SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AMONG VIETNAMESE GENERATIONS

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Abstract

Vietnam is a young country with more than half of the population born after 1975. Using data from the World Values Survey conducted in Vietnam in 2001, the current research explores the differences in political values across four Vietnamese generations and between North and South Vietnamese, given their distinct historical experiences. The Vietnamese people show overwhelming support for democracy although North-South differences persist. Contrary to what socialization theory predicts, distinct influences of each historical period cannot be traced through measurement of orientations toward democracy across the generational units; only regional differences defined by historical events help mark the context of democratic support. North-South and generational differences, however, are bound to be eliminated as Vietnam undertakes its political and economic transformations. More liberal politics and economics will diversify Vietnamese interests and broaden the spectrum of their social and cultural values.

Support for Democracy among Vietnamese Generations [1]

Nearly three decades since the Vietnam-American War has ended, a new generation of Vietnamese has sprung into existence. According to the 1999 Census data, more than 50% of the total population in Vietnam was born after 1975 (Central Census Steering Committee 2000). The young people of this generation paint a mixed picture of hopes, uncertainties, and frustrations. These people know not of the war, but the economic, moral, and social conditions are their concerns today (Marr 1996). While the younger generation may be more homogeneous in their political values because they grew up under the same regime and in a better time, the older generations might have sets of values pre-defined by regional influences and the North-South political division of the past with a different regime for each part of the country.

A cross-generational analysis may help to determine if the socialization process has potential impacts on Vietnamese values across regions. Using data from the World Values Survey, the current research examines generational and regional differences and similarities among the Vietnamese in their attitudes toward democracy. The paper first describes the different historical periods in Vietnam's modern history. These historical periods are defined by major changes in the political system of the country. Then the paper explores how socialization theory predicts the attitudinal outcomes of Vietnamese growing up in different historical periods and regions of Vietnam. Survey results reflect a cross-section of the Vietnamese society where people appear to have been socialized into different sets of values unique to their very own life experiences. Hence, each cohort's attitudes toward democracy may represent some variations as a product of history. Lastly, implications of the findings are discussed.

Dynamics in the Vietnamese Society

Vietnam was born out of chaos. Its history is plagued with warfare, from skirmishes on the borders to large-scale foreign invasions to civil wars. Since the birth of the country in 939A.D. (Taylor 1983), rarely have its people witnessed prolonged periods of peace and independence. Vietnam's political regime has never been democratic. With governments ranging from

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monarchy to authoritarian regime, the Vietnamese spent three-quarters of the twentieth century fighting the French colonialists, the American imperialists, and among themselves. Although most of Vietnam remains agrarian today, the Vietnamese social structure has been changing with every shift in economic and political regime.

Contemporary history of Vietnam could be divided roughly into four periods which helped craft four generations of Vietnamese: colonial (before 1954), division (1954-1974), post-war socialist experiment (1975-1985), and reform (1986-present). Political changes and economic policies over each historical period carried variable outcomes regionally in accord with different political regimes in the North and South Vietnam. A brief overview of modern history reveals patterns of constant fluctuation which have potentially influenced the different generations in Vietnamese society.

French Colonialism (1861-1954)

Saigon was the first target of the French in Vietnam in 1861, and by the late 19th century, all of Vietnam became subject to French colonial rule. The French divided Vietnam into three parts: Cochinchina (south), Annam (central region), and Tonkin (north). Each region developed its own administrative structure. While Cochinchina was directly ruled as a French colony, Tonkin and Annam retained the monarchical hierarchy based in the old capital of Hue under the supervision of French protectorates.

The respective economic structures in the three regions were also transformed to fit colonial interests according to how much control the French had over each region. In Southern Vietnam, where the French had the most influence early on, land became privatized instead of being owned collectively by the village before the French colonization (Ngo Vinh Long 1973). Villages in the South, with their relatively open residential settlement structure, were easily penetrated by the central administration, be it the French or, later, the American-backed government (Hickey 1964). This characteristic further inculcated a sense of individualism among Southern peasants compared to Northern and Central farmers. Meanwhile, in Northern and Central Vietnam, the village structure was closed, and communal living style has been the norm, accurately reflecting a popular saying, “The king’s rule stops at the village gate” (*Phep vua thua le lang*) (McAlister 1971). Thus, even when the French incorporated all of Vietnam

into the Indochinese Union in 1897, collective farming persisted in the Northern and Central regions alongside the French attempts to privatize the land (Beresford 1988).

Though there were variations among the regions, the political atmosphere during this colonial period was in general stifling. Vietnamese intellectuals either collaborated with the French to share the spoils or resisted them and received punishment. Ordinary people tried to negotiate their livelihood between resistant armies and colonialists' power. Northern and Central Vietnam were endowed with an authoritarian culture stemming from rigid Confucian political philosophy, the imperial court, and the hierarchical power structure within the villages (Porter 1993). On the other hand, living in more open villages amid "the ways of the world," Southern Vietnamese easily received international influences and more often rejected traditions (Hickey 1964). There was also relatively more freedom of expression allowed in the South than the North (Tai 1992).

Steep taxation, social polarization, and exploitation of workers sparked intellectual and popular struggles against French rule throughout the country (Beresford 1988). Out of the resistance movements was born the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) in 1930 (Nguyen Trong Phuc 2002). Through its clandestine operation, the VCP eventually incorporated various political factions and penetrated deeply in Northern society, but the movement failed to monopolize power completely in the South (Beresford 1988; Schulzinger 1997). In fact, Communists mingled with non-Communist progressive elements and nationalist religious movements, reinforcing a relatively more pluralist political culture in Southern Vietnam (Tai 1992). Vietnam specialists have often commented on the North-South differences and speculated as to why the Communist movement might not have taken a stronger foothold in the South. Some authors attributed this to a natural fit between the pre-existing authoritarian structure in Northern society and Confucian-style Marxist ideology (Tai 1992; Porter 1993), whereas anarchism would be more appealing to Southern Vietnamese, who favored individualism and populism (Tai 1992).

U.S.-Vietnam War (1954-1975)

On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh read the Declaration of Independence in Hanoi, laying the foundation for an independent state of Vietnam. Yet war between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the French continued until the Geneva Accord of 1954. By then, the DRV

had consolidated its power in Northern Vietnam. The Geneva Accord split Vietnam in half at the 17th parallel, with the Communist-controlled DRV to the North and the U.S.-backed nationalist Republic of Viet Nam (RVN) government of Ngo Dinh Diem in the South. What followed were two decades of international involvement in diplomatic and military efforts to reunify Vietnam in the middle of ideological struggles (Kolko 1985; Schulzinger 1997).

Immediately after the VCP was able to gain full control of Northern Vietnam, the DRV government embarked on a series of land reforms from 1953-1957 with the ultimate purpose of nationalizing all lands. Brutality occurred during this early period, when many landlords and peasants were wrongly killed, forcing the VCP to rectify its mistaken policy later (Moise 1983). Then came a rush to industrialization and collectivization of farmland which left the state's economic development crippled (Fforde & Paine 1987). Hence, despite the fact that privatization was generally condemned by the government, an unofficial marketplace operated on the side to alleviate food shortages (Luong Van Hy 1993; Kerkvliet 1995). Excess consumption over production had been a constant economic problem for the North during the war (Beresford 1987; Le Khoa 1992). The problem was made worse by U.S. bombing in the North, which destroyed much of the infrastructure necessary for production (Tran Van Tho 2000). Besides economic deficits, liberal ideals were also severely challenged. The VCP controlled mass organizations and propaganda apparatus, thereby restraining any freedom of expression (Porter 1993). The VCP was the only "vanguard force" leading society toward socialism (Nguyen Trong Phuc 2002).

Compared to the North, the South was a relatively freer state with a market economy during the war. Yet the Southern economy relied heavily on American aid, services demanded by U.S. troops, and the importation of goods (Le Khoa 1992). War damages done to the countryside drove massive relocation in the cities, and unemployment swelled, especially when the U.S. began to withdraw its troops in the early 1970's. Corruption was rampant. By the end of the war, the South Vietnamese economy was in a near state of collapse (Beresford 1988). In the meantime, political and religious freedoms ebbed and flowed depending on who held power. Although quasi-democratic elections were conducted in the South during the 1960's and the first half of the 1970's, most leaders turned into dictators (Kolko 1985). In its temporally limited ranking of civil and political liberties, Freedom House from 1972 to 1975 gave South Vietnam scores of 4 and 5 compared to scores of 7 in the North during the same period of time. Freedom

House annually ranks civil and political liberties of countries in the world on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being "Free" to 7 "Not Free."

Reunification and Socialist Experiment (1975-1986)

The war ended in 1975. Two halves of Vietnam were finally reunited as the Social Republic of Vietnam (SRV) under the leadership of the VCP. Vietnamese Communist leaders were ambivalent over what should be done with the South. Not until 1976 did they decide that a socialist agenda should go into full effect in Southern Vietnam to minimize North-South differences (Beresford 1988; Vo Nhan Tri 1990). The socialist experimentation with the South, however, could not succeed where people had experienced the market economy. Land collectivization was resisted; properties of capitalists were confiscated; daily commodities turned into monthly rations; prices sky-rocketed; per capita income plummeted; black markets expanded (Tran Van Tho 2000). While Northern regions had acquiesced to Party's policies since 1945, the imposition of central planning only reaped failure in the South (Vo Nhan Tri 1990).

Politics did not fare any better. With much difficulty caused by war damages and the challenge to rebuild a new society under centralized leadership as well as restoring order, political and religious freedoms were sacrificed. Books were banned; listening to radio broadcast from capitalist countries was prohibited; private publications were suspended; religious organizations were re-organized under the directions of the State (Porter 1993). Yet the leaders' intention in setting up the political system was to be as inclusive and democratic as possible, with potential for mass participation at different levels of the power hierarchy (Beresford 1988). A gap existed, nonetheless, between the country's leaders and their governed mass (Kerkvliet 2001). Evaluating this gap, a Western scholar observed, "The price of a centralized political structure... has been an overburdened leadership group, rampant abuses of power, popular alienation, ineffective policy-making on many issues, and an inability to respond administratively to popular needs" (Porter 1993: 64).

Doi Moi, The Reform Period (1986-Present)

Vietnamese leaders began acknowledging that economic problems had occurred during the transition toward a socialist economy in the country at the Sixth Plenum of the Fourth National Congress in 1979. By 1986, the Sixth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party

(VCP) decided that Vietnam should undertake a series of major economic reforms known as *doi moi*. The reforms included reallocation of resources from heavy to light industries, decollectivization of agriculture, interest rate liberalization, and encouragement of private ownership (Griffin 1998). Vietnam also sought to improve trade relationships with foreign countries. In 1994, Vietnam and the United States normalized their bilateral relationship; by 2001, a bilateral trade agreement was reached between the two countries. Vietnam now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, averaging nearly eight percent annual GDP growth from 1990 to 2000 (World Bank, 2001). Although the gap between rich and poor people has widened and differed among regions across Vietnam, the overall standard of living has improved (United Nations HDI Report 2003).

Vietnam maintains an authoritarian regime, and the Ninth Congress in 2001 still emphasized the leading role of the State, particularly the VCP (Nguyen Trong Phuc 2002). Yet some traces of political liberalization have indeed followed economic development. A fountain of public debates, creative works, and critical discussions burst forth in the latter half of the 1980's (Porter 1993; Abuza 2001). Demonstrations broke out in different places across Vietnam, and workers went on strike (Kerkvliet 2001). Organizations with a certain degree of independence from the State emerged in the 1990's to work on social issues such as drugs, unemployment, and homelessness (Beaulieu 1994). Here, in the civil society arena, some regional differences could be detected, where Northerners are more likely to join state-mobilized groups, and Southerners tend to join groups that may question the regime's values (Dalton and Ong 2003). After a series of demonstrations by peasants against local-level corruption and land issues in a Northern province, the government drafted grassroots democracy initiatives, and their implementation began in 1998 (Decree No. 45-1998/NQ-UBTVQH).

Given the diversity of experience Vietnamese people have been through in the past 140 years of turbulent history, their lives have been greatly affected by the policies adopted by each regime. Those born and raised in the North have been socialized into accepting and living with centralized political regimes. For those who were born and raised in the South, their living in a partially open and chaotic political system formed their early socialization experience. Besides regional differences, there are at least four generations now living in Vietnam, each having grown up during a unique part of history. Consequently, members of each generation have lived

through and been socialized into a particular political regime. These particular experiences by each cohort might influence their attitudes toward democracy. Next, a look at socialization theory helps inform the subsequent data analysis.

Generational Units and Socialization Theory

Age alone is not sufficient to define a generation. A useful concept when examining generational differences is Mannheim's "generational unit." It is defined as people "within the same actual generation who work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways" (Mannheim 1927: 304). The conceptualization of generational units bears more dimensions than just time. In Mannheim's definition, one may interpret generational units to mean an interaction between age and some other social variables such as social experience, education, income, etc., which help account for more variance statistically than age alone (Bengston and Cutler 1976). A set of same-age individuals, whose experiences have defined these persons' values and beliefs, collectively compose a generational unit. Mannheim's theory of generational unit provides a framework for examining where disruptions are located along the continuum of age. Events causing disruptions to one set of values and beliefs may mark the beginning of another set of values and beliefs on the temporal scale.

In particular, it has been argued on the basis of Mannheim's theoretical concept that early formative experience leaves trace on one's values and beliefs (e.g., Dalton 1977, Inglehart 1990, Abramson & Inglehart 1992). Mannheim's generational unit helps bring back social and cultural context to a much criticized attempt at making socialization theory in isolation into a universal law (Renshon 1977). Heavily influenced by the behavioral movement in political science, socialization theory reinforces the notion that experience is essential and partially deterministic of one's evaluative cognition of life which in turn induces certain sets of behaviors (Easton and Dennis 1965; Baker 1971). However, the a-historical characterization of the learning process in acquiring different attitudes toward political objects explains little variance when not taking into account the cultural and social conditions accompanying it (Dahl 1961; Dennis 1973). The concept of generational unit corrects for this assumption by considering other factors besides age in composing a cohort's experience. It also elevates the individual's experience to that of a collective unit by aggregating individuals into particular cohorts, each of which has been subject

to the same historical and cultural context and would be different from others who have not been exposed to the same events (Cutler 1975).

Empirical research in Western countries has shown repeatedly that economic and political conditions at an early age shape a person's values and beliefs (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton and Dennis 1969; Jennings and Niemi 1968; Inglehart 1990, 1997). This age varies from 10 to 18 years (e.g., Converse 1976; Dalton 1977, Jennings 1996). In this study, age 15 will be used as a benchmark for political socialization. In addition, since each cohort was associated with a different period of history, and Vietnam suffered from prolonged regional division, it is necessary to divide the cohorts into Northerners and Southerners and to use region as an independent variable, together with age, in predicting various shifts in attitudes.

Vietnamese Generations

Vietnamese history of the past century could be divided into four periods as noted above: colonial (before 1954), division (1954-1974), post-war socialist experiment (1975-1985), and reform (1986 to present). According to breakdowns by age 15, I define a cohort as including all those who reached the age of 15 during the period discussed. The first cohort was born before 1939 in the colonial period when Vietnam was colonized by the French. The second cohort, born between 1939 and 1959, belonged to the wartime North-South division period, during which Communist-influenced North Vietnam was fighting with American-backed South Vietnam. The post-war socialist experiment influenced the cohort born between 1960 and 1970, beginning with Vietnam's reunification in 1975. Since 1975, the Vietnamese people have been living under the same regime although it is still possible that North-South differences persist. The birth cohort of the year 1971 onward has been part of the reform period, when Vietnam began a series of *doi moi* initiatives to liberalize the economy.

As Vietnamese came of age across the two regions of the country and in different periods of history, one could hypothesize that there would be unique characteristics to each generation, especially their value orientations toward democracy. Yet socialization does not mean fixation, as values do alter over time. Hence, experience of transitions may influence how people form and express their values so that the more experienced, older cohort may look deeper into the past and also be influenced by having been socialized into past regimes, so they might evaluate the current situation with a different eye than the younger cohort without much life experience.

In this paper, Northerners are defined geographically as those born in the provinces north of the 17th parallel which divided Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Accord and who did not migrate to the South even after 1975. Similarly, Southerners are those born south of the 17th parallel, who never migrated north.

One might expect that patterns of values within region and across generations would be more similar than different. The wartime and colonial Southern cohorts and the two post-war generations regardless of region might be quite similar in terms of political values. Yet it is expected to find differences in values between the latter and the wartime/colonial Northern Vietnamese. Vietnamese throughout Vietnam growing up in the reform period (after 1986) should possess more liberal political ideals than the Northerners who grew up during wartime. The post-war socialist experiment generation and the reform generation should not differ much in terms of their support for democratic values and virtues of a democratic regime, regardless of where they live.

It is further hypothesized that the younger generations are hypothesized not to vest as much interest as the more experienced Northern Vietnamese generations, for people who have experienced colonial followed by the communist regime for a long time may have better knowledge of what changes they hope to see in the future, especially in politics. People growing up in the South during wartime, however, should hold an equally strong conviction for democracy because they can compare their life experiences living in a partially free society before 1975 and an authoritarian regime post-1975.

In all cases, however, the differences among generations would have been drastically reduced due to nearly three decades of living in the same political atmosphere. On the contrary, value discrepancies between Northerners and Southerners, regardless of generations, would persist due to the different socio-political history of each region.

Data Set

The analyses were performed in this paper using cross-sectional data collected from the World Values Survey (WVS) first conducted in Vietnam in 2001 (Dalton and Ong 2001). The WVS, which has been carried out using the national representative sampling method in 65 societies worldwide over 20 years, is the largest comparative data set available. Now in its fourth wave,

the WVS contains nearly 250 questions asking respondents about their social, economic, cultural, and political values.

Among these questions, an index for democratic support was formed by averaging four items in the questionnaire where respondents expressed their opinions about various characteristics of democratic performance. The items examine whether democracy might be seen as a source for societal chaos, economic malfunctioning, and indecisiveness, or as the best form of government available. The scales run from 1.00 "little or no support" to 4.00 "strong support."[2] The four items have often been used in measuring democratic support throughout the world and particularly in Asia (e.g., Klingemann 1999; Dalton & Shin forthcoming). Particularly the last item testing the Churchillian principle of democracy as the best form of government has been used in many surveys to measure democratic support (e.g., Rose, Haerfper, and Mischler 2000).

The Vietnamese dataset used in the following analyses was filtered to include only Northerners and Southerners with no North-South migration experiences.[3] The selection criteria yielded a total of 840 cases for subsequent analyses.[4]

A couple of cautionary notes may be necessary before I proceed to interpret the statistical results. First, many Vietnamese were probably asked about their support for democracy for the first time, so some might have been hesitant to answer the questions to the best of their ability or knowledge. Secondly, the WVS questionnaire originated in the West without culture-specific questions for each country, so interpretation of conceptual meanings might vary from country to country. This means one ought to place the current findings in the appropriate cultural and historical context of Vietnam, as I shall explain later.

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[2] The four democracy items are rated on a scale from 1 "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree":
V169 The economy runs badly in a democracy
V170 Democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling
V171 Democracy encourages disorder
V172 Democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government (scale reversed)

[3] In 1975 when Vietnam was reunited, some Northerners from poor, rural areas went South mostly for economic reasons (Nguyen Hoang Bao et. al. 1999). This later group of migrants are often perceived to be different than those who migrated in 1954 due to the twenty-some years living under a closed, Communist regime versus those who were living in a relatively more open society in the South. The present data set contains too few cases to permit a thorough analysis of the different migrant cohorts.

[4] Frequency distribution for each cohort: $N_{colonial} = 122$; $N_{division} = 259$; $N_{postwar} = 324$; $N_{reform} = 135$.

Support for Democracy

Despite a history of monarchical and authoritarian regimes, which authors such as Pye (1985) considered to be an obstruction to democratic aspirations, the Vietnamese today demonstrate a substantial level of support for democracy (Table 1). The levels of support, though, are relatively lower than in other Asian countries or than those in advanced, industrial nations (Dalton and Ong 2001).

= = = Table 1 about here = = =

On answering individual items which made up the democratic support index, most Vietnamese disagree with the characterization of democracy as being bad for the economy. A majority of Vietnamese do not think that democracies are often too indecisive. An even higher percentage of Vietnamese do not agree that democracy breeds disorder in the society. Nearly three-quarters of the Vietnamese decide that there is no form of government better than a democracy.

Given the overall picture, one would not be surprised to see support for democracy being universal throughout the country and across generations. Perhaps, nearly three decades living under one government have muted some of the more striking differences that may have existed formerly. This is especially true for measurement of democratic values. As shown in Figure 1, all four generations in the North vary only one or two percentage points in their support for democracy. Southerners vary a bit more across generations, but the variation is almost negligible (Figure 1). Democracy, however, represents more of an ideal than a tangible reality to most Vietnamese. Hence, when probed about their support for democracy, most Vietnamese can conceive of the notion as something desirable, but few had enough real experience to judge or evaluate this notion.

= = = Figure 1 about here = = =

The variable regional difference, however, demonstrates the most pronounced effect (See correlations in Table 2). When controlled for generations, gender, levels of education, and levels of income, the relationship between regions and support for democracy is still significant ($r = -.153$, $p = .001$).

= = = Table 2 about here = = =

Compared to Northerners, Southerners are in general less supportive of democracy. An example of the apparent anomaly is the Southern cohort of the post-1954 division period, which

is composed of people who, in the past, lived under regimes that professed to be democratic. After Vietnam was split in half by the 1954 Geneva Accord, South Vietnam passed through many regime changes, from dictatorship to military rule to quasi-democracy. At the very least, the Southern cohort growing up during this chaotic era had at least minimal contact with democracy through elections and also experienced a relatively free press from time to time. Yet this cohort's support for democracy is much lower than that of its Northern counterpart.

Perhaps, Southerners do not maintain as keen an interest in politics as Northerners. There might also be a discrepancy in Southerners' and Northerners' understanding of the concept of democracy. A more detailed analysis of the items which made up the democratic support index reveals some of the regional differences (Table 3). In general, Northerners and Southerners do hold different expectations about democracy. More Southerners than Northerners carry a negative view when asked about the possibilities of the economy turning bad in a democracy, and fewer Southerners disagreed with the same statement. Many more Southerners than Northerners agree that democracy may breed disorder and also with the statement, "Democracies are too indecisive and have too much quibbling." Still, paradoxically, a significantly larger number of Southerners think that democracy is the best form of government.

= = = Table 3 about here = = =

The findings for Southerners versus Northerners as to their evaluations of democracy may not illustrate how accurately the people from each region understand democracy, but one could see that the Southern conception of democracy is probably closer to a Western conception of democracy than that of Northerners. Furthermore, Southerners' interpretation of the questions about democracy, particularly those coming from the wartime and colonial periods, may have been colored by their own experience of living through several political regime transitions. This may help explain why the Southern wartime cohort scores lower on the democratic support index than its Northern counterpart. For these people, on the one hand, growing up and being socialized into the quasi-democratic regime of South Vietnam may very well be similar to experiencing a bad economy, societal chaos, and public disorder. So when asked to evaluate democracy on these scales, they became less enthusiastic about the political regime. On the other hand, support for democracy is still widespread in the South, reflecting either a yearning for faster democratization in Vietnam or nostalgia for the past regime.

For Northerners, who tend to attribute more positive consequences to a democratic regime, the term "democracy" may carry the Vietnamese socialist government's meaning of democratic centralism. Democracy understood as presented by the government does not breed disorder, is not indecisive, and certainly is not bad for the economy. Democratic centralism is a political model proposed to complement a market economy without any conflicts. Democratic centralism also does not support pluralism to the extent that the latter may bring confusion and disorder to the country. And because there is a centralized component to a regime practicing democratic centralism, the political agenda may be discussed widely, yet policies can be carried out effectively without much quibbling (Nguyen Tien Phon 2002). If this is truly the case, then at least the majority from the three generations of North Vietnamese (wartime, post-war, and reform) have been socialized into accepting democratic values as prescribed by the current Vietnamese government.

Instead of differences across cohorts, North-South regional influences turned out to be the differentiating factors in support for democracy. As democracy becomes a global trend (Huntington 1991; Fukuyama 1992), the Vietnamese also express their support for the concept of popular rule. Yet the level of support is uneven throughout the country, perhaps, due to different historical legacies. The ghost of past regimes may still be lingering, undermining recent reforms. It may also reflect to a certain extent the non-uniformity of implementing grassroots democracy initiatives at the local level. To minimize regional differences, political reform initiatives need to be implemented more aggressively and systematically throughout Vietnam.

Hope for a Better Future?

Overall, the Vietnamese people do show overwhelming support for democracy. Support for democracy is near ubiquitous although North-South differences persist. As socialization theory proposes, distinct influences of each historical period can be traced through measurement of orientations toward market economy across the generational units. However, contrary to my expectation, regional differences defined by historical events differentiate the context of democratic support (Table 2).

Here are some speculations for why regional difference in support for democracy has persisted. Events and policies affecting political freedom have probably been branded in people's collective memory quite deeply. What is permitted and what is not permitted under a

certain regime become embodied in an individual. National policies bound the individuals to their land or their region in this case. Northerners, regardless of age, support democratic centralism more than any Southerner would because the former have lived under a regime that promoted the concept for half a century. Southerners support Western-style democracy because they have had some taste of it during the U.S.-Vietnam War. Perhaps, parents have transmitted their values to their children, North and South alike, making it impossible to erase across generations. Rather than their children being socialized into the social environment when they grow up, parents have spilled over their values into their children's. Hence, socialization theory did not help explain support for democracy in Vietnam.

The above analyses provide a strong case in describing how certain historical events have been important in the formation of values but do not address how and why values persist through time, which is a valid subject for future studies. Moreover, in the Vietnamese context, it would also be practical to examine the degree to which radical changes in official policies may affect everyday concerns and the average people's formation of values in the long run. Particularly, as Vietnam has begun to practice grassroots democracy and has gone further in liberalizing the economy, these reform policies will leave indelible traces on the Vietnamese attitudes toward democracy. Longitudinal projects in measuring value shifts over time for all generations of Vietnamese will be useful in providing feedback to policy-makers in writing and implementing new policies.

This paper has found value differences across geographical regions in Vietnam. Earlier surveys have shown (Nguyen Quang Uan et. al. 1995), however, that North-South differences are bound to be eliminated with Vietnam undertaking its political and economic transformations. At the same time, more liberal politics and economic policies will give the Vietnamese more choices. Eventually, the choices will be evenly distributed across the country regardless of region if the Vietnamese standard of living improves and if more political freedoms are guaranteed. That is when value differences will become appropriated among individuals with particular socioeconomic attributes rather than having cohort or regional effect.

Methodological Appendix

The survey was conducted in September-October 2001 using a multi-stage area probability sample with a random walk household selection at the last stage. The project and fieldwork was conducted by the Institute for Human Studies in Vietnam under the direction of Prof. Dr. Pham Minh Hac.

In the first stage, we stratified provinces by the eight census regions and selected 20 provinces on a basis proportional to population. Within these provinces we selected 99 districts, and two villages or town were selected from each district. In the final stage there were 200 primary sampling units; within each sampling unit the interviewer conducted a defined "random walk" to select five households. Within each household interviewers selected respondents by the "nearest birthday method." We calculated the response rate as 80 percent. The sample consists of 1,000 respondents distributed proportionately throughout Vietnam to be representative of the adult population. In comparison to census statistics, the survey closely represents the population on several standard demographic measures:

	Survey	Census		Survey	Census
Red River Delta	19.9%	19.4%	18-19 years	5.2%	6.5
Northeast	14.4	14.2	20-29	17.5	29.1
Northwest	2.9	2.9	30-39	23.2	25.4
North Central	8.1	13.1	40-49	23.9	16.7
Central Coast	13.2	8.6	50+ years	30.2	22.3
Central Highland	6.5	4.0			
Southeast	12.8	16.6	No education	4.2%	9.8
Mekong River Delta	22.2	21.2	Primary	32.0	50.3
			Lower sec.	33.7	26.7
Male	49.1%	48.4	Upper sec.	23.2	10.4
Female	50.9	51.6	College	6.9	2.7

The statistical sampling error of this study is approximately 3 to 4 percent. This means that national percentages in this report are likely (95 percent of the time) to be within +/- 4 percent of the actual population percentages. In addition, one should also consider that this was the first application of national probability sampling on a political attitude survey in Vietnam. The Vietnamese population also is unfamiliar with the survey methodology, and some respondents may feel hesitant to express their opinions fully. So it is possible that non-sampling errors are also present in these data even though the Institute for Human Studies expressed their willingness to take extraordinary care to follow scientific procedures.

Additional information on the Vietnamese survey, the English and Vietnamese language questionnaires, sampling design, and information on the World Values Survey project is available on our project website: www.democ.uci.edu/democ/archive/vietnam.htm

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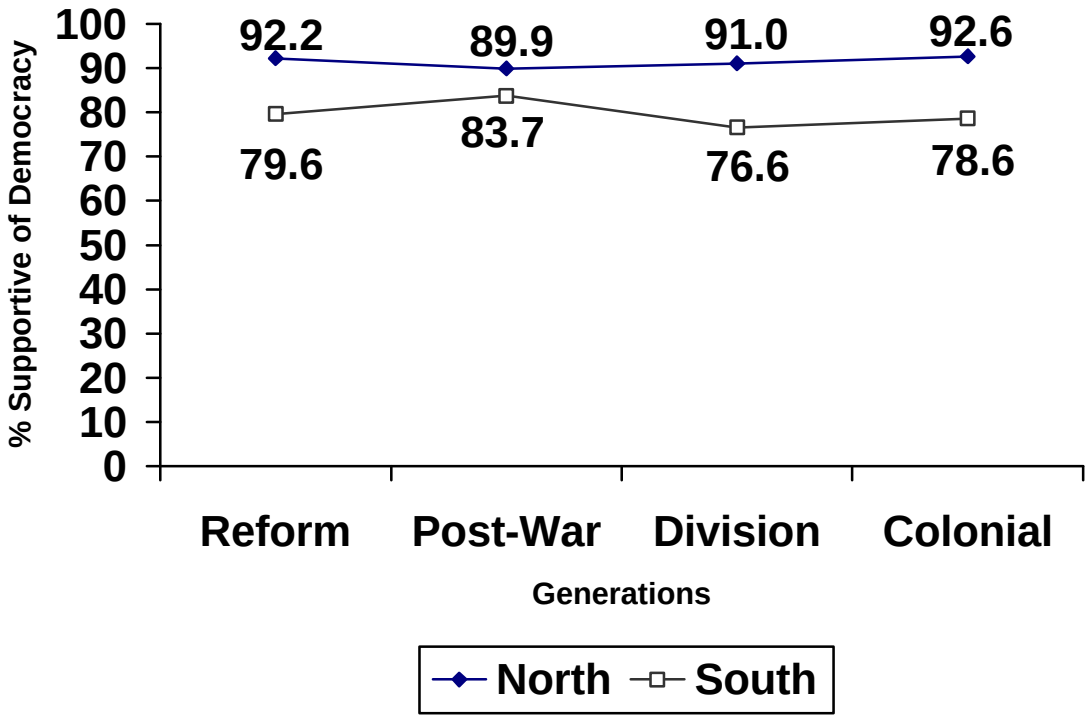
Table 1. Percentage in Support of Democracy

Statement	"Strongly Agree"	"Agree"	"Disagree"	"Strongly Disagree"
Economy runs badly in a democracy (N=792)	5.2	12.9	71.5	10.5
Democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling (N = 784)	2.2	28.6	60.8	8.4
Democracy encourages disorder (N = 799)	3.1	22.2	67.2	7.5
Democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government (N = 783)	19.7	52.6	25.5	2.2

Source: Vietnamese World Values Survey 2001.

Figure 1. North-South Percentage Supportive of Democracy across Generations*



*Percentage "supportive of democracy" includes responses 2.5 or higher on a scale from 1.0 "non-supportive" to 4.0 "extremely supportive."

Source: Vietnamese World Values Survey 2001.

Table 2. Correlates of Support for Democracy*

	Democracy Index
Generation	-.007
Region (North-South)	-.162**
Gender	-.075
Education	-.044
Income	.111**

*Pearson's Chi-square correlations
**Significant at p = .01

Source: Vietnamese World Values Survey 2001

Table 3. North-South Percentage in Support of Democracy

Statement	"Strongly Agree"		"Agree"		"Disagree"		"Strongly Disagree"	
	North / *South*		*North* / *South*		*North* / *South*		*North* / *South*	
Economy runs badly in a democracy (N=675)	1.4	9.7	9.3	15.8	77.1	66.1	12.2	8.5
Democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling (N = 670)	2.1	2.7	25.5	33.7	64.2	55.3	8.2	8.2
Democracy encourages disorder (N = 682)	2.1	4.7	12.4	29.4	75.8	60.6	9.7	5.2
Democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government (N = 669)	15.4	24.7	51.9	54.3	30.4	19.8	2.3	1.2

Source: Vietnamese World Values Survey 2001.