

THE FUTURE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN VIETNAM IN 2030

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Introduction

The civil society has been playing crucial roles beside the state and the private sectors as the facilitators, conveners, innovators as well as service providers, and advocates in resolving social challenges as well as governance issues. In the fast changing context as the economic and geopolitical focus is shifting away from Europe and North America, and the activities of civil society are restricting in many countries, projecting the future role of civil society can be implications for decision-makers, the NGOs leaders and the officers make better strategies in dealing with these contexts, and operate their own organizations sustainably. Based on the four scenarios proposed in World Economic Forum in 2013 about the world in 2030 and driving forces of changes reshaping the civil society, this paper examines the future role of civil society in Vietnam putting in the changes of geopolitical, socio-economic context in 2030. The paper focuses on two questions:

- What might the contextual environment for civil society in Vietnam look like in 2030?
- How might the role of civil society play in these new contexts? How might the relations of civil society with the state, and the private sector would be in 2030?

Materials and Methods

- The paper based mainly on three recent reports of international organizations, government offices, and contributions from NGOs and the business:
 - + *The Future Role of Civil society* (The World Economic Forum, 2013) gains insights from more than 200 leaders from civil society, business, government, and international organizations, and includes data from 80 experts interviews and five strategic foresight workshops;
 - + *The Vietnam 2015: Toward prosperity, creativity, equity and democracy* (The World Bank, and Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, 2015) is a joint report of Vietnam's government ministries and agencies, academic research institutions, and international experts in numerous workshops and focus group discussions;
 - + *The Civil society in Vietnam: A comparative study of civil society organizations in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City* (CIVIUS, 2012) based on survey and in-depth interviews with 79 registered NGOs throughout Vietnam.

Results

Critical driving forces reshaping civil society to 2030

Driving forces of change

Critical driving forces	Potential impacts	Degree of potential impacts
Funding for civil society	Economic robust can increase funding Sources, types & conditions maybe different	Low High
Access to technology	Technology is used to improve open governance, crowd-sourced decision-making, and to heighten transparency Technology is governed and used for monitoring activities and heavily governed.	Low High
Citizen engagement with societal challenges	Public's awareness to volunteer and support civil society activities Low engagement due to human, technological and financial resources constraints	Low High
Geopolitical stability and global integration of markets	Geopolitical conflict as a disrupter or driver of civil society activity. Geopolitical stability enables smooth movements of goods, people, and ideas. Instability affects the attitudes of gov to foreign organizations and citizen assembly.	Low High
Environmental degradation and climate change	Increase cost to deal with more frequent extreme weather events and decrease in crop yields affect negatively on livelihoods	Low High
Level of trust in government, business and international organization	High level of trust can increase transparency & success of government structures. Low level of trust prove systematic failures of the system, but opportunity for civil society as trusted partners. Otherwise, contaminated themselves with overall breakdown	Low High

(World Economic Forum, 2013)

Four challenging scenarios in 2030

Mad Max	Transparently Blurred	Turbulence and Trust Deficits	Privatized World
A world characterized by international and national conflict. Gov. exert strong security on business and society. Funding for society and development are limited.	A world where economic growth is relatively high. Government and private sector both deeply engage in tackling societal challenges. Increase access to data, technology and monitoring.	A chaotic world where trust is a scarce commodity. The rise of the networked society, and the social engagement by citizens, particularly at local level.	A world where governments are seen to fail, high inequality. Corporations play most important roles and being main providers of social services

(World Economic Forum, 2013)

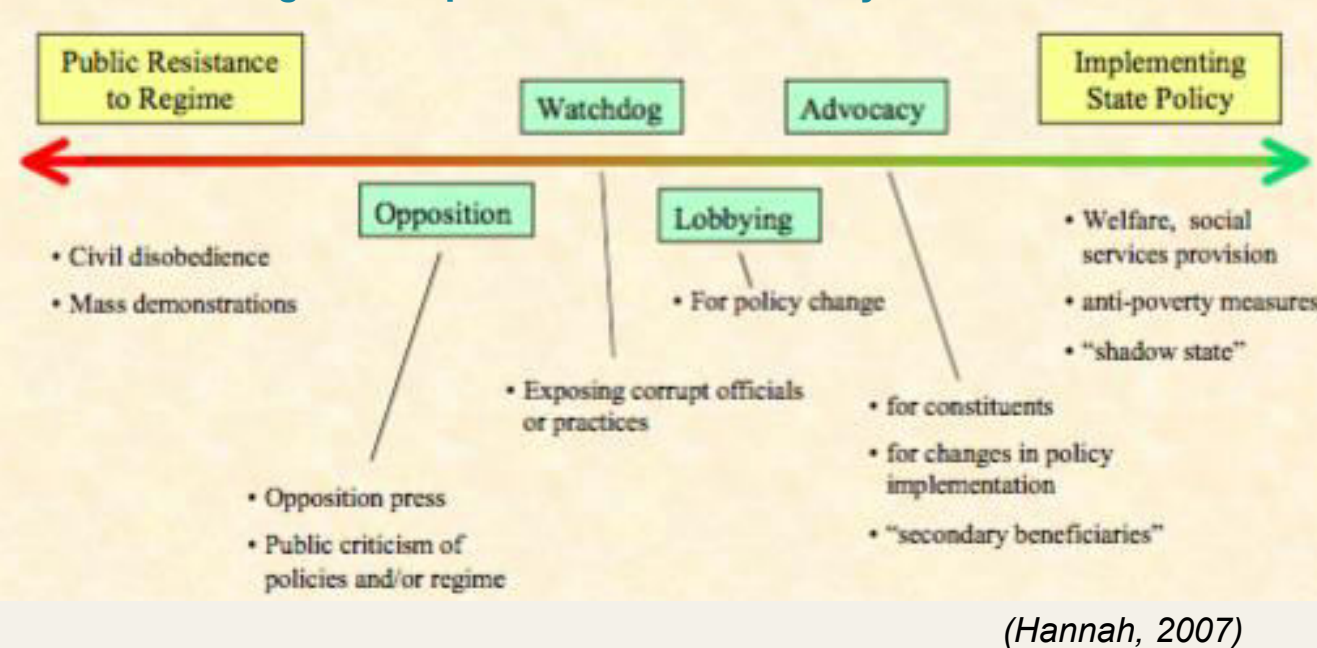
Case study of Vietnam

Definition and roles of civil society in Vietnam

- Western general concept of civil society as *'the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of rules'* (Diamond, 1994) cannot be used to define civil society in states like China and Vietnam. It bases on four assumptions, (1) dichotomy between state and civil society; (2) separation of civil society from the private sector; (3) logic of domains, which all actors can be counted as civil society actors; (4) active role of civil society in promoting democracy.

- Hannah (2007) suggested another approach, defined civil society based on logic of actions, focusing on activities and roles of social actors rather than forms of organizations.

Figure 1: Spectrum of civil society action



(Hannah, 2007)

- There are about 2,000 CSOs in Vietnam (Civil Society Index, 2006). Characteristics of civil society in Vietnam:

- + Vast majority of civil society groups are clustered on the right side of the arrow, works as partners in implementing state policy in the provision of welfare, social services, and poverty alleviation measures.
- + Vietnam not yet developed civil society groups acting as watchdogs to expose corruption, but rather involves the journalists and the media.
- + The political civil society groups on the left are emerged, but not yet involved in direct civil disobedience or mass demonstrations.

Projecting Vietnam in 2030

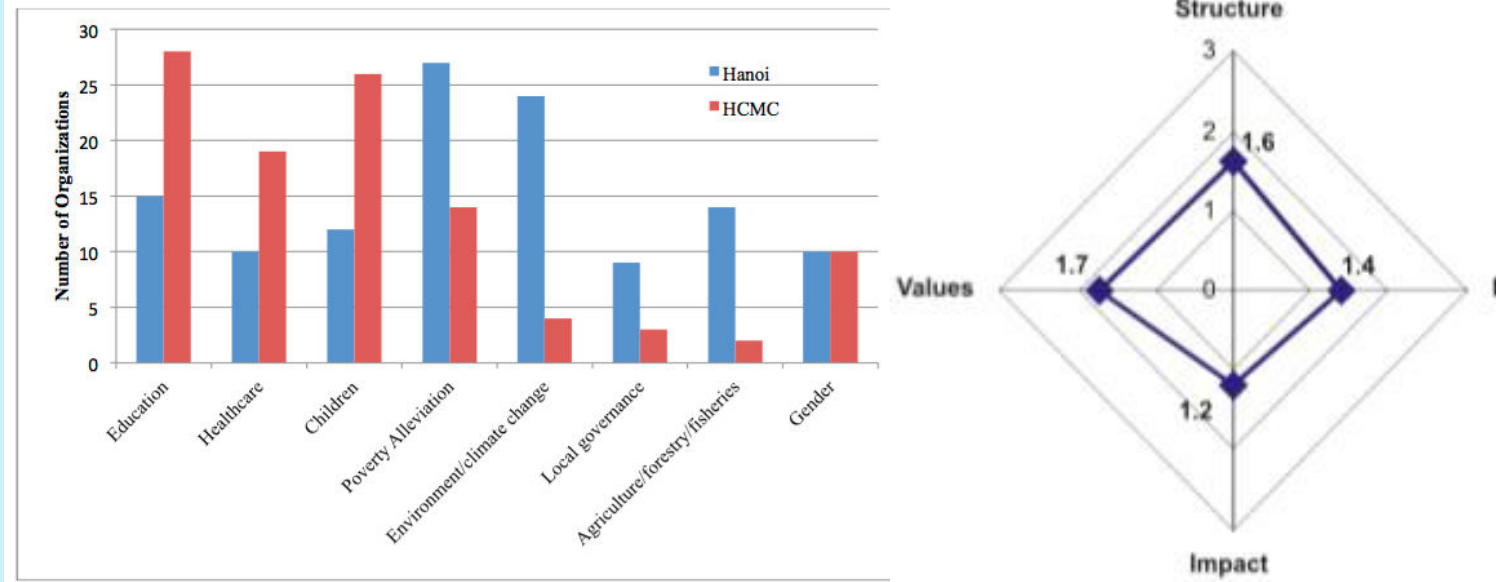
Critical driving forces	Trends, opportunities and risks
Funding	Most of bilateral partners reduce their presence in Vietnam, funding may decrease. Vietnam as one of the signatories and founding members of the AIIB can cover some financing gap Civil society diversify venue sources, utilizing market-oriented strategies such as merchandise sales and service fees to bolster their financial bases
Technology	Increase access to technology improve access to information. Social platforms are used as forum for discussion and debates. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used for open governance. The government intensify the measures to monitor online activities.
Citizen engagement	The state provides a relatively more hospitable environment for civic engagement. However, the ongoing lack of clear framework creates an uncertain operating environment. CSOs focus in participatory and people-centered approach. There is an increase in involvement of partners, clients, volunteers, and donors in the process.
Geopolitical stability	Geopolitical shift from west to east, north to south, existing regional powers (Japan, South Korea) and emerging powers (Brazil, India, etc.) Emerging of a multipolar world order, could be collaborations, or tensions or conflicts. Geopolitical risks are maritime issues with China. Middle East in turmoil, have implications for Vietnam as a producer and exporter
Environmental issues	Vietnam is among the five countries likely to be most affected by climate change, centers in population in coastal lowlands and deltas. Agriculture, especially rice production, is hit hard, most severely around Mekong Delta. The marine ecosystem severely affected, affecting the fishing in. Climate change impacts have adverse health consequences, including water and vector-borne diseases and diarrheal illnesses. The poor and the elderly become vulnerable to heat extremes, compounded by the aging population.
Trust	There is a medium of trust, tolerance, and public spiritedness among citizens (41% of citizens say they trust their fellow citizens, state and its institutions) influenced by Confucian norms and strong family values.

Source: The World Bank, 2013; CIVIUS, 2006; & The Asia Foundation, 2012)

Potential states in 2030: Transparently Blurred

Graph

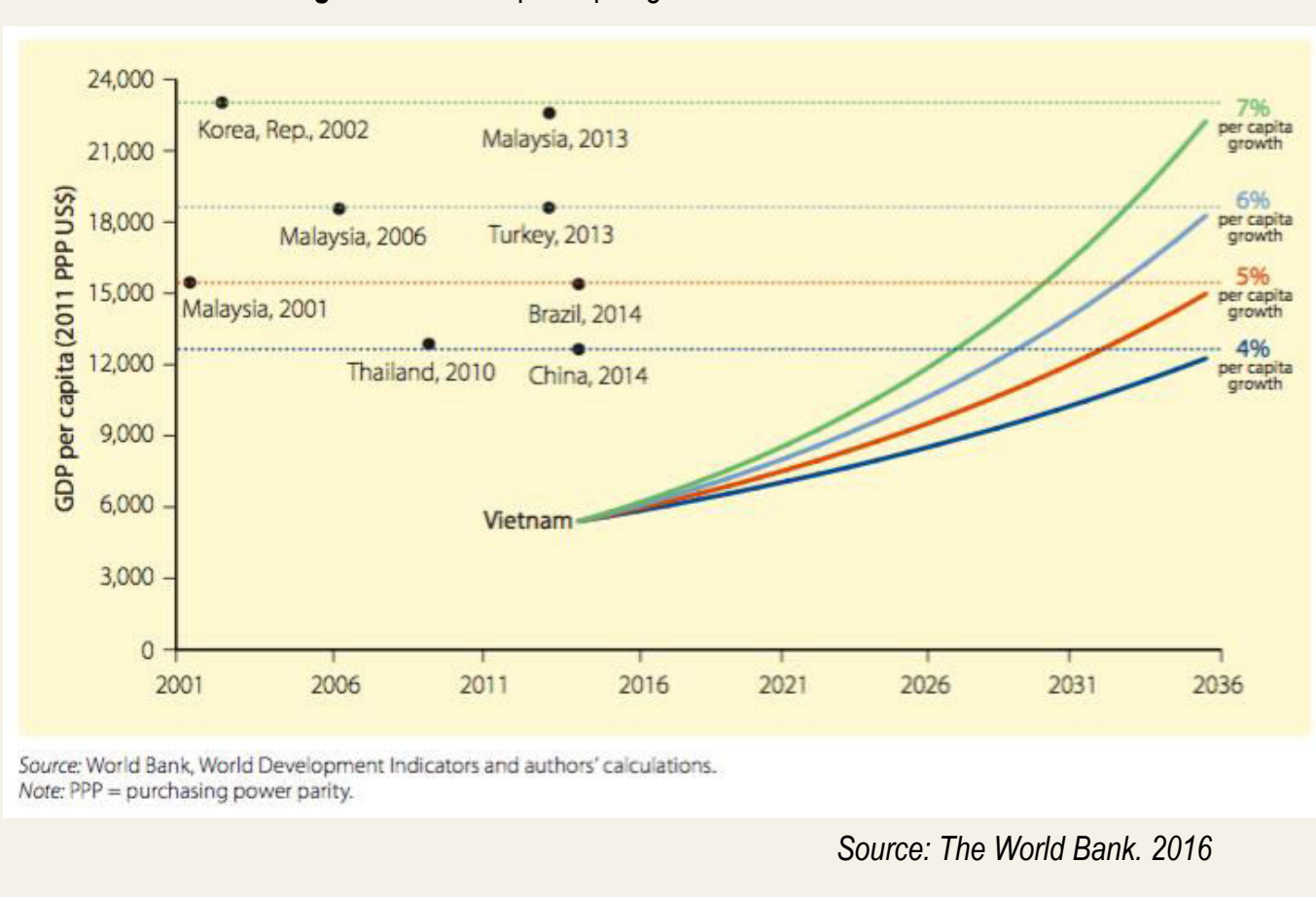
Figure 1: Field of operations of CSOs in Vietnam (100 samples) Figure 2: The civil society diamond for Vietnam



Source: The Asia Foundation, 2012

Source: The CIVIUS, 2006

Figure 3: Income per capita growth scenarios for Vietnam to 2035



Projecting the future role of civil society in the future

- +Civil society organizations continue to play significant role in delivering social services (in the left spectrum) in wider areas of working, from poverty alleviation, health, education, to social welfare, contributing to achieve the SDG goals;
- + Civil society organizations have stronger tendency to move further the left of the spectrum, playing the role as 'advocacy', 'watchdog', or 'checks and balances', promoting accountability and transparency of the government as well as stimulating the participation of the citizens;
- + The civil society are still not conceived of functioning independently of the State, but the interactions and communications between the civil society and the governments are intensified.
- + There is an ongoing collaboration between civil society and the private sector. The issue of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming increasingly prominent. The business plays greater role as a source of funding for civil society, and civil society shifting their role in doing business as partners/clients in delivering social services.

References

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Projecting your own scenarios

- Choose your driving forces of changes;
- Select at least two potential outcomes per driving force;
- Check and shuffle your card pack;
- Deal a scenario;
- Suspend your disbelief and describe the scenario;
- Test for relevance and challenge;
- Go to step three above and repeat until you run out of interesting sketch scenarios.

Figure 2: The World Economic Forum's Approach to Scenario and Strategic Option Development

