

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