy by 'realisation' that cadres need to behave morally (like Ho Chi Minh), on the other hand, the same charisma challenges the VCP when it hesitates to protect Vietnamese territory from China, because as Ho Chi Minh put it: "Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty" (Ho Chi Minh in Sainteny, p. 172). Further, and I will come back to this, one of the many professed reasons many Vietnamese give for considering Ho Chi Minh to be an authority, is by pointing to the fact that he did what he promised: legitimacy, in these accounts (reinforced by Party propaganda) is linked to success, not in general, but in solving particular problems that the Party sets for itself.

#### **6. 2. 5. Mobilisation**

Historical emulation movements were an important tool of mobilisation of the people in war. People were much more willing to contribute when it came to something they believed in. Historical emulation movements gradually taught people to participate in public life in certain controlled ways, such as through emulation movements and the Mass Organisations. People got into the habit of it and today, participation in officially-sponsored and approved

associations, clubs and emulation movements is a part of life in Vietnam. I emphasized before that despite emulation being formally voluntary, practically there are many incentives (pressures and rewards) for people to participate. In Vietnam there are so many movements and campaigns that everyone concerned has to devote substantial time and energy for either their involvement (volunteerism or false volunteerism), or in more cases devote energy to masking their lack of involvement; As we saw in all of the selected cases, emulation movements suffer the ‘disease of formalism’ which means that individuals or collectives write their emulation reports without actually achieving the results. The formal routinised system is based on tables with points, criteria and standards which need to be fulfilled, and these can be easily falsified. With the lack of control, or inability to control things in such detail, such as whether 50% of family members do sports to deserve a ‘Cultural Family’ plate, these are often marked as fulfilled. The striking case of Tuc Tranh elementary school in emulation movement ‘Create Friendly Schools and Active Students’ was highlighted as a typical example of such formalism (Chapter 4, Section 4.7.2.).

Emulation is generally reported to suffer this problem as all of the selected movements struggled with it. This shows that emulation is generally nowadays seen as emptied form, an ineffective tool and in many ways, a burden. From the more and more frequent forms of opposition to the regime we can conclude that the political function of mobilisation and emulation movements suffers problems and is in some ways dysfunctional and in its effects acts against the VCP. Crucially, it erodes foundational claims (such as the value of Ho Chi Minh as a charismatic personality whose example can stop Party cadres’ corrupt behaviour), and as a touted solution to problems, it makes it appear that the VCP is less and less successful in mobilisation of people in a controlled way. This can be looked at from another angle, that of values where the clash or inability of society to accept or understand the Party’s touted ‘collective values’ undermines the authority of the Party. The VCP does not seem to accept that if it wants people to mobilise spontaneously, it has to represent the values they consider important, for only then it can gain a real instead of ‘surrogate’ consent.

### **6. 2. 6. Responsibility Sharing**

Responsibility sharing is an extension of mobilisation. Sharing responsibilities is a principle inherited from wartime when everyone was needed to contribute to either fight or for agricultural and industrial production. Through the long wars and through emulation

movements, people learnt that the Party valued self-sufficiency and encouraged them deal with their own problems. This became a sort of ‘official policy’ and we can see it in emulation movements in current Vietnam. It seems often to have results that are perceived by the population as positive.

We saw that emulation often serves as a type of charity in which people collect money to repair schools or roads, build new countryside, pay for scholarships for poor students, and collect money for health insurance. The related campaign of saving which is a part of the national SFHE campaign works complementary to it. The self-sufficiency of the Vietnamese and still relatively small demands when it comes to the tasks the government should fulfil produces advantageous dynamics for the VCP and contributes to political stability. As we saw in the Piggy Bank campaign, the Women’s Union in Ho Chi Minh City, Bình Tân district, saved money in Piggy Banks to help people escape poverty, which reportedly worked as ‘poor households in the district are reduced to 5.5%’. We saw that a relatively high percentage of the total budget for the campaign which is ‘Building the New Countryside’ comes directly from the Vietnamese people’s own pockets. In the domestic security movement, people ‘voluntarily’ join self-managed People’s Patrols to look after the streets at night, that these patrols are supposed to inform police about ‘disorder’ and the police can mobilize people to participate in arrests. This scenario would be in many Western countries unthinkable but in Vietnam the responsibility-sharing principle creates many situations where people consider it to be normal to cooperate. This is how the emulation movements in current Vietnam create a never-ending list of obligations for the Vietnamese citizens, which are often accepted as normal and legitimate.

In the area of security, however, the responsibility-sharing is creating frictions. The VCP dictates that in the case of China, it is patriotic to stay calm and trust the government, but, for many of those who were taught to ‘fight for their country’, it is not acceptable. In many movements, we saw that the VCP relies on their own citizens to deal with many issues, yet, in the case of China, the Vietnamese are firstly told to share the responsibility and then told not to.

‘When the Fatherland needs it’, the Vietnamese should become soldiers who do not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the common cause. ‘When the country needs it’, common Vietnamese need to catch the thief or guard the borders and waters. Students work on the roads and bridges, people save money in piggy banks to be able to fulfil the criteria of the New Countryside standard. An important impact of this function is that people do not place

high demands on their government, and another one is that when the ‘mistakes’ happen, there is a sense of shared responsibility for the mistakes. In terms of legitimacy dynamics this serves as an important regulating mechanism that directly supports stability and indirectly legitimacy or legitimacy effect. Yet, in some cases, the negative dynamics emerge - as we saw in case of China.

### **6. 2. 7. Physical Control of Population**

We saw that there are two separate security emulation movements, one for domestic security and one for international security. In the case of domestic security, the movement seem to be sustained for primarily three main functions: control of the population, dictation of values and sharing of the responsibility. In terms of values, there is a value of patriotism again, in that it is considered patriotic to volunteer to keep public order, that includes making sure that the beer corners are closed, and night life is finished to avoid ‘social evils’. Every foreign traveller or student knows the reality of this practice in large cities in Vietnam: after 11pm, night bars pretend to close while many of them bribe the police or patrols and continue to function under the ‘closed door policy’ behind their steel gates. The income from ‘social evils’ is apparently high enough to pay both the owners of the bars and the police. Strong security networks bring the element of control. Police can be bribed but have the power, to refuse the bribe and then the bar closes almost instantly. The random rare shows of this power send the message that at the end of the day, the Police or patrol decide what will happen. In this case, however, as in many others, patriotic emulation is subordinate to the power of money.

Emulation movements contribute to the physical control of the population in another way, for those who emulate are part of formal organised emulation groups. We saw that in Vietnam, people are divided into small groups in streets, where a few households create a ‘street group’, and these inevitably involve mutual control. I noted criticisms of the ‘Cultural Family’ that alleged that it causes degradation of relationships between neighbours. There are other divisions that work similarly, for example the previously mentioned blocks and clusters, officially, these serve to share experience, but it seems as though they perhaps have other functions.

Given that participation is not entirely ‘voluntary’, usually records are kept. Thus, another way to physically control the population stems from the routinised and bureaucratic

logic of emulation movements. As they are ‘voluntary’, people have to participate in them after work or school, taking time that could be used in other ways. We saw, for example, that teachers in Vietnam have to participate in summer ideological education, they have to write their essays and on top of it emulation requires many extra activities which require preparation.

Such physical control does not really contribute to legitimacy, not least when emulation movements seem so often to fail to meet their stated goals, and people often complain about the take of time they have to devote to emulation movements. Nevertheless, such practices to some degree prevent opposition, and as such, creates also a form of ‘legitimacy effect’.

### **6. 2. 8. Producing Real Outcomes/Agenda Setting**

One of the biggest problems of the emulation movements in current Vietnam is that they are supposed to serve as a practical political tool to ‘perfect policies’ and deal with ‘immediate requirements’. In this respect emulation movements are seen by many, not least those who read the official reports (Chapter 4, Section 4.7.1.) to completely fail. The first problem is the unrealistic expectation that they could possibly work like that. This, however, can be just an empty and misleading message. A greater issue is that, as we saw, the population can start to realise that that emulation movements demask ‘agenda setting’ in Vietnam, which means, that the VCP can be observed trying to closely control definitions as to what the problems are and how people should contribute to fixing them. These are often less relevant to the population than what they see as the real practical problems and by contrast may be seen as being more relevant for ideological purposes and the Party’s own interests. In other words, my analysis and exposition has shown clearly that there is often a striking gap between the real problems (in popular eyes) and what the VCP chooses to address in emulation movements.

This can be understood from the perspective of the second dimension of power described by Lukes. As presented above (Chapter 1, Section 1.6.), second dimension of power relates to the ‘agenda setting’. Such power can cause that some topics which are publicly spoken, are prevented from political arena.



We can also understand this problem from the perspective of Beetham's points about legitimacy. The first goal in Vietnam is the protection of independence (survival), the next goal is some type of prosperity (regime success). This second point well explains the current Vietnamese situation. Old Soviet-style tools and institutions do not really provide the political effectiveness (state capacity) and efficiency necessary for fulfilling the goal of progress. On the other hand, what has been proving to be quite efficient is the mixed economy and the free market mechanisms in Vietnam. This contrast, however, creates inconsistencies in communist doctrine and so the authority of the VCP.

If we look at the individual movements, we can see these as hoped-for solutions to problems and examine the practical outcomes. For example, the problem of corruption in Vietnam is - by the VCP - presented as a problem of degradation of the ideological and moral discipline of party members. Consequently, the VCP launched the SFHE emulation movements to fix the problem, yet a no effect that can be said to have reduced the rampant corruption in Vietnam is visible.

The cases of land grabs keep triggering open opposition. And, n education, we clearly saw how the addressed problems are far from what the people perceive as the central problems of the sector. Instead of dealing with the 'disease of achievement', it is clear that popular sentiments would prefer to see the Party focus on securing broad educational reform to secure quality of the system of education, teachers and students. A core part of this would be to get corruption out of the system. One of the three emulation movements is supposed to fix the problem of the quality of teachers, but examination of the tools to do so prescribed by the Party-State, shows, however, that they are in effect non-existent. The VCP prescribes self-learning, creativity and professionalism but there are no practical mechanisms in place to teach teachers these qualities. The responsibility is shifted to teachers, as we saw in discussing the responsibility-sharing function. Other than that, the problem comes down to recognition of talented people in Vietnam and allowing them to get position as teachers and professors. As we saw, lack of study abroad, lack of study at the 'right political schools' or 'not obtaining political certificates' and lack of money for bribes prevent many talented people from gaining teaching positions. It seems that again, the practical problems are not dealt with.

The third movement which wants to create nice schools and active students and pupils expresses clearly that the schools are in practice left to deal with their problems on their own and that they simply do not have any other choice but to write 'empty/false' emulation reports. The Party-State prescribes what the standard but fails to participate to improve the

situation in localities, so self-help is often the only solution. 'Active pupils' thus mostly means pupils who clean septic tanks, take care of local cemeteries, clean the area of the school and its premises, and contribute to poorer families. After comparing an emulation report from Túc Tranh Elementary School to the real situation of the School (Report attached to application for a National Standard) we saw that the emulation report clearly avoided topics where the school could not fulfil the prescriptions of the movement: safe school buildings, classrooms and facilities. The emulation movement participation as reported by the school could not really deal with the 'collapsing buildings and fences' despite the prescription of 'safe environment'. The reports show clearly how emulation movements are more or less a routine that each school have regularly go through, but they do not really deal with the emerging situations and real problems. The real problems were, as I showed, introduced in the UNESCO report or through people's contribution to the topic in Thanh Niên Newspaper. The problems of the policies on education in Vietnam as we find them expressed in those sources are many, and systemic, such as: too high targets and expectations; low level of support; questionable mode of support and challenges in implementation of policies (lack of guidance, coordination and communication). These are not consistent with the problematisation or the experienced reality of emulation movements.

Alternatively, in the 'Building New Countryside' movement, we can also see many problems: high-set goals, false reports about achieved results or financing which is primarily from credit and a substantial part of which burdens people who contribute to meeting the targets. There are 19 targets with 47 standards which need to be fulfilled, and both targets and standards are often set so generally that interpretations of what it means to achieve the standard or target vary. From the perspective of practical policies, many of the targets are unrealistic and their fulfillment cannot be monitored. The program's broad goals as a whole are supported as the increasing gap between the cities and countryside is a serious problem yet when we look at some of the concrete standards we can see two main problems. Firstly, from the (Appendix 9) we can see that the Party just prescribed goals without providing the means to meet the goals, and this leads to falsification of reports as the localities have to achieve the standards in a certain time. Secondly, many of the standards cannot actually reasonably be said to have an impact on bridging the gap between cities and countryside, and the Cultural Family standard is a good example, for dirty kitchen or quarrelling husband and wife are not the factors which differentiate villages and cities.

In the area of the environment we saw how emulation is aimed by the Party at completely different problems from those that bother most Vietnamese people. Despite the country having the motto 'green-clean-beautiful' visible in public places, pollution from the largest polluters is not prevented and people in the ecological campaigns are mostly incentivised to take care of the green appearance of their neighbourhoods. While planting trees and flowers is a positive, the lack of control over large industrial factories, use of chemical fertilisers, and hormones in animals, use of unsafe plastics and others are the primary problems which stay unaddressed. The ecological price paid in terms of the damage to environment is high and is just a reflection of this situation. The government allowed the Chinese to mine bauxite in the Central Highlands, and it did not respond to the ecological catastrophe of poisoning of tons of fish across four provinces caused by the Formosa Steel Plant by banning it. In this case, neither law nor emulation movements served well as the tools for leadership or governing.

The emulation movement 'Saving money in a piggy bank' is primarily a movement for schools through which pupils learn about the importance of 'saving' and helping others. Many Women's Union chapters also participated to support either poor women or schools and pupils. Often the money was used to buy presents for the pupils from the poor families. Collection of money also serves other purposes, and as we saw, parents contribute to various things: repairs of school buildings or emulation rewards. The movement is praised for contributing to the goals of the elevation of poverty or local sustainability criteria. On top of it, the movement is also particularly encouraged because it promotes one of the important principles related to Ho Chi Minh: saving. There cannot be said to be much that is negative about teaching pupils or society in general to save money and contribute for the good common purposes, as much as there cannot be much said that is bad about charity. However, we have to realize again, that the principle of 'saving' is used in Vietnam to deal with issues which the leadership has chosen not to deal with, from practical things like repairs of schools, to substantial problems like poverty. In one case, we saw that the officials of the People's Committee and Mass Organisation members, civil servants and community of Mỹ Tho Commune were saving money for the voluntary health insurance, that is insurance for those who were not state employees and therefore were not a part of any compulsory health scheme. While the policy of voluntary health insurance has a good intention, the real problems of health care, namely out-of-pocket fees which people have to pay outside their insurance

schemes, have a devastating effect on access to health care. A misdirection of the movement is clear here.

Security and its international part is perhaps the most contradicting emulation movement Vietnam has. Historically, in emulation movements people learnt to be ready for combat. In the present-day emulation movement, they are indeed supposed to protect territory and waters and in general, to be ready to protect the fatherland. This emulation movement however, has to be put in the context of the Vietnamese public protesting against Chinese behaviour in the South China sea, a sort of expression of dissatisfaction about how the Party maintains a soft line with China. The suppression of Vietnamese protesters (Chapter 4, Section 4.7.6.) contradicts the task people are given in the movement. The situation is further escalated by the likelihood that the Party itself is torn between dependency on China and its fear of it. At the end, the message from the Party is clear: people have to help to protect the territory and waters *on the Party's terms*. Coercion is used against patriots. Control wins. This clearly harms the Party's legitimacy.

An article in Thanh Niên Newspaper directly comments on the South China Sea Issues and patriotism. Reacting on what appeared in social media (Facebook page Patriotic Diary 'Nhật ký yêu nước') the author of the article writes: "In this stressful time, people have to trust in Party and state policies, if we don't trust the Party, how can we stop the Chinese conspiracy?" (Thu Hằng). This appeal is in accordance with the Party line. However, as we observed emulation movements in Vietnam, patriotism was both encouraged and suppressed. Clearly, the VCP struggles to create some non-contradictive version of what patriotism should be: on the one hand, people have to be ready to fight for their islands, country, etc., but on the other hand, they should only do it when the Party says so, as expressed for example by factory director Nguyễn Quang Dũng to workers: "Patriotism at this time is to increase production (...) Instead of strikes, demonstrations and breaking, (...) you should spend your time by adding another shift of work to support South China Sea. You are now workers, the time have not come yet to be soldiers" (Tâm Giao, 2014).

These emulation areas shown that for the Party gaining legitimacy in modern Vietnam is not easy, and there are many negative dynamisms which the VCP has to deal with. However, some functions do still work and balance these negative dynamics. It appears that the political effectiveness of emulation movements has been declining, in general. It appears also that the use of foundational factors such as Ho Chi Minh's charisma and the professed problem-solving goals of movements, may be eroding legitimacy and legitimacy effects. If

the Party is to continue its foundational position on the value of legitimacy, and so avoid coercion, an agenda to restore legitimacy and replace the fading value of emulation movements seems necessary. The problem is that there does not seem to be other way out of this ever more challenging situation other than political reform.

### **6. 2. 9. Analysis of Present-Day Emulation Movements: Summary**

This section looked at present-day emulation movements in the context of legitimacy and legitimacy effect to assess legitimacy dynamics and the role of present-day emulation movements in Vietnam. We saw that there are many more problems emerging (negative legitimacy dynamics) and these are expressed by the presence of increasing and increasingly open opposition which contests the values the VCP prescribes.

In a large part, the legitimacy of the regime is dependent on economic performance, however, another substantial part of regime legitimacy stems from the foundational circumstances of modern Vietnamese national independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty. As we saw, these two sources of legitimacy are now clashing as China has become a large trading partner. The emphasis on patriotism and the values related to it is a primary concern of the VCP, however the contradictions between economic and ideological dependency on China and patriotism have created and continue to create negative legitimacy dynamics. Negative legitimacy dynamics also stems from the general inability of emulation movements to produce real outcomes compared with their stated goals, and furthermore to provide, in the eyes of the population, real solutions to the real problems. At the same time the Party presents no other mechanisms which would substitute this function and create these outcomes. Emulation movements are largely a formal obligation in contemporary Vietnam, which stands in stark contrast to their foundational role in standard official narratives about the origins of the regime and the Vietnamese contemporary nation-state.

Emulation movements often do not address the real problems that engage the Vietnamese population today, and these increasingly comes into public focus as a weakness of the emulation movements or even as a political tool or intention of the VCP to direct attention to quite different areas. As I wrote earlier, Lukes names this phenomenon the ‘second dimension of power’, in that this power rests on agenda setting. In Vietnam, it is clear to all that the VCP has the monopoly on agenda settings, indeed its role in leading the society is laid down in the Constitution of the SRV. It is obvious, though, that emulation movements are restricted to what the VCP considers to be ‘safe’ topics, and ‘safe’ modalities, at least in

theory, as the Party's acts here are in full public view. The agenda-setting in emulation movements can thus have a double effect; it can indeed work and direct people to focus on things which are not controversial, in Vietnam, these can be 'clean kitchen, saving for scholarships or development of sports facilities in the countryside'. However, in other cases, it is by contrast difficult for the Party to avoid certain topics, and here the best examples are security and China. The VCP needs people to be ready to fight against Chinese aggression, that is why it has security emulation movements high on the agenda, but on the other hand, perhaps the biggest challenge to VCP legitimacy stems from this 'interest' of people triggered by the participation in emulation movements. When people try to protect Vietnam from Chinese aggression and the VCP persecutes them for it, this becomes a large problem. This similar contradiction was visible in many movements. The negative effect here is large and damaging.

One of the functions that creates positive legitimacy dynamics is shared responsibility, and as we have seen this is foundational. The language and form of Vietnamese emulation movements constantly strengthen the principle of self-reliance which the Vietnamese know so well from the past, either as lived experience or because they have been taught it. By prescribing self-improvement, volunteerism and personal contributions to the education sector, for example, the VCP tries to create a general feeling that the Party-state's main role is the decision about the direction and policies, movements and targets. If these directions, policies and movements and targets are not implementable, it is a problem of localities, individual schools and families. But this is not the end of the matter, and failure to address issues that the population thinks are important poses the question of the systemic causes of the failure, and so the capacity and legitimacy of the regime itself. More concretely, inability to fulfil the standards and targets leads to a formalism very well-known from Soviet Russia or former communist regimes in Europe when the plans were fulfilled to 150%. Not that the Western countries do not struggle with these problems in their own way.

To sum up, this analysis has shown:

First, from the analysis of current emulation movements we can see the intention to use both control and legitimizing strategies to sustain the stability of the regime, but practically the VCP is less successful in the current specific Vietnamese situation. When opposition emerges, the VCP increasingly uses coercion.

Second, we discovered how negative legitimacy dynamics (illegitimacy) are created in Vietnam and what it is related to: values which the VCP does not know how to monopolize anymore and a situation of the clash of values together with the inflow of new values; expectations that the VCP will protect national sovereignty and bring the country to prosperity; decline of the VCP's mobilisation abilities; expressions of discontent (protests).

Third, whilst the analysis suggests the presence of factors that are increasing latent instability, it is clear that the the VCP struggles to acknowledge that some changes are needed, or to devise new legitimising strategies.

### **6. 3. Comparison of Historical and Present-Day Functions: Conclusion**

At this point it is important to compare the historical and current functions of emulation movements as the changes, help us to explain the problems of emulation movements today. As we can see, Vietnam historically was in a completely different position from that of today. The old broad values of patriotism: prosperity, education and independence are still strong today, but the ideas about what concretely these are, and what they mean for everyday life and political action, have changed and continue to do so. Prosperity is tied to many more things than just material production, for example, the importance of the environment, health care, personal success in business, and international recognition. Education has changed dramatically, tackling illiteracy has been replaced by demands for better quality of education. The enemy has changed also. Historically, the French and after them the Americans were the enemy that was feared and had to be eliminated. Today Vietnamese biggest fear is China on which the VCP is economically dependent.

Historically, Ho Chi Minh promoted three simple values which were not really contested in Vietnam, currently, however, values have diversified and evolved. Values, or their particular interpretations, seem to be more and more contested, as can be observed in the new emulation movements and their clash with reality. When the Party launches emulation movements to fix the problems of education, it 'deals' with particular issues that are not really considered by the broad population as the most pressing issues. When China as one of the Vietnamese largest trading partners but also feared neighbouring power wants to mine bauxite in the Central Highlands, it triggers largescale popular and elite opposition. Environmental issues are contested, people express more and more their dissatisfaction with the state of environment; it is not enough to grow trees and flowers to make the streets pretty.

A crucial problem that the VCP faces today is the problem of the degradation of communist doctrine. While historical emulation movements successfully helped indoctrinate the population, current emulation movements have to deal with a much more difficult task: that of managing the degradation of doctrine, much of which is foundational, going to the heart of the Party's claims to legitimacy. On one hand, the market economy brought a huge source of legitimacy based on performance (the goal of progress of Vietnam), that expresses clearly what the Vietnamese want, but on the other hand, it is causing the degradation of communist doctrine, and for a one-party communist regime that creates a very dangerous situation. Return to Ho Chi Minh's ideology seems to be as impossible as a return to the economic institutions from before the economic reforms. The degeneration of doctrine is perhaps the most serious problem the VCP faces, particularly because this degeneration is 'inside the Party'. As the Party admits, it threatens regime legitimacy. Emulation movements cannot fix this situation, at maximum, they can try to slow it down, but in some ways their failure may make it worse. What is particularly problematic is that the most important ideological ally is China. This is potentially the most serious problem for the VCP currently, and whilst the changes are gradual they seem inevitable.

We saw that Ho Chi Minh's charisma played a particularly important positive role in emulation movements which functioned as a vehicle for the spread of this charisma. Today's emulation movements reflect how the VCP tries to perpetuate this charisma in an attempt to use gain legitimacy or legitimacy effect from it. Ho Chi Minh is ever-present in Vietnam. Emulation movements are organised as Ho Chi Minh's patriotic emulation and a national movement SFHE is also supportive of this perpetuation. The question is, for how long can this work? For how long can the VCP keep trying to persuade the Vietnamese society to believe in it?

Historically, emulation movements in Vietnam served a function of creating links between Party and people, and that was at the time possible thanks to efforts that Ho Chi Minh and others put into travels and meeting with people. Emulation heroes served as the connecting elements. Historically, meeting an Emulation Hero was considered to be an important occasion, but today, when emulation has become routinized and seems to many Vietnamese (and as can be read into the official documents) to mis-define problems that avoid the key issues, these links degrade. In current emulation movements this authentic function seems to disappear.



In terms of ideological functions this analysis ends with a rather negative conclusion - the VCP is trying to save what it can but unfortunately, the less it gains through 'soft' strategies such as emulation movements, the more it is pushed to use the control and domination functions it can also deploy.

Comparison of the practical functions of movement historically and in the current period seem to lead to similar conclusions

Historically as well as currently, emulation movements are used as a tool for mobilisation and as a show of 'consent' with the regime. Historical movements were launched in the much more favourable situation for mobilisation, war. Today, it is more and more difficult to create enthusiasm, mobilisation seems to be habitual and people are complaining about the load of work related to emulation movements. In the context of formalism and corrupted practices, emulation is mostly ritualistic.

Sharing of responsibility is one of the functions that seems to be equally important in both periods and substantially helps stabilize the regime. However, issues with China and clash of security emulation campaign show that people feel this responsibility, as 'citizens', and less and less hesitate to express this openly in protests.

Historically, emulation movements served as a way to select people for Party membership, and administrative and other positions that the Party could offer. Those who worked the most, were the most supportive of the new regime and sacrificed the most were among the selected ones. That was the way how the Party built loyalty. Today, emulation is important for the CV's, in that respect, the Party selects in the important positions based on loyalty (and bribes), but as is more and more clear from the sources, such as those about education, that Vietnam needs talent more than loyalty. The building of Mass Organisations was a process that was also related to emulation movements, and, as we saw, peasants were advised to join Mass Organisations as they participated in patriotic emulation. Later, the control functions of such organisations, and the apparatus as a whole, prevailed. In current emulation movements it seems as though their contribution to the control of population is among the main functions. As we saw the political diploma prevails as the key to Party and state positions.

The last practical function is related to achieving real outcomes. Historically, the emulation movements were supposed to deal with the three large tasks I have mentioned. This thesis did not really find data for assessing to what extent emulation movements contributed,

and it is not likely ever to be easy to do so. What they do show is the internal and public arguments for emulation, and these are revealing. However, it is possible to be sceptical, and to assert that if the historical problems were indeed achieved through the help of other factors, with the emulation movements playing some role, it is rather clear (especially from the official documents) that current emulation movements *in fact* completely fail to achieve the demanded results. A large part of this problem is firstly that emulation movements never really were efficient tools for specific practical outcomes, especially those under present-day conditions, and secondly, that the VCP now uses them to deal with those problems which are, in the eyes of much of the population, less relevant – either to distract attention from the real problems or because it believes that these are indeed the real problems.

To sum up, this comparison shows how the emulation movements changed and how current emulation movements show the Party struggling with the new situation. The original functions of emulation movements were, under contemporary conditions, much more likely to succeed. As the Vietnamese situation has changed radically, the VCP has only slightly adapted these functions. Currently, the VCP tries to make use of these new functions but they are not really bringing sufficient results. Further, its use of foundational issues such as Ho Chi Minh's personality and charisma in purported solutions that seem to fail, threatens to erode, and likely has already, basic pillars of the regime's legitimacy.

In the last chapter of this thesis, I will consider these legitimacy issues within the broader perspective of power-authority-legitimacy relations.

## 7. Power, Authority and Legitimacy

The penultimate chapter of this thesis re-considers the problem of legitimacy, augmenting the analysis based on study of emulation movements with research that has examined, from a different perspective and with different data, the broader context of power and authority issues in Vietnam.

This chapter draws on field work conducted in Hanoi in 2013 and 2014 which explored the problem of power and authority via an analysis of the results of semi-structured qualitative interviews. Some of the findings were published in the *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* in a 2017 co-authored article: *Political Authority in Vietnam: Is the Vietnamese Communist Party a Paper Levithan?* (Fforde, Homutova 2017). This Chapter draws on the article and relates its conclusions to those so far in this thesis.

The primary concern of the article was to investigate how ‘authority’ (or rather, the closest Vietnamese equivalent word) is understood in Vietnam. Authority can be conceived in multiple ways, for example, when we talk about political authority, we can understand it as a spectrum. On one end of such a spectrum, we can simply think of political actor who has a coercive power to sustain order within a given territory; on the other, we can think of a special quality which makes a person, organ, party or institution respected, trusted and therefore usually obeyed. The interviews in Vietnam revealed that the dominant context of authority in Vietnam was reported by our interviewees, asked to explain the Vietnamese term ‘uy’, is a context of fear. As we wrote in our article:

“The Vietnamese seem to think of power and authority as based on fear and when asked about positive aspects of politics they automatically switch the discussion to different terms involving what they know from their past, for example Ho Chi Minh was *trusted* by many as a strong moral personality because they thought he did what he promised and took personal responsibility” (p. 113).

The problem that can arise when and if political power and authority are not believed by political community (here in the sample, ‘ordinary Vietnamese’)<sup>136</sup> do not differ in their

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<sup>136</sup> The sample was based on opportunity, creating my own network of informants which I built gradually. People I asked about the meaning of ‘authority’ in Vietnam were of different age and from different social backgrounds. I conducted several interviews at the National University in Hanoi (both teachers and students from different Departments), I also asked multiple people in Hanoi who were either private workers or state employees, or retired. Despite this sample was not representative, yet it provided interesting information which was utilised in the above mentioned article (Fforde and Homutova, 2017).

qualities is what Arendt (1961) calls ‘authority failure’. If our respondents report that authority is defined in terms of necessary obedience, then they are reporting that for them in that context authority is something which makes people obey, then violence can be as well authority. Arendt’s notion of a valid authority is dependent on the birth of political community (society) and its needs. Here, obedience is authorised, not forced. In Vietnam this reported situation of a confusion of power and authority, or in other words the presence of ‘authority failure’, can be seen as well. The equation between power and authority is comparable to the situation where a ruler can rule but is unable to govern. While rule (coercive power) is enough to secure the survival of the ruler, governing (especially with a market economy with a globalising and rather open society where the population experiences much choice) is necessary for an efficient functioning of the state, implementation of policies, generation of real consent, creation of shared norms, etc. The lack of distinction between power and authority is triggering more and more problems in Vietnam.

## **7. 1. Legitimacy in Vietnam**

I have advanced an argument in this thesis that when Ho Chi Minh launched patriotic emulation in Vietnam in the late 1940s, he managed to become and acquire considerable legitimate authority in Beetham’s sense. That meant that he had managed to create norms which represented to a large degree (though clearly not for all Vietnamese) shared values; and he had managed to fulfil goals which were widely shared in Vietnam, thus obtaining the real consent from a large proportion of society. In contrast, increasingly nowadays, the VCP does not manage well the political task of representing well a set of shared values and goals. So far in this thesis my analysis has supported this assertion through study of emulation movements, and these suggest that the more legitimacy the regime loses, the more coercion it uses. This conclusion is confirmed by the following interviews from Hanoi about the meanings of power and authority: the Vietnamese interviewees show plainly the presence of ‘authority failure’ as they report rather clearly and with a high level of agreement that use of the close Vietnamese equivalent to authority (‘uy’) does not differentiate between power and authority.

## 7. 2. Authority and Power in Vietnam

This section explores contextual observations and data presented in the above cited article.

During the periods of time spent in Hanoi, primarily in 2013 and 2014, I encountered multiple important contextualising points, either during informal discussions or interviews. These discussions were conducted in Vietnamese without an interpreter. Three points stood out:

Firstly, many informants' initial thought on politics ('chính trị') in Vietnam was that it is "sensitive" ("nhạy cảm") or a "forbidden area" ("khu vực cấm"). This naturally affected people's responses to politics in general and political authority in particular. It seems clear that this is part of the existing political order.

Secondly, Vietnamese political values are generally asserted to be very distinct, and so-called traditional values are thought of as having been formed by historical development and cultural specifics. This clearly fits the various narratives we have seen deployed by the Party into emulation movements. Issues that came up often included the struggle of the Vietnamese to keep their identity in a region of mighty kingdoms and empires, which suggests that some form of nationalism is strong and a united leadership is preferred. For example, the Vietnamese often expressed admiration for strong leaders such as Russia's Putin (Appendix 8). At root, this implies a sense that political order with authority is important. The question is then, obviously, what they felt were the origins of the power and authority of political order, especially that around them.

Thirdly, as I noted above, Ho Chi Minh appears often in discussions as an archetype of morality and as I have also noted, his political thought receives considerable official attention. Here there is at least an overlap between popular and official narratives. This seems to be an indicator of possible political authority as legitimate power, a source of political authority, because according to the Vietnamese interlocutors "morality" – moral standing – would and should lead to respect and obedience (in Arendt's terms, a clear absence of 'authority failure' – the regime is obeyed because it deserves to be, not because of a threat of coercion). Thus, erosion of authority within the political order is generally associated with a lack of morality. Because interviewees actively made such points in reply to questions about the meanings of 'uy', we can read into these replies one important implication: that many Vietnamese believe

that the VCP is not moral enough, and that because the questions were not asking what they thought, but what generally thought (about ‘uy’), they report that this is a general issue.

The second and third points are worth considering in the context of legitimacy issues and emulation movements. References to so called ‘traditional values’ seems to be to a present-day equivalent of what Ho Chi Minh called ‘patriotism’ when he launched patriotic emulation in 1948. As Vietnam struggled through many wars for independence, the Vietnamese evolved and formed a set of values aimed at self-preservation and self-sacrifice for the Fatherland. This confirms that the informants in Vietnam tend to think in terms of these values. An admiration for strong (but moral) leaders seem to correspond to the qualities of Ho Chi Minh’s charisma, actual or hoped-for. The current immoral behaviour of the Party members (corruption) is then contrasted (by implication, as it is well-covered in the Press and by no means a taboo topic in daily conversation) to these characteristics; and as we saw, even the official Party documents admit this could eventually threaten regime legitimacy and even its survival.

### **7. 2. 1. Data**

Our research involved engaging a range of people, mainly in Hanoi, in informal discussions. The interviewees were between 19 and over 70 years old and from a range of social backgrounds with a relative gender balance (women were slightly less represented than men). The interactions were carried out in Vietnamese, with no interpreter, and took the form of extended exchanges. The basic stance was an expressed desire on the part of the interviewer to be informed, as a non-Vietnamese person speaking Vietnamese, by their discussant. Questions were formulated so far as was possible in politically neutral ways and so did not directly ask for opinions; rather we asked interviewees to help us understand the language – what do terms mean? The discussions were ‘open’ and allowed for the interlocutor to go where they saw fit in their explanations.<sup>137</sup> Asking about authority revealed many interesting results.

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<sup>137</sup> Vietnamese is written, and understood, as a series of separate syllables. A Vietnamese word, as written, may have one, two or perhaps three syllables, written separately. Therefore, Vietnamese words confusingly appear (for the typical Western learner) written as a series of what seem to be short words. Thus, equivalent terms for ‘authority’ may appear as ‘uy’ or as ‘uy quyền’. Both are words in the sense of distinct dictionary entries. We found no discernible difference in usage between ‘uy’ and ‘uy quyền’, therefore, we will use these three terms (‘uy’, ‘uy quyền’ and authority) interchangeably for the rest of this article.

In the following section we present our research data and findings to provide a deeper insight into the current Vietnamese understandings of authority.

### *Authority as Fear, or Respect?*

A large majority of interviewees connected authority to the notion of fear and awe, and we discovered an overall confusion and difficulty facing interviewees in explaining whether ‘uy’ is positive or negative. Interviewees often tried to distinguish between a sense of ‘uy’ as entailing fear on the one hand, and on the other hand a sense of ‘uy’ as entailing ‘prestige’ – both authors’ sense is that simply translating ‘uy tín’ as prestige may confuse, as the semantic range includes the sense that the person concerned is (more or less) trusted, honoured and valued.

Translated into the language of our data, authority (as fear) for some is “Something that makes other people frightened” (“Cái làm cho người khác sợ”) or connected to “Exploitation of a position of power (chức quyền), to exert authority (ra uy) over another so as to force obedience to oneself” (“Lạm dụng chức quyền, để ra uy với người khác bắt người khác phải phục tùng theo mình”). Two interviewees expressed authority in terms of “Intimidating or threatening people, deterrence, being afraid” (“Sự mạnh mẽ, oai phong của người có chức quyền”). Another interviewee emphasized that authority “Brings fear, creates an invisible strength with which it pressures everybody – everybody obeys” (“Mang tính chất sợ hãi, tạo ra sức mạnh sức ép với mọi người vô hình mọi người sẽ nghe theo”). However, the word authority was by some interviewees understood as “strength” (“sức mạnh”) and “respect” (“tôn trọng”), for example “The authority of father and mother regarding their child so as to educate and guide” (“Uy của bố mẹ đối với con cái để giáo dục, chỉ bảo”). We observed that this positive sense is barely mentioned in connection to politics.

Fear versus respect seems to be very important for emulation movements. In historical emulation movements, there was more people willing to fight and work voluntarily for their country and its independence. Motivation was positive and that’s why emulation movements were more successful in terms of voluntary participation. In today’s emulation movements, there are many complaints about formalism of emulation movements, people seem to lose motivation to participate and consider emulation movements empty and burdening. As we showed they often participate because there could be consequences if they would not.

However, if motivation is based on respect and acknowledgement of worthiness, then it simply works better.

### ***Authority as Inner, Outer or Conditional Characteristic?***

When asked about authority many of the replies bring in at once a comparison between ‘uy’ and ‘oai’, as though this would help in a significant way to answer the question. They argue that ‘oai’ is generally pejorative, and refers to only external attributes (appearance, uniforms, etc.), yet this does not imply, necessarily, either that ‘uy’ is positive, or must refer to internal attributes. ‘Uy’ is, by implication, conditional, but upon what? Discussions have often circled this issue. We argue that the conditionality treats ‘uy’ as relational, something conferred by social or political context – and crucially, for a politician – by non-politicians.

This interpretation of the importance of relationality seems to be in the core of difference between social contracts where individuals confer authority onto a person or institution to protect them and for that they have to obey the rules set by the authority, and communist regimes where people are treated rather as the objects and the ruling Parties sit in the position of power and occupy it without understanding that they would be better off with conferred authority. In terms of the postmodern thinking of Claude Lefort explained by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe: that position [of power] has to “stay vacant” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p. 186).

### ***Authority as Position or Reputation?***

According to the answers of our interviewees the sources of ‘uy’ are a given. These can be economic or social position, or the power of position (‘chức quyền’) - a neat use of word order. The first (qualifying) term is ‘chức’, which is well translated as ‘position’ within an organisation (‘tổ chức’), which in the Vietnamese context suggestively means the Party-State. Thus, according to two interviewees authority (‘uy’) is linked to “The strength, somebody with a position of power imposes something on us” (“Sự mạnh mẽ, oai phong của người có chức quyền”). Another interviewee describes authority (‘uy quyền’) as following: “This is not something everybody has – somebody with a high social position will as a result [of that position] have it, somebody with authority may or may not have prestige (“uy tín”) ...



but somebody with prestige often has authority” (Uy quyền không phải ai cũng có, người có vị trí cao trong xã hội mới có được, người có uy quyền có thể có hoặc không có uy tín ... và người có uy tín thường có uy quyền”). This shows the struggle to differentiate between authority based on position and authority based on prestige (honour, trust, value). The subsequent quote emphasizes the relation between power (coercive) and reputation as follows: “Prestige and power are closely related and interdependent. When there is power, use of it requires prestige for power to get maximum results. And it is not certain that somebody with prestige will have power. Prestige + authority = power”. (“Uy tín và quyền lực có mối quan hệ khăng khít, tương trợ cho nhau. Khi có quyền lực, sử dụng quyền lực thì cần có uy tín thì quyền lực mới đạt hiệu quả cao nhất. Và chưa chắc người có uy tín sẽ có quyền lực. Uy tín + uy quyền = quyền lực). This suggests that prestige (honour, value, trust) and authority are both needed if one is to have power, however this opinion was only able to be so eloquently stated by one interviewee. One interviewee thus came closest to the principal suggestion of this article: power and authority are qualitatively very different and power itself is not sufficient to secure good results in politics.

We saw that in current emulation movements the VCP uses ‘prestige’ (charisma) of Ho Chi Minh to seek to invigorate his authority and gain for the regime any legitimacy to be secured by the values he promoted. The problem is that the VCP cannot and does not behave accordingly and so is promoting contradictory values (Do what I do vs. do what I say). The reputation of Ho Chi Minh is still important in gaining legitimacy effects but this thesis suggested that this function was declining in its effectiveness and could well be counter-productive as it questions foundational aspects of the regime. Since it is clear from my analysis of emulation movements that, contrary to Levitsky and Way, the regime can and does seek legitimacy, the analysis of ‘uy’ suggests that the regime’s coercive position of power simply does not seem to fulfil its own goals.

### ***Authority of Individuals or of Institutions?***

Almost all answers concerning authority referred to individuals, not to institutions or organizations or their members. Judges, priests, etc. are not mentioned, and certainly not Party leaders. Indeed, it is consistent with our broad arguments, that as they have very little authority, Vietnam’s political institutions are not used by the Vietnamese to explain authority. The only exception was when one interviewee referenced the National Assembly, Vietnamese

parliament, this however, was done so in negative terms, highlighting authority (“uy quyền”) as “The imposition of will on the people: for example, the National Assembly.” (“Sự áp đặt ý muốn lên nhân dân ví dụ: Họp quốc hội.”). The lack of confidence towards political institutions has some important implications. If the VCP wants to transition [from ruling] towards governing and create effective and just political order, it will have to reform institutions to ensure that they fulfil their prescribed roles. That change would be reflected by people’s recognition of the authority of these institutions which is something we will be potentially able to observe in Vietnamese politics in the future.

This supports my analysis of the emulation movements. Present-day emulation movements are missing respect because they are viewed as formalistic and they cannot deliver what they are supposed to be delivering (to meet the foundational claims of the regime to secure, with the population, results in dealing with problem). Why is that? Answers here are both political as well as analytical. Politically, the key issue is the general one of the regime’s failure to solve agreed problems, such as corruption. Analytically, as we discovered, emulation movements were in fact far from being what they were said to be: for example, they never seriously contributed very much to increasing production; instead, my analysis suggested that, like other communist parties, the VCP was more interested in movements’ control, mobilisation and ideological functions (propaganda). In today’s Vietnam, however, practical results matter.

One individual who often appears in discussions on authority as an example of a person with positive character, a person with “prestige” (“uy tín”) is Ho Chi Minh: “Uy tín – this Sino-Vietnamese word, is about trust and belief and being praised by everybody in a positive sense. For example: The Vietnamese people trust and love Hồ chí Minh” (“Uy tín: từ hán Việt đó là sự tin tưởng và được mọi người ca ngợi hiểu theo nghĩa tích cực, Ví dụ: Hồ chí Minh được nhân dân Việt nam tin tưởng và kính yêu”). Prestige in Vietnamese (‘uy tín’), as we wrote, has to do with trust and belief; often people describe it in the duality of promise followed by acts: “Something done to make others believe” (“Cái làm cho người khác tin”), or “This [prestige] is a way of speaking so that others follow and believe in one, and (one) must preserve that trust, and do correctly what one has said one will do” (“Uy quyền: không phải ai cũng có, người có vị trí cao trong xã hội mới có được, người có uy quyền có thể có hoặc không có uy tín... và người có uy tín thường có uy quyền”). This is again, something that even the VCP acknowledges that is missing currently.

Here one also hears much about an emphasis on Ho Chi Minh's morality ('đạo đức', 'đức'); 'morality', in discussions, is a far more vivid word and for Vietnamese interviewees often seemed a more interesting word than 'authority'. This suggests to us that the Vietnamese feel the need to recreate morality in politics; it is what they know from their received histories, and perhaps, what they believe to be a panacea for the political problems of the present.

It looks like people accepted and agree with what the VCP itself acknowledges and narrates to them, that it needs to increase morality in politics. However, it seems again, that just increasing morality as a solution, which is how the VCP promotes it in its emulation movement (SFHE), would not be a single universal solution to the Vietnamese problems, and much evidence supports this conclusion. If on the one hand historically Ho Chi Minh did what he promised (as we illustrated in historical emulation movements, and as is central to the Party's foundational narratives) then on the other it can easily be argued that his inheritor, the present-day VCP, lacks effective tools, institutions and policies, and possibly the authority, to do what they promise. Emulation movements certainly cannot easily be argued to fulfil this function and so neither can the other old Soviet institutions such as the Mass Organisations. So far, the VCP uses economic results to argue that they have delivered what they promised, yet, the economy is just a part of it, and despite policies and emulation movements it presents as being unable to fix education, healthcare, corruption, the environment and other areas, and it is certainly not able to argue convincingly that it can fix corrupt politicians or dependency on China.

### ***Authority as Power?***

The crucial observation that came out of our interviews is related to one phenomena which repeatedly occurred during discussions, namely a frequent snap change of topic from authority ('uy quyền') to power (coercive) ('quyền lực'). Thus, when asked to do so, the discussants often tried to differentiate these two, accepting the possible difference in meanings, but then quickly forgot about the distinction and returned to using them interchangeably. This suggests that they do not yet really think in terms of authority being different from power at all, and this suggests 'authority failure' in Arendt's sense. Several times interviewees started to explain authority, but then when asked further they shifted to use the term power instead. This implies that political discourse in Vietnam is saturated with

relations of power *as domination*. One apparent result of such an atmosphere is the detachment of people from politics, and this may indeed be something that is perhaps desired by those who rule. As Nguyen (2016) suggests, reporting that there is something like a 50:50 profit share between the de jure owners of their sample's businesses and VCP officials receiving "informal payments", this political crisis is highly profitable for some.

Although this thesis is not a general analysis of contemporary Vietnamese politics, this situation in current Vietnam where power discourse seems to dominate can be argued to be a result of multiple things. Firstly, the VCP is used to using institutions and tools that were designed to either increase legitimacy or legitimacy effect, or for control. It has, consistent with its foundational narrative, an interest in avoiding coercion. When it is unable to achieve legitimacy or legitimacy effect, the old Soviet institutions, with added power given modern technologies, provide these control mechanisms. We saw this in the case of the international security emulation movement and contradictory arrests of Vietnamese protesting against China breaching the Vietnamese islands in South China Sea or the Formosa Dead fish catastrophe. Secondly, as was suggested before, the VCP faces a degradation of the communist doctrine which is one foundational base for its monopoly of power. The state of communist doctrine is best visible when we look at the Party's struggles with ideological control of their own members. In this situation, the central Party must then use control and coercion but is clearly reluctant to do so (corruption is endemic).

The de facto equivalence we find reported by the interviewees between power and authority points back to the struggle of the VCP currently to increase the legitimacy of its regime. This suggests that the gathering use of coercion is then explained as happening because the Party cannot secure legitimacy coming from other sources than economy. This in turn suggests that the very risky deployment of 'big cards' such as reference to Ho Chi Minh morality and charisma in ways that show precisely that the Party and its cadres fail to meet His standards, confirms the desire for legitimacy. And because the VCP continues to have to resort to coercion (and refuses to reform the institutions and political tools), it cannot gain legitimacy from other sources. This starts to look, as Party statements about the risks to the regime imply, that there is a gathering political crisis (of legitimacy).

### **7. 3. Power, Authority, and Legitimacy in Vietnam: Conclusions**

This chapter compared the conclusions and analysis of the thesis so far with the results of my joint research based on interviews that gathered data on perceptions of power and authority in Vietnam. The equation that many interviewees put between power and authority fits the other findings of this thesis. Emulation movements had and have many functions, as we have seen some of which were to secure legitimacy or legitimacy effects while also keeping control over the population and the Party. Historically, the DRV government managed to produce positive legitimacy dynamics, and this is a key part of the Party's foundational narrative. Yet, as the situation has changed in Vietnam and legitimacy and legitimacy effects are experienced as more and more difficult to generate, the VCP resorts to 'controlling' functions and so interviewees report 'power as domination'.

The VCP has a monopoly on the official promotion of values and beliefs and practical policies to be implemented using state power and other mechanisms such as the Mass Organisations and the Party's direct leadership activities. As it promotes contradictory values and goals and its policies are (as it openly admits) – ineffective, and often systemically so, people seem to start questioning and contesting these values and solutions, as is clearly visible in the case of China or environment, and the SFHE movement. A wider solution is not obvious, yet without it, the population is facing a situation of 'authority failure' and a ruler, the VCP, facing more and more challenges and problems.

What could be a solution to this situation? The ins and outs of the histories of emulation movements, perhaps oddly, throw light on this question. Any legitimate regime, such as reformed VCP, would have reflected (as Ho Chi Minh seems to have done) on the values people share and contest, and so acknowledge that people are subjects rather than objects, and as such, they should be a part of the discussions about these values. It seems clear that Ho Chi Minh sought and acquired legitimacy in part by seeking popular authorisation, which a large part of the Vietnamese population chose to grant him.

The VCP, thus, needs to reform its institutions so that they respond practically and in a fast manner to challenging situations, and emulation movements cannot really provide that response. The VCP needs to acknowledge that the real problems in Vietnam need real solutions, yet currently, it chooses the strategy of avoiding what the population would see as 'real' problems by dealing with similar yet not so pressing issues. This was apparent from the environmental area, for greenery in the cities will not deal with the ever-present smog, and the

piggy banks will not deal with the healthcare issues. Like any legitimate regime, the VCP would need to deploy other types of power than coercive power. Rather than legitimacy effects, the VCP should focus on generating legitimacy. Rather than being felt by the population as possessing an authority which equals power, the VCP has to acquire an authority which people respect, and this respect will be secured when the VCP, or any other regime, starts to represent the values people share, instead of suppressing them. In passing, this is suggestive for the extent to which the populist advertising that has been widely seen in the various 'colour revolutions' in some post-Communist countries would or would not work in Vietnam. The VCP currently seem to play three card games: one game with China, a second game with the local Party members, and a third game with Vietnamese society, however, it will have to realize, if it has not already, that it cannot win them all. Its foundational narrative, and Ho Chi Minh's politics, both say that the third game is the key.

## 8. Conclusions

*“Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty”*

*“It was patriotism, not communism, that inspired me”*

*“I only follow one party: the Vietnamese party”*

- Ho Chi Minh<sup>138</sup>

## Introduction

After the Second World War, Vietnam was in a terrible condition: people were dying of famine as the country was decimated by Japanese occupation and the French exploitation of food supplies. When Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence in 1945, he knew that the situation was difficult, but he could not know what was to come. Over the next thirty years, Vietnam saw two major wars, one with France followed by one with the US, which was also in large part a civil war. After the national division at the end of the First Indochina War in 1954, Vietnam was unified in 1976 as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) with the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) as sole ruler. The regime survived the unification of the ideologically different North and South after 1975, the Cambodian crisis in 1978-1979, and the opening to economic reforms with Doi Moi in 1986. The regime survived when the Third Wave of Democratisation<sup>139</sup> broke out at the end of the 1980s and has survived since. For political scientists, Vietnamese experts or observers of Vietnam, the puzzling question is how? I am persuaded that there are too many factors at play to be answered simply, and especially not in a PhD thesis, so unlike Levitsky and Way (2013) this work does not make such an attempt.

Here, however, I side step this broad question and, to add to the debate, explore how consideration of emulation campaigns may enhance our understanding of the underlying reasons for the stability and instability in Vietnam. I chose this focus, instead of other obvious candidates, such as coercion, and I primarily focused on the area of norms and values involved in emulation movements and how they were/are pursued and shared in Vietnam from the 1940s. This thesis shows that the rather unexplored topic of emulation movements in

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<sup>138</sup> Ho Chi Minh, Selected Writings (2000).

<sup>139</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 (Huntington 1993).

Vietnam reveals much about the political tactics and stated intentions of the VCP. Through emulation movements I can and have observed much to do with norms, values and consent, which allowed me to use these for my analysis of problems of legitimacy, legitimacy effects, authority and power in Vietnam. This analysis is deliberately and necessarily limited in scope, it therefore does not, of course, provide a full account of Vietnamese politics, however I believe it makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the topic.

Emulation movements and, through them, observation of legitimacy issues in this thesis helped to point to one source of stability and instability in Vietnam: values and their representation. Judging their relative importance would of course require a fuller analysis, but this thesis suggests that while Ho Chi Minh managed to become a 'legitimate' authority by representing the shared values at that time, study of emulation movements suggests that the VCP in contemporary Vietnam struggles to achieve this goal through that means. Whilst further research is needed, not least as other factors are in play which this thesis has not studied, these conclusions have important implications for scholars of Vietnamese politics to consider, for they may help to explain why Vietnamese elites increasingly seem to have recently resorted to greater use of coercive power and control – that is because without legitimacy, authority will be drawn to rely only on dominating power.

Contrary to Levitsky and Way (2013), in my interpretation, regime durability in Vietnam, so far, would then be explained in part through an ability to sustain some of Ho Chi Minh's legacy of legitimacy and legitimacy effect *despite* the use of coercion. For the preservation of stability, the VCP has been using a combination of Ho Chi Minh's charisma, legitimacy effects and a new strong source of legitimacy, economic prosperity, which, as a purported pragmatic solution to the problem of material underdevelopment, is an extension of what Ho Chi Minh pursued previously. However, I concluded that many of these emulation campaigns, viewed as political strategies and despite investment of considerable resources and political capital, do not provide solid bases for political stability in present-day Vietnam. I suggest that despite the regime employing this tool with some success historically, currently it struggles to generate stability through activities in emulation campaigns. I argued that this outcome is better interpreted as a reflection of Ho Chi Minh's ability to represent shared and accepted values through these emulation movements, thus producing real consent within important groups in society.



## ***Helping to Understand Vietnam***

I stated in the introduction that, in the broadest sense, this thesis attempts to contribute to a better understanding of Vietnam and its regime. I tackled this problem in concrete ways that are limited to an analysis of emulation movements.

Firstly, I explored the under-researched topic of emulation movements in Vietnam. This goal included three steps: 1. examining both historical and present-day emulation movements, 2. creating a typology of emulation movements for the movements in present-day Vietnam and 3. creating a list of functions for both historical and current emulation movements.

Secondly, I contributed to the wider discussion on the topic of political legitimacy in Vietnam by emphasizing the importance emulation movements attached to the topics of shared values and consent.

Thirdly, I added to our understanding of the early phases of the Vietnamese communist regime and how the regime managed to consolidate itself.

Fourthly, I contributed to our understanding of the practical problems and challenges in modern Vietnam, with their stability and instability.

Fifthly, I contributed to our broader understanding of power, authority and legitimacy in Vietnam.

## **Emulation Movements in Vietnam**

This thesis undertook the task of analysing emulation movements in Vietnam, a specific topic that to my knowledge has not been addressed (with the exception of the issue of revolutionary heroism in Vietnam, Benoit Tréglodé 2012, to which I owe much).

In the second chapter, using secondary sources, the thesis summarized information about socialist emulation in USSR and China in their different historical periods. This served as an introduction to the topic and a differentiation of their respective appearances. Emulation in China and the USSR had many similarities because China learnt from the Soviet Union until their political split in the late 1950s. When Khrushchev gained power in 1956, and with his criticism of Stalin's cult of personality, Mao Zedong, who had been building his own cult of personality, chose not to tolerate the USSR's position. This split only unmasked the deeper

differences which had long been present, and which were, as I point out, visible in their different emulation movements. As I argued, China was culturally different and had a very different socio-economic base (the country predominantly agrarian). Understanding the original shape of emulation in the USSR and the shapes it took in the USSR and China was important because it later allowed me to better analyse Vietnamese emulation practices and their associated professed rationales.

In the third chapter I showed how Ho Chi Minh adopted emulation from the USSR via China and adapted it to the specific Vietnamese conditions of war with colonial France and the goal of independence. Vietnamese emulation was modelled on the Soviet experiences, and was mediated through China, although being similar culturally and socio-economically to China, Vietnam was in a very different situation to both countries. Moreover, Ho Chi Minh's choice to focus on 'the Vietnamese mission' differed from Maoist goals of emulation which primarily seemed to serve ideological goals, especially those of establishing the foundations of the cult of Mao Zedong. Since Vietnam started emulation after Stalin's death, it 'missed' the zenith of Stalinist emulation with its Stakhanovite movement, and in any case direct Soviet influence was very limited until the late 1950s.

Furthermore, as I showed throughout the thesis, the evidence suggests strongly that Ho Chi Minh initially focused far more on patriotism than socialism. That was illustrated in the case of the first three emulation movements launched in 1948, 'Eliminate Hunger, Ignorance and Foreign Invaders'. Vietnamese history, tradition and culture created an important base for a positive acceptance of emulation movements in Vietnam. Apart from a strong tradition of national heroes which translated easily into emulation heroism, I argued that there were strong connections to the experience with large-scale popular mobilisation (against France) and sacrifice, as well as to the use of symbolism in the names of the movements, penetration of emulation into Vietnamese village via rituals, cult of ancestors, worshipping places, etc. I argued through a detailed examination of the history that this helped lead to a smooth 'domestication' of emulation in Vietnam.

I showed how little direct external communist knowledge and help Vietnam had with this task in 1948 when it was not yet a part of any communist alliance. That changed in 1950 with Chinese (and Soviet) diplomatic recognition of the DRV and a significant inflow of Chinese advisors. An important part of these early emulation movements was a preparation and realization of their organisational aspects, which included the emergence of the new institutions specific to them, importantly the Medal Institute and the Central Committee for

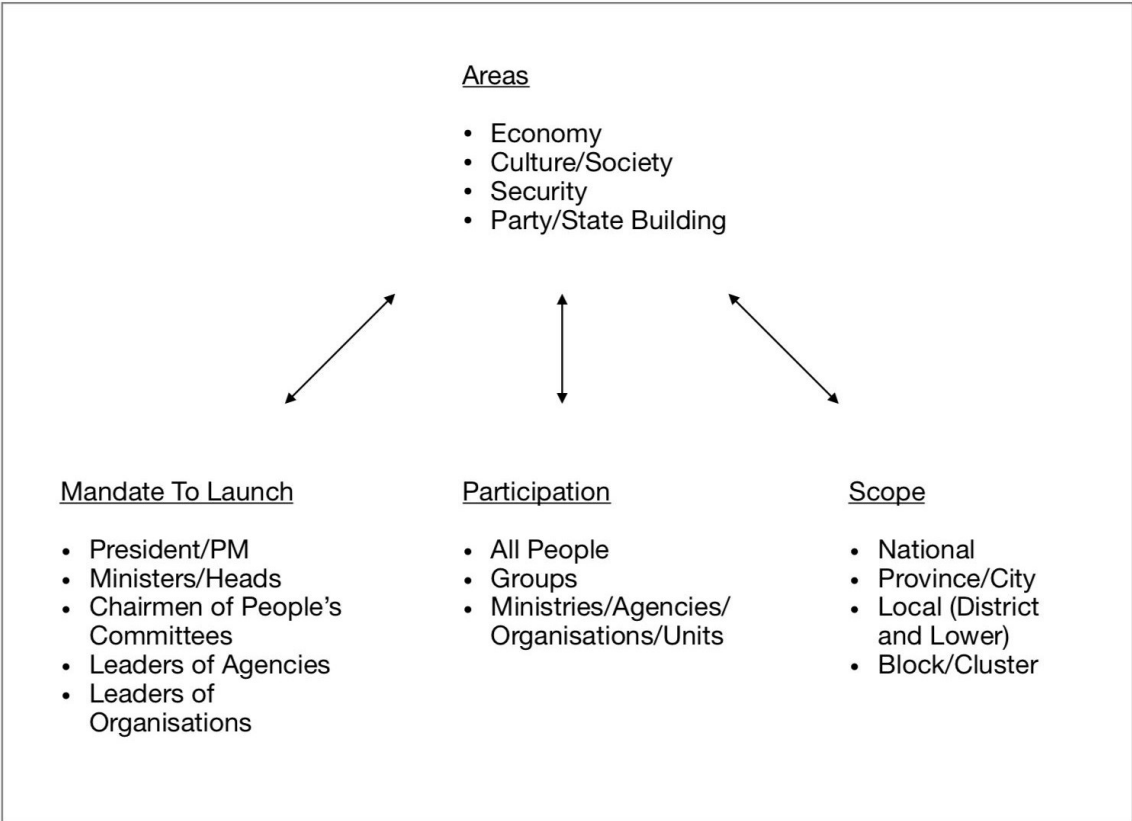
the Patriotic Emulation Movement. It also included appointing new personnel, establishing their system of titles and rewards and construction of organisational linkages between central and local levels. A part of this process of organisation were the local and national patriotic emulation congresses, which was one component of the range of ceremonies where rewards and titles were awarded in the presence of DRV leaders. To spread the movement, a powerful system of propaganda around emulation was created: emulation was propagandised via speeches, the press, media, books, stamps, school curricula, folk pictures, Mass Organisations, workplaces, visits of Emulation Heroes and leaders of the DRV, etc. This was part of the foundational narrative of the emerging regime, and I devoted space to bring out and analyse how this worked in terms of its internal logic, stressing factors that suggest the key importance of legitimacy.

The important victory at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954 meant the end of French colonial involvement in Indochina and brought a positive result to Ho Chi Minh's politics, including the emulation movement calling for elimination of foreign invaders. Also, the situation in two further areas improved, as illiteracy was reduced and hunger was tackled. This meant that those emulation movements which had been tied to these goals celebrated their first substantial victories and the regime gave them public credit for this. I introduced in detail the First National Patriotic Emulation Congress and the first seven Emulation Heroes. My argument suggested that whilst the first campaigns were presented as 'successful' we need to be cautious as in a broader analysis this success cannot be attributed so readily to emulation movements. Other candidates for substantial contributing factors were foreign aid, natural conditions, the general enthusiasm of people related to newly acquired independence, the population's trust in authorities, etc. This situation, however, did contribute to a successful start of both emulation movements and the new regime.

The 1948-1954 era saw a predominance of emulation in specific areas such as the military, but the following period that ended in 1964 when another war started, was focused primarily on agriculture and rural collectivisation. I presented and analysed the four largest emulation movements of the early 1960s: Đại Phong Wind in agriculture, Duyên Hải Wave in industry, Bắc Lý Drum in education and Three Most in the military; the second and third National Patriotic Emulation Congresses; and it then identified a shift back to military movements which occurred during the Second Indochina War (1964-75). Although, partly due to a lack of primary sources, we lack research on the extent of popular support for the regime in the early 1960s, we can observe a growing gap in legitimacy after 1954. As regime

elites tried to ‘marry’ together patriotism and socialism, the gradually-introduced values of socialism were not as easily accepted. The third chapter concluded with a division of historical movements in three phases: introductory, peak and regressive, which expressed these important changes in the focus of emulation movements.

Chapter 4 mapped emulation movements ‘in the new period’ (after the 1986 Đổi Mới economic reforms), noting that they experienced a sort of ‘resurrection’ in the late 1990s and early 2000s, after the 1997 Thái Bình protests, marked by the 2003 promulgation of the Law on Emulation and Rewards and the new five-year emulation period starting in 2006. The 2003 Law was introduced in detail, together with the particular topics of the new emulation organisational structure, a section on funding and an analysis of the question of ‘voluntary participation’ in emulation movements in Vietnam. I created a typology of present-day emulation movements. The main division according to ‘Areas’ is completed with three complementary axes: Mandate to Launch (Who can launch emulation movements?); Participation (Who participates in emulation movements?) and Scope (At which administrative level are movements organised?). In the main text I provide a detailed exposition, but as a simplified scheme, this typology appears as follows:



This typology served as a guideline for my analysis of the selected emulation movements. I presented multiple case studies: the three largest national movements and several smaller movements in different areas of emulation: Culture/Society, Security and Party/State Building, corresponding with the concrete movements related to Party and Morality; Education; Countryside; Family; Environment; and Security.

I chose movements which represented different types and concurrently those, which were the largest, most interesting and most important. I examined the national movement ‘Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh’s Moral Example’ (SFHE), a movement intended to deal with the problems of corruption and stated lack of morality of the Party and people, and its sub-movements: three movements from the Education sector; and the ‘Saving Money in a Piggy Bank’ movement. A second large national movement I explored was the ‘Building New Countryside’ movement and its sub-movements ‘Cultural Life’ and ‘Cultural Family’. After that I analysed emulation in an Environmental area, ‘Green-Clean-Beautiful’, and finished with an examination of emulation movements in the Security area: first domestically - ‘All People Protect the Security of the Fatherland’ and secondly internationally- ‘All People Participate in Protection of Territorial Sovereignty and Security of National Borders’. I concluded that my analysis showed that the largest and most important movements very likely correspond with the most serious political issues in current Vietnam. Each movement was considered within the broader context of existing problems, policies, or challenges, as articulated by the VCP in its explanations (both internally through official documents and externally through how the movements’ contents were justified to the population).

### ***Functions of Emulation Movements***

After I explored emulation movements in Vietnam, I created two lists of functions of emulation movements as a basis for their comparison and analysis. I discovered that the functions of emulation movements past and present differ at some aspects and argued that these differences reflect the different situations in which Vietnam was historically, compared with the present-day. I divided these functions into two broader groups: ideological and practical, despite it being clear that many of these functions can be seen as lying within both categories. Through these functions, I argued about whether they possibly affect legitimacy in Beetham’s sense (norms, values, goals, consent) or whether they help to create legitimacy effects.

## Functions of emulation movements

<b>HISTORICAL FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>CURRENT FUNCTIONS</b>
<b>Ideological</b>	<b>Ideological</b>
Promotion of values	Promotion of values
Indoctrination	Remedy for the degeneration of Communist doctrine/Party's ideological self-control
<b>Practical</b>	<b>Practical</b>
Mobilisation	Mobilisation
Responsibility sharing	Responsibility sharing
Building Party, Mass Organisations and Administrative	Physical control of population
Link between Party and People	
Achieving Practical Results	Achieving Practical Results/Agenda setting

## Legitimacy and Legitimacy Effect

Part of the motivation of this thesis was to initiate and support deeper discussion about legitimacy in Vietnam and how this might contribute to the general topic of legitimacy in non-democratic regimes. In this thesis I worked primarily with the concepts of legitimacy of three authors: Max Weber, David Beetham and Robert Lamb.

Drawing upon Max Weber's writings, I explored the issue of Ho Chi Minh's charisma (and its routinisation) which played an important role in Vietnam. A charismatic personality carries a mission, and in Vietnam this mission was primarily the termination of colonialism and defence of independence. David Beetham, a critic of Max Weber, provided arguments for my focus on norms, values, goals and consent. His approach helped me to form the comparative analysis of values in Vietnam between 1948 and currently, and to relate them to legitimacy. I interpret the success of Ho Chi Minh as being able, through emulation movements, to represent norms, values, and goals which were widely shared in Vietnam, thus producing real consent. My third author, Robert Lamb, introduced the question, 'what has the same effect as legitimacy?', which helped me to explore 'legitimacy effect' and related strategies that have a similar effect on regime stability as legitimacy (such as seduction, persuasion, manipulation and habit).

By using this distinction between legitimacy and legitimacy effect, my thesis was able to show that whilst it is often difficult practically to distinguish the causes and effects of stability, it is important to distinguish the source, as the quality of stability from different sources seems to differ. To clarify, I argue that we can see it as a three-level gradient: the quality of stability seems to be strongest and most durable when its source is pure legitimacy; legitimacy effect merely contributes to stability; and coercion, based on fear, creates very 'unstable stability'. In this thesis, I have tended to assume that legitimacy and legitimacy effects work complementarily with coercion, so that the less legitimacy is secured the more coercion is necessary. I introduced the idea of 'legitimacy dynamics' as a combination of legitimacy and legitimacy effects that creates a mixture which is constantly shifting, and interacting with coercion, which is probably why it is difficult to capture them practically or make black and white predictions about them.

### **Why Does the VCP Maintain Emulation Movements?**

This question, asked at the start of this thesis was considered within another assumption that this thesis made at the beginning: the regime adopted and maintains this Soviet tool (emulation movements) because it believes that it is somehow advantageous for it: it is thought to contribute to the stability and the legitimacy of the regime. The consideration as to whether this assumption is correct or not is a complicated issue, and not fully resolved. My analysis of the apparent functions of emulation movements entered this discussion, which

I divided into two parts, firstly, why did the regime adopt emulation movements and secondly, why does it continue to use them? The presence of very different answers I propose for these two questions, especially the contrast between them, is itself analytically useful.

### ***Why did the Regime Adopt Emulation Movements?***

An easy but unfulfilling answer, as I have argued, to this question would be because Ho Chi Minh was devoted to the ideals of Marxism-Leninism and he wanted to prove this to the USSR to gain their alliance. Rather, I argued emulation movements naturally fitted with aspects of Vietnamese culture, tradition and experience. Ho Chi Minh perhaps rather hoped that emulation movements, if shaped for Vietnamese conditions, would help with his mission of independence. Emulation indeed helped, I argue, and also helped create a foundational regime legitimacy and offered possible links to new communist doctrine.

Why is this difficult to see? The first problem is that emulation movements had and have their origin in the USSR and as such it can be easily assumed that their design was perhaps intended more for control rather than to increase legitimacy. Even if that assumption about the design being purely for the control is correct (which can be debated), it does not mean that the countries which adopted this tool used it for control. In this thesis I showed, that in Vietnam, the functions of emulation movements were closely related to legitimacy or legitimacy effect.

In my interpretation, in 1948 when Ho Chi Minh called for patriotic emulation, he gradually managed to secure a positive legitimacy dynamic. This thesis showed that multiple factors arguably contributed to creating this dynamic.

Conditions in Vietnam were favourable to pursuing a ‘large change’ in Vietnam. Vietnam was decimated by the war and the French were widely hated, especially by the landless farmers. Nationalist groups which were previously relatively strong were not able to terminate French colonialism and the ruling Nguyen dynasty was considered corrupted because it had largely collaborated with the French. Ho Chi Minh offered something very different in a situation of widespread popular excitement around the newly proclaimed national independence. A political vacuum, hatred of colonialism, and the will to fight for the newly gained independence were three strong factors that aided the success of Ho Chi Minh and the doctrine he represented.



We can consider the following factors based on my analysis through the lens of functions of emulation movements. I suggested that emulation movements served three basic ideological functions: propagation of shared values; indoctrination; and the spread of Ho Chi Minh's charisma. The practical functions of emulation movements were also important for legitimacy and legitimacy effects, among those I suggested were: mobilisation; responsibility sharing; building Party, Mass Organisations and the administration; creating links between Party and people; and achieving practical results. As I conclude in the following section, these functions often interacted.

I argued, that Ho Chi Minh was managing to use an imported Soviet tool to pursue three values which were not contested in Vietnam: independence, need for education and need for the increase of well-being of the Vietnamese (first reducing famine and then building the economy). These values were tied tightly together in the notion of 'patriotism' which reminded many Vietnamese of the old quest for preserving national identity in the face of powerful empires.

In terms of indoctrination, the new values related to the new communist doctrine and emulation movements were introduced gradually and in the background, and as my analysis shows, were usually tied to the three large foundational patriotic values. This transition from old to new was supported by connecting emulation with Vietnamese traditions: tradition of heroism, of loyalty to authority, and of popular beliefs. We see this in the symbolism of the chosen names of the movements, for example using 'lucky numbers' and names like 'Bắc Lý Drum' which ostensibly reminds people of Vietnamese famous traditional Đông Sơn bronze drums or perhaps even more generally the symbolic importance of drums in Vietnam (often used in the wars); powerful elements like wind or wave; traditional folk pictures Đông Hồ and their connection with emulation; or relating emulation heroes and martyrs to spirits, cult of ancestors and rituals in the villages as argued by Tréglodé (2012).

Gradually, emulation movements served as a base for building of Mass Organisations, Party and administration. Through Mass Organisations, people could compete for titles and rewards, Emulation Heroes were often admitted to the Party, gained high functions in the state administration and became loyal to the regime, and all this provided support for legitimacy

Ho Chi Minh's charisma was an important factor contributing to positive legitimacy dynamics. As a representative of the three highlighted values, and given his charisma, Ho Chi Minh gradually became an authority that a large enough proportion of the population started

to believe in, especially when he delivered what he had promised. The victorious outcomes of the First and Second Indochina wars and the DRV's survival perhaps softened the negative legitimacy challenge of the Land Reform. I argued that consideration of Weber's features of charisma illuminated how emulation movements helped to spread Ho Chi Minh's charisma through his travels throughout the country; visiting emulation groups; his speeches and writings; and the congresses where he met with emulation heroes who spread the message about him further in their home villages or during their own travels.

In general, politicians were reported not hesitant to put their hands on ploughs, machines, and other agricultural or industrial equipment, and so, some said, they managed to appear as, 'close to the people'. This creation of a link between Party and people was important as it assisted Ho Chi Minh to gain a following and with that also strengthened the positive legitimacy dynamic.

Mobilisation was analysed in terms of popular consent, this thesis suggested that it was predominantly real consent which we could see in Vietnam from the late 1940s. Many people truly supported the cause of independence and did not necessarily see or understand the consequences of the second part of the equation – socialism. That partially explains why many people voluntarily participated in emulation movements when they were related to the cause of national independence. On the other hand, I showed some 'strategies' that led to sustaining the mobilisation of people, providing other types of consent, and it was, for example, a system of rewards which allowed farmers to raise their social status; also fear, especially after the Land reform and its brutality; and propaganda of the 'successes of emulation fighters, heroes, collectives', etc. We saw four strategies: seduction, persuasion, manipulation and habit which all contributed to mobilisation: people were seduced by rewards or the promise of personal prestige, and becoming a 'Hero' or 'Fighter' promised an important increase in personal status. People were being persuaded via speeches, and the message at the time was that Vietnam only had a chance if 'all the population' joined in. And lastly, people were manipulated emotionally when they heard heartbreaking stories about Emulation Heroes. I suggested that principles of habit were employed in emulation as well, but it is difficult to find direct evidence. As we do not have enough data on popular acceptance of the regime in the DRV during the early 1960s, this interesting problem calls for more research.

In sum, this thesis showed that a predominance of successful legitimization, combined with legitimizing effects, helped to stabilize the DRV regime despite the coercion experienced

during the Land Reform. In both Beetham's and Weber's sense, I conclude that in the period of 1948-1954 Ho Chi Minh managed to fulfil the criteria of 'legitimate authority'. In later periods this is far more questionable. My detailed analysis shows foundational aspects of regime legitimacy in the particular context of historical emulation, and so in the absence of a major revision, what was inherited would have to be used in any present-day replication of such movements by the VCP regime.

### ***Why Does the Regime Continue Using Emulation Movements?***

The analysis of present-day emulation movements showed that the VCP struggles to use emulation movements as a tool to increase legitimacy. Instead, it increasingly uses them as a tool to seek legitimacy effects and control over the population. I presented two main probable reasons for why the regime keeps using emulation movements. Firstly, and most importantly, through some functions, their use is still able to support stability or at least slow the degeneration of the doctrine, either via legitimacy effect or control. Secondly, in the situation of the degeneration of the communist doctrine in Vietnam, getting rid of a typically communist tool, especially one that is central to foundational narratives, widely lauded as having been established by Ho Chi Minh, could produce a serious negative effect. These two reasons are rather likely, as problems with contemporary emulation movements seem to be related to increasing instability as the VCP currently often struggles with negative legitimacy dynamics.

Again, multiple factors are candidates for explaining this negative dynamic:

Firstly, I advanced the idea that Vietnam and the VCP are nowadays in a completely different situation from that when foundational aspects of the regime's narrative were formed, and the detailed analysis of emulation movements shows this very clearly. The absence of war means the regime faces a bigger and different challenge in creating enthusiasm and willingness to participate in movements voluntarily. For example, historically, there was a common enemy, France, however currently, China is the country which is of most popular concern, and is generating most emotions and fears in Vietnam. The ambivalent stance of the VCP when it comes to China apparently contradicts its historic and current appeal to patriotism. Another reason, I argue, is related to the fact that the VCP has ruled Vietnam for a relatively long time now, and the regime is mature and consolidated, this means that has had time to prove itself. Not only has the regime matured but also emulation movements have

been employed for a relatively long time, such that their many problems are now clearly visible. Another important aspect is the clash of two different doctrines, communist and capitalist, which emerged after the VCP gave a green light to economic reforms through the 1986 Đổi Mới, – the VCP struggles to accommodate the market economy under the label of communism. And lastly, problems in present-day Vietnam are not easily linked and limited to anything comparable to Ho Chi Minh’s ‘three big tasks’. Instead, they are much more diverse and complicated, and as the society becomes more and more demanding, Vietnamese elites need to pursue national success instead of national survival.

Other factors were considered within my analysis. Based upon my typology, my analysis of the current functions of emulation movements helped to uncover links to legitimacy and legitimacy effects. In present-day emulation movements there are three ideological functions, which I elaborated: promotion of shared values; remedy for the degradation of communist doctrine; and perpetuation of Ho Chi Minh’s charisma. Practical functions of emulation movements were also revealing. The four main functions identified were: mobilisation, responsibility sharing, physical control of population and producing real outcomes combined with agenda setting.

From the perspective of norms and values in Vietnam, I showed through my analysis of current emulation movements that the changes in them and the social diversification related to both economic opening and development in Vietnam means that values are often clashing or underrepresented. This was clearly visible across a wide range of movements and through the difficulties the VCP experienced in designing and structuring them coherently. The foundational values of independence, education and well-being did not transform easily into suitable present-day forms: nowadays, threats to Vietnam’s very survival do not loom as large. China is perceived as the largest threat to Vietnamese sovereignty, however at the same time the two countries are inextricably linked as Vietnam’s economic success is largely tied to China. From illiteracy, Vietnam moved on to more complicated problems, which place far greater burdens upon a state pervaded by high levels of corruption, so it is not easy to argue persuasively how emulation movements will tackle the quality of teachers, education and educational facilities; modern teaching equipment; or international competitiveness. Well-being is an even trickier category. Besides economic progress which is advanced through the adaptation of mixed economy and free market principles, the Vietnamese care for a healthy environment and safe food, access to good quality healthcare, social security, etc. The VCP no longer seems to be able to represent shared values, simply because problems in Vietnam

are much more challenging and complicated and their solutions require first admitting that they exist, and second, bringing to the fore effective policies and tools to tackle them. In other words, an accepted (because shared) monopoly on the promotion of values is crumbling and the old Soviet tools the VCP is using do not easily seem to produce desired outcomes.

The functions of Perpetuation of Ho Chi Minh's charisma and the Remedy for the degradation of communist ideology are two sides of one coin.

The legitimacy and popularity that Ho Chi Minh still holds today in Vietnam seems undeniable. The foundational charisma of Ho Chi Minh with which the Party supports itself is in sharp contrast with the reality that VCP members are often corrupt, and importantly for general populous perception, are too often caught in corruption scandals. I showed that to 'cure' the communist doctrine, which is in decline, the VCP launched a movement 'Studying and Following Ho Chi Minh's Example'. Primary sources show that the VCP is grappling with the notion of a deep inner crisis, as many members of the Party do engage with capitalism in opposition to Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology. The VCP sees this as a direct threat to its legitimacy. My analysis of emulation movements shows the problem to be, that while Ho Chi Minh's 'simple' solutions arguably worked in the past, the new problems of today require more than just the training in Ho Chi Minh's morality as envisaged by emulation movements.

The function of control in Vietnamese present-day emulation movements is pronounced. Introduction of emulation movements supported their use as a tool to ensure that the mechanisms for population control (such as detailed record-keeping of participation) were set in place, but present-day movements are increasingly used for these rather than other functions as ideology degrades and legitimacy effects fade away. I showed how people and collectives are controlled in multiple ways. For example, the domestic security emulation movement provides 'volunteers' who help to control their fellow citizens. Emulation groups 'check on each other' as we saw in case of the 'Cultural Family' movement. Anyone who works in a collective which emulates has to contribute to emulation, so that the group can be successful, and those contributions or their absence add to the data collected by the state on individuals. As I suggested, participation in movements cuts off the free time people have and perhaps limits the space for 'unwanted' activities. The element of control is enhanced as the regime fights the 'negative impact of the market', dangers of 'individualism' and 'peaceful evolution'.

I argued that the mobilisation of people in Vietnam is more and more complicated and expressed consent seems to become increasingly fake. Firstly, there is no large source of enthusiasm comparable to the context of the 1940s with Vietnam's newly gained independence and shared animosity of a single enemy. As there is no substantial motivation for people to voluntarily contribute, mobilisation becomes more and more an empty formalism, as was pointed out in the official reports of all the emulation movements studied. My primary sources showed that, as emulation movements are often discussed as being 'empty form' or 'suffering formalism', teachers, workers and farmers are reported as finding participation less and less attractive. What seems to contribute to participation are habit and again 'power strategies' (creating legitimacy effects). As I showed there are pressures which lead to people participating simply to avoid problems. Financial bonuses for emulation titles are another source of motivation, but, as discussed in the Vietnamese media, they are often distributed to people in 'leading positions'. People seem to increasingly mobilise outside emulation movements in a way that the VCP does not tolerate: in protests against China, protests for a clean environment, protests against corruption and land grabs.

Shared responsibility is one of the functions that seems to create largely positive legitimacy effects. As an example of de facto seduction or manipulation, people seem to be used to think in the way that it is their responsibility to repair schools, roads and bridges, alleviate poverty, reduce the gap between countryside and cities, protect their streets or borders or plant trees in their communes. This shared responsibility principle however sometimes can turn against the VCP, as we saw with the examples where people are ad hoc denied this responsibility. This was most pronounced in the international security area or when the authorities decided to allow the Chinese to mine bauxite, or the authorities cut down the trees in Hanoi.

Achieving Practical outcomes and Agenda setting are also important functions which allowed me to delve into the current problems of legitimacy. Thus, my argument threw light on aspects of performance legitimacy. Free market mechanisms and tools are popular in current Vietnam, most probably because they manage to deliver outcomes, they are efficient. Most believe that free market mechanisms triggered Vietnam's fast development. The old Soviet institutions like emulation movements, are comparatively judged as to whether they are as effective a tool for delivering outcomes. Even if Ho Chi Minh and the DRV tried to propagate the opposite message, current emulation movements are, my data shows, simply very limited and ineffective. In the context of large problems, whilst the Party says that they

are valid solutions, the evidence generally suggests otherwise. People are often able to repair schools, students voluntarily plant trees and women save some money for scholarships for poor pupils, etc. Only if these can be classified as ‘dealing with imminent problems’ can the VCP claim that emulation movements are able to deliver. However, there are obvious tensions, for when it comes to serious and complicated problems like ecological catastrophes or educational reform, emulation movements are clearly unable to deliver sufficient results.

Again, the absence in the sources of clear narrative links between this function and reported outcomes suggests that movements default to serving largely as a control mechanism. We saw that the VCP decides (with little evidence of consultation) what problems within a given area or sector will be dealt with in emulation movements, and indeed appropriates the task of agenda-setting. Emulation movement agendas are thus shifted away from the problems expressed by the public or experts in given areas. Agenda setting might theoretically serve as a correcting mechanism for a negative legitimacy dynamic, provided people believe that what *is* addressed is what *should be* addressed. Three emulation movements in education showed a lack of ‘systemic solutions’ and ‘proper identification of what is actually the problem’. Whilst allowing them access to the media, the VCP does not allow public or unwelcome experts to enter the process of agenda setting and the monopoly of the Party in agenda setting then appears to get in the way of solving the problems of the education sector. By excluding some problems from these agenda, these are not dealt with. I showed in Chapter 4 and 6 that similar problems are visible across all selected areas. In an increasingly open society, the political risks of this strategy are rather clear.

## **Legitimacy, Power and Authority**

My original field work in Vietnam in 2013 and 2014 concerning power and authority, and the analysis of the resulting data, threw light on the prevalent ‘power discourse’ in Vietnam. When I asked Vietnamese to explain the terms power and authority, they were often unable to differentiate them, they usually interchanged these two expressions and took them as having one common meaning. This corresponds with the above described analysis of present-day emulation movements. As the VCP lacks the ability to comprehensively represent popular concerns (avoid clashes, synthesize and accommodate some important shared values), it often resorts to dominating power. My analysis then concludes that this power is used to preserve its rule, and to stay in power, however, it cannot do much more, as it appears that the

regime needs ‘legitimate’ authority and not just authority with power. This question was addressed in Fforde and Homutova (2017) – because legitimate authority can *govern* as opposed to *ruling*. This means that it can create and implement comprehensive policies that lead towards shared goals while nurturing shared values. For this change, the analysis suggests that Vietnam needs a political reform that includes two major steps. One is to admit that to be able to represent ‘shared values’, a legitimate regime would have to allow people to be able to truly contribute to the debate about these values, what they are, how they develop and what they should be; that is in sum: to treat people as subjects who conferred authority on the regime. Two, Vietnam would need reformed institutions. The current anachronistic old Soviet institutions are maybe suitable for control and propaganda, they are however, unable to deliver practical results and this was clearly shown through my exploration of present-day emulation movements.

## **Stability and Instability of the Vietnamese Regime: Legitimacy versus Control**

Instability in Vietnam can be related to many elements. Whilst I looked at only one part of Vietnamese politics, emulation movements, the data and its analysis showed clearly that it is a complex problem.

I specifically focused on legitimacy and authority issues. In terms of legitimacy issues, I advanced the idea that emulation movements, as a research topic, show more generally that instability (protests) in present-day Vietnam arise when the VCP struggles to consistently represent a set of shared values and project those as clear goals. Study of emulation movements shows clearly the tensions the VCP faces in this area, it can be observed in setting their goals and rationalising them.

With this lack of legitimacy, the VCP seeks to secure control, unfortunately, emulation movements serve this function as well. In this sense, Ho Chi Minh unwittingly imported a tool which can do a damage. My evidence from emulation movements suggests that whilst for Ho Chi Minh the goal of communism was not perhaps as important as independence and patriotism, this could not be the end of the story as Ho Chi Minh was a communist. Ho Chi Minh in the newly established DRV managed to acquire ‘legitimate’ authority by representing collective and shared norms and values, and through his ability to use enthusiasm to sustain



mobilisation and promote goals that were generally supported (independence and progress). At the same time, however, he set in place the foundations for a system (institutions and political tools, including emulation movements) which provided the mechanisms for control and gaining legitimacy effect. Paradoxically, or perhaps ironically, whilst having at its disposal material resources of far greater magnitude, the contemporary VCP is in a completely different and far more challenging position than Ho Chi Minh.

With the tool inherited from Ho Chi Minh and facing the challenging task of securing 'prosperity' while accommodating two different doctrines, the instability of the regime is lurking under the surface.

The goals of the population are success, progress, quality of life and recognition in the world. Natural enthusiasm is now rather on the side of globalisation and the free market and its possibilities and benefits. For the VCP, this however creates another problem. The free market as a source of legitimacy and stability also worsens the problem of corruption. With corruption, legitimacy suffers and instability arises. It is striking that the revival from dormancy of emulation movements appears to date from the Thái Bình protests of 1997, which showed that the rural base of the Party was often corrupt, lacked legitimacy and was vulnerable to popular anger. Emulation movements which are teaching the population and local cadres about Ho Chi Minh's ideology, however, are not likely to stop this corruption.

My analysis of emulation movements revealed how opposition and instability in Vietnam arises and how this is tied to legitimacy. I presented a picture in which the VCP inconsistently tries to balance between goals and values from its foundational narratives of the past and a search for new ones. Patriotism is a prime example. Much of the open debate in the official press shows that Vietnamese people truly want to take care of the well-being of their country but, as my analysis shows, these expressions of will are often suppressed. A political party which wants legitimacy can promote and concurrently suppress the same values, but it is not likely to be seen as legitimate. Emulation movements in environment and international security provided important insight into this problem. These show that the Vietnamese population seems to know what the goals should be and how values should develop but the VCP is either afraid or refuses to represent their voice. Either not represented at all, or misrepresented, and confronted with the foundational narrative of the Party that stresses a legacy of 'solving problems' inherited from Ho Chi Minh, this triggers opposition. This opposition is then strongest, my analysis shows, when a diverse population of different groups of Vietnamese relate to the same problem, as was the case in 'Dead Fish' and 'Bauxit

Mining'. Here perhaps the same technology that seems to facilitate state control, information technology, may also act against it, and the role of social media in these events is an interesting problem to address in further work.

Instability is thus related to a dilemma that the Party faces, it cannot both represent and control the values. As I showed throughout the thesis and particularly in the last chapter, this inability to represent consistently collective values, norms and goals in Vietnam comes down to the core problem of other communist regimes: they cannot admit pragmatically that they are possibly unable to represent popular values. Further research would investigate this inability and especially whether it is central to their self-understanding of their existence and the logic of the monopoly of their power. The analysis here suggests that the prevalent dysfunctionality and waste of emulation movements supports this view: they cannot achieve their goals and they cannot find a pragmatic solution, therefore, being in a trap, they find themselves resorting to domination and control. This, from my perspective, is irrational, as it creates a negative cycle, for domination and control cannot secure practical long term results in politics, nor the legitimacy of the regime. Against this, the fact remains that the regime survives, and the question is, why the regime seems to be stable?

This takes me into the area of the general political analysis of Vietnam, which is outside the scope of the thesis, but nevertheless my analysis of emulation movements does offer some suggestions.

As I suggested, there are different types of stability: a stability based on fear (violence, coercion) is different than a stability based on 'putting up with something' and again different from a stability stemming from legitimacy effects (people for some reason believe it is a good idea) and legitimacy (genuine and durable support). The latter, being probably the strongest, is a type of stability which is mostly missing in Vietnam and at the same time, the biggest challenges to the VCP are identified as being related to this type of stability. Ho Chi Minh and the Party's foundational narrative evoke such possibilities. After all, a poor country defeated both the French and the US.

Therefore, I argue that asking about whether Vietnam is stable or not is not sufficient. The better question to ask is, how stable is this stability that Vietnam currently has? Market economy and the first three types of stability for now are apparently strong enough to hold things together. After all, the country reached middle income status around 2009 after one of the fastest reductions in poverty ever seen in the world. However, there are factors which are

undermining this balance: the VCP uses the market economy as a ‘whipping boy’. When there is a problem, like the one of corruption of their own members, it immediately points to the ‘underestimated dangers’ of market capitalism with its individualism. Through my analysis of emulation campaigns, I suggested that legitimacy strategies are weaker and weaker, habitual and ritualistic time-consuming and a corrupted emulation becomes a burden. People are more and more educated and more and more complain about the emptiness of the movements, this is apparent from the abundance of articles on this topic in Vietnamese online resources. Violence is extremely unpopular and costly, and risky for the security personnel involved. In the case of opposition, the VCP jails many protesters but releases them soon after. However, there is often one, or a very few, who receive a long sentence in prison, serving as an ‘example’, and as the VCP hopes, to create fear and obedience.

To sum up, the biggest weakness of the VCP identified in the analysis of this thesis is that of legitimacy (and dealing with this lack of legitimacy by coercion). As progress and quality of life are increasingly the goals demanded by the population, and the VCP has to deal with a clash between the contrasting values of capitalism and communism, a clash between the value of patriotism and dependence on China, and a clash of the effectiveness of the market mechanism and inefficiency of communist tools and institutions, it is increasingly unable to be a ‘legitimate’ authority representing the shared values and goals of its society. Stability in Vietnam seems to have fragile foundations. The legitimacy-control dilemma can be considered via Hannah Arendt’s claim: “where force is used, authority itself has failed” (Arendt 1961, p. 93).

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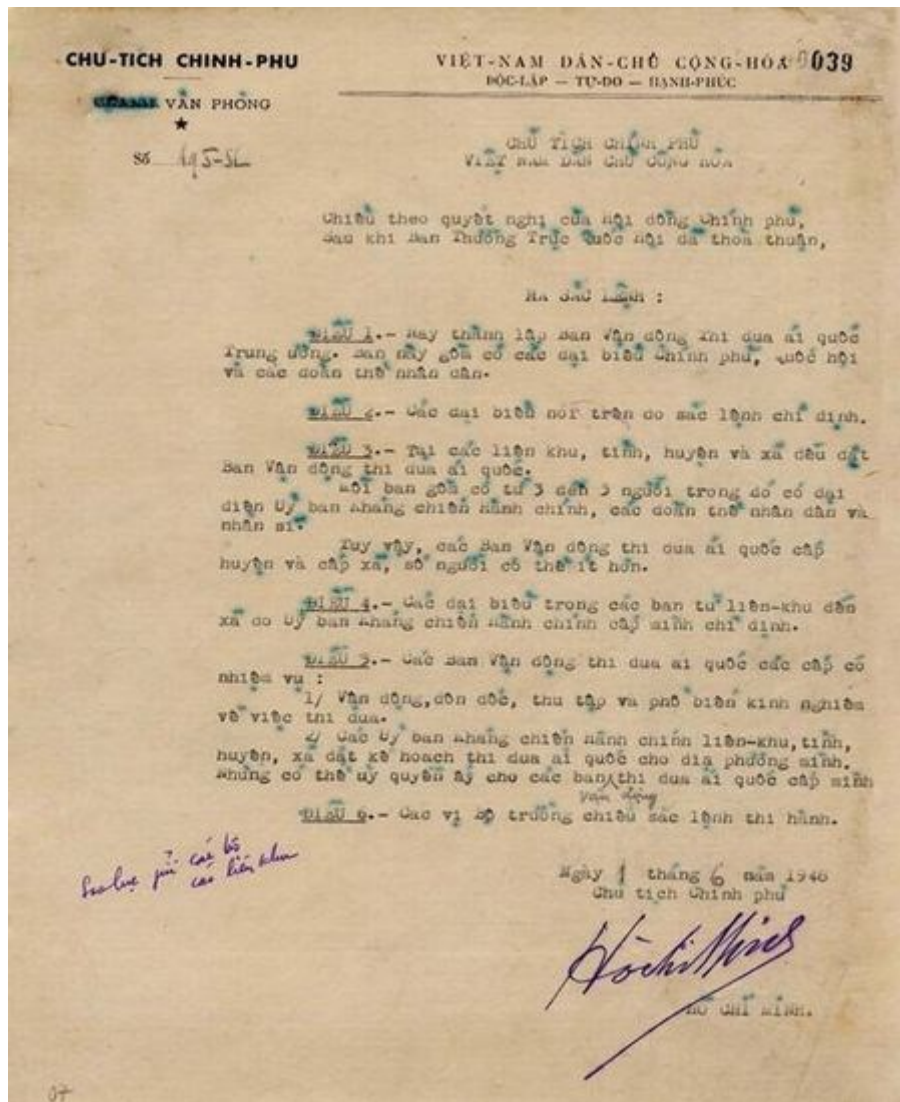
## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Ho Chi Minh's handwritten Proclamation of emulation movement

Càng toàn thi đặng bao yên quý.  
Nước ta kinh tế lạc hậu, nhưng  
long yên nước và chi quả lương  
chàng kem ai.  
Nay muốn tự cấp túc túc, đặng  
kịp người ta, thì chớ ta phải đi  
mưu.  
Vì vậy toàn dân, sĩ, nông,  
công, thương, binh, gái trai già  
trẻ, toàn thi đặng <sup>vô luận ở gia đình, làm công</sup> yên quý  
hải ra sức tham gia cuộc  
động viên đưa yên nước, tức là  
lặng xa sản xuất.  
như thi thi - Khó khăn nhất  
đình thế lực; Kiên quyết nhất  
đình thành công.  
HỒ CHI MINH

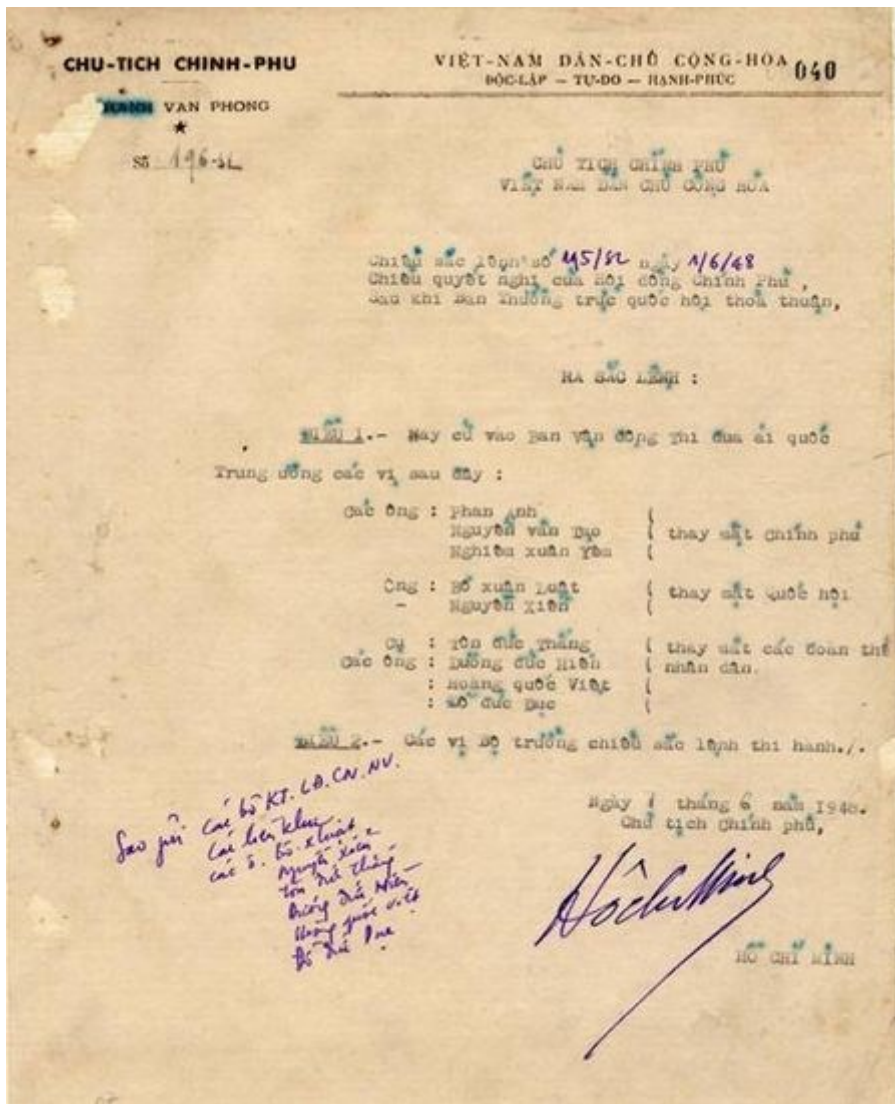
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs.

Appendix 2: Decree No. 195/1948 which established Committee for Patriotic Emulation Movement



Source: Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum (Management Board).

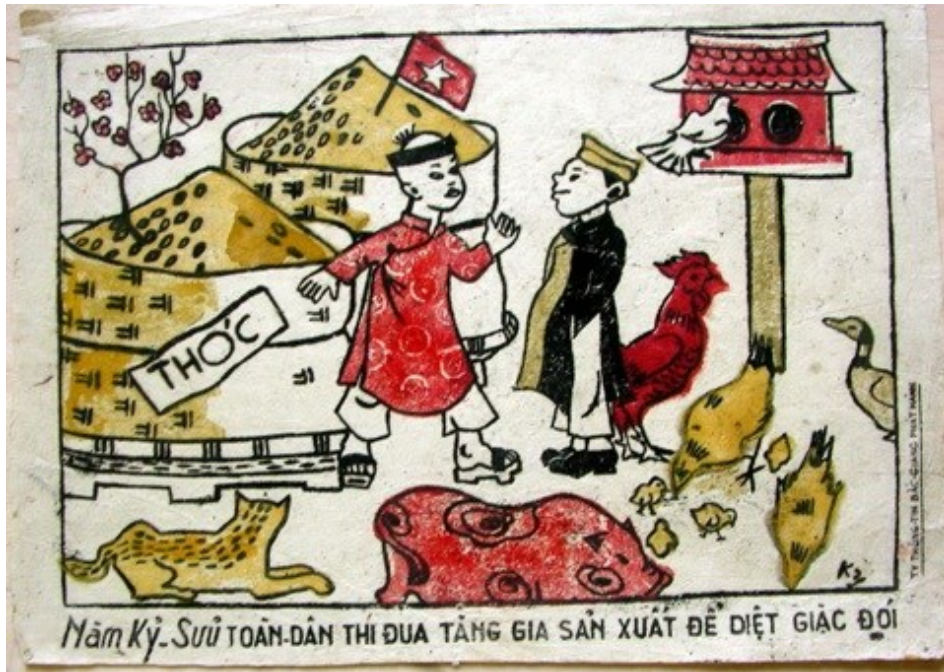
Appendix 3: Decree No. 196/SL from 1/6/1948 appointing members of the Central Patriotic Emulation Committee



Source: Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum (Management Board).

Appendix 4:

A) Folk Picture Đồng Hồ – “All people emulate to increase production and eliminate hunger”, (“thóc” means ‘rice/paddy’).



B) Folk picture Đồng Hồ – “All of the People emulate learning alphabet to eliminate illiteracy.”



C) Folk Picture Đồng Hồ – “All people emulate killing French”



(Source: Revolutionary Museum, Hanoi)



## Appendix 5: Eliminate Ignorance (Illiteracy)



Source: Hoàng Phương, 2015. Available online: <https://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/thoi-su/phong-trao-diet-giac-dot-70-nam-truoc-3270864.html>.

Appendix 6: Stamp ‘Ba Nhất (Three Most)



(Source: Vietstamp Club). Available online:

[http://www.vietstamp.net/data/2009/06/17/23254795\\_257.jpg](http://www.vietstamp.net/data/2009/06/17/23254795_257.jpg).

Appendix 7: Ho Chi Minh talking to Duyên Hải Workers



(Source: Union of Cooperatives and Enterprises of Hải Phòng City). Available online:

<http://lienminhhtxhaiphong.org.vn/PortalFolders/ImageUploads/LMHTX/1059/B%C3%A1c%20H%E1%BB%93%20th%C4%83m%20nh%C3%A0%20m%C3%A1y%20c%C6%A1%20kh%C3%AD%20Duy%C3%AAn%20H%E1%BA%A3i.bmp>.

Appendix 8: Books on sale in Hanoi.



(Source: Author)

Appendix 9: The National Rural Development Criteria for the New Countryside Commune<sup>140</sup>

**I. PLANNING**

TT	Name of the Criterion	Content of the Criterion	Common Targets	Criterion according to the area						
				North East Mountains	Red River Delta	North Central Coast	South Central Coast	Tay Nguyen	South East	Mekong River Delta
1	Plan	1.1. Having a general plan for the construction of commune[1] approved and publicly disclosed on time	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		1.2. To promulgate regulations to build the commune and organize implementation according to the plan	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve

**II. SOCIO\_ECONOMICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

TT	Name of the Criterion	Content of the Criterion	Common Targets	Criterion according to the area						
				North East Mountains	Red River Delta	North Central Coast	South Central Coast	Tay Nguyen	South East	Mekong River Delta
2	Transport	<p>2.1. Commune roads and roads from the centre of the commune to district roads need to have asphalt or concrete surface, ensuring that the cars can travel all year round</p> <p>2.2. Roads at the villages and hamlets need to be at least rolled flat (dirt road) to make sure cars can access it all year long</p> <p>2.3. Lanes are clean and not muddy in the rainy season</p>	<p>Provincial-level People’s Committee will make the concrete regulations which are in accordance with the plan, local conditions, needs of socio-economic development, ensuring the needs for connectivity of the local transportation system</p>							

<sup>140</sup> Translated by the author of the thesis according to the original Decision (No. 1980/QĐ-TTg, 2016)

		2.4. Main internal road (from residential area to fields) need to be rideable all the year long								
3	Irrigation	3.1. The proportion of agricultural land being irrigated and drained is more than 80%	Provincial-level People's Committees shall stipulate in detail the direction of restructuring the agriculture sector, adaptation to climate change and the formation of sustainable agricultural commodity production							
		3.2. Ensuring adequate conditions according to needs of population and in accordance with the regulations on disaster prevention at the place	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
4	Electricity	4.1. Standard electric system	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		4.2. The percentage of households using electricity regularly and safely	≥98%	≥95%	≥99%	≥98%	≥98%	≥98%	≥99%	≥98%
5	Schools	Ratio of schools of all levels: kindergartens, elementary schools, lower secondary schools, all having school facilities and teaching equipment up to the national standards	≥80%	≥70%	100%	≥80%	≥80%	≥70%	100%	≥70%
6	Cultural Facilities	6.1. Commune has a cultural house or multi-purpose hall and a sports-ground for cultural and sport events of the commune	Provincial-level People's Committees shall provide specific regulations to suit the practical conditions, community needs and cultural characteristics of each ethnic group							
		6.2. Commune has amusement, recreation and sport facilities for children and elderly people as prescribed[2]								
		6.3. Percentage of hamlets with public cultural houses or	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

		places for cultural and sport activities									
7	Rural Trade Infrastructure	Communes have rural markets or places of selling, buying or exchange of goods	The provincial-level People's Committees shall make specific regulations to suit the planning, practical conditions, socio-economic development requirements and cultural characteristics of each ethnic group								
8	Information and propaganda	8.1. Commune has a postal service point	The provincial people's committees shall set specific regulations to suit the conditions and needs of organizations and communities in each commune								
		8.2 Commune has telecommunication service and internet									
		8.3. Commune has radio and loudspeaker system to hamlets									
		8.4. The commune uses information technology in the management and administration									
9	Residential housing	9.1. Provisional houses, ruined houses	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
		9.2. Percentage of households that achieved the standard according to regulations	≥80%	≥75%	≥90%	≥80%	≥80%	≥75%	≥90%	≥70%	

### III. ECONOMY AND ORGANISATION OF PRODUCTION

TT	Name of the Criterion	Content of the Criterion	Common Targets	Criterion according to the area						
				North East Mountains	Red River Delta	North Central Coast	South Central Coast	Tay Nguyen	South East	Mekong River Delta
10	Income	Average income per capita in rural areas by 2020 (million VND/person)	≥45	≥36	≥50	≥36	≥41	≥41	≥59	≥50
11	Poor households	Percentage of poor households in period 2016-2020	≤6%	≤12%	≤2%	≤5%	≤5%	≤7%	≤1%	≤4%
12	Employment	Percentage of employed people in productive age who have ability to work	≥90%	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
13	Organisation of production	13.1. Commune has cooperatives operating	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve

		in accordance with the Law on Cooperatives from 2012								
		13.2. Commune has a model of linking production and consumption of agricultural products as a key to sustainability	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve

#### IV. CULTURE-SOCIETY-ENVIRONMENT

TT	Name of the Criterion	Content of the Criterion	Common Targets	Criterion according to the area						
				North East Mountains	Red River Delta	North Central Coast	South Central Coast	Tay Nguyen	South East	Mekong River Delta
14	Education and Training	14.1. To popularize preschool education for 5-year-old children, eliminate illiteracy, popularize universal primary education and popularize secondary education	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		14.2. Percentage of secondary-school graduates who continue to higher education	≥85%	≥70%	≥90%	≥85%	≥85%	≥70%	≥90%	≥80%
		14.3. Percentage of workers having work via their education (trained workers)	≥40%	≥25%	≥45%	≥40%	≥40%	≥25%	≥45%	≥25%
15	Healthcare	15.1. Percentage of population who participate in health insurance	≥85%	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		15.2. Commune meeting the national health criteria	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve



		15.3. Percentage of malnourished children under 5 and stunting (height according to the age)	≤21,8%	≤26,7%	≤13,9%	≤24,2%	≤24,2%	≤31,4%	≤14,3%	≤20,5%	
16	Culture	The percentage of hamlets with cultural standard	≥70%	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	
17	Environment and food safety	17.1. Percentage of households using water for hygiene and clean water according to regulations	≥95% (≥60% clean water)	≥90% (≥50% clean water)	≥98% (≥65% clean water)	≥98% (≥60% clean water)	≥95% (≥60% clean water)	≥95% (≥50% clean water)	≥98% (≥65% clean water)	≥95% (≥65% clean water)	
		17.2. Percentage of economic production, aquaculture, breeding establishments, craft villages which comply with the regulations on environmental protection	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
		17.3. Build the safe, green, clean and beautiful environment and landscape	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		17.4. Funerals according to regulations and planning	Provincial People's Committees shall provide specific regulations to suit the practical conditions and cultural characteristics of each ethnic group								
		17.5. Local landfill, garbage and industrial wastewater, have to be collected and disposed according to the regulations	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		17.6. Percentage of households having hygienic latrines, bathrooms, water	≥85%	≥70%	≥90%	≥85%	≥85%	≥70%	≥90%	≥70%	≥70%

	tanks hợp vệ sinh và ensuring 'three cleans'[3]								
	17.7. The percentage of livestock raising farms ensuring environmental protection	≥70%	≥60%	≥80%	≥70%	≥75%	≥60%	≥80%	≥70%
	17.8. The percentage of household food production and trading establishments who comply with food safety regulations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## V. POLITICAL SYSTEM

TT	Name of the Criterion	Content of the Criterion	Common Targets	Criterion according to the area						
				North East Mountains	Red River Delta	North Central Coast	South Central Coast	Tay Nguyen	South East	Mekong River Delta
18	Political System and approach to law	18.1. Commune Cadres and civil servants who meet standard	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		18.2. Have enough of organisations in political system as prescribed by the regulations	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		18.3. Party and Commune authorities meet the standard "clean and strong"	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		18.4. Socio-political organisations in the commune meet the grade good and higher (Vietnam uses a 5-grade system,	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

		where good is 2nd best, LH)								
		18.5. Commune meets legal access standard according to the regulations	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		18.6. Ensuring gender equality and prevention of domestic violence; protection and support of vulnerable people in family and social life	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
19	Defence and Security	19.1. To build a 'strong and broad' militia and fulfil the national defence norms	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve
		19.2. Commune reached the standards of security and social order and ensured the peace: do not have mass and prolonged complaints; do not let happen crimes and social evils (drugs and drug addiction, theft, gamble) these have to be curbed and reduced compared to previous years	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve	Achieve

[1] The general plan for building of commune must ensure re-structuralizing of agriculture in response to climate change, urbanisation, peri-urbanisation and rural environment.

[2] Facilities for children's play, recreation and sport must be in compliance with drowning protection.

[3] Ensuring 'Three cleans' includes: Clean house, kitchen and lane (according to the campaign "Build the family of five no's and three cleans" ("*Xây dựng gia đình 5 không, 3 sạch*") developed by the Central-level Women's Union.

(Source: Decision No. 1980/QĐ-TTg, 2016)