

VIETNAM'S ONLINE PETITION MOVEMENT

Jason Morris-Jung

In July 2014, sixty-one members of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) posted online an open letter to the party leadership and all of its members. While decrying the Party's response to China's bullying in the South China Sea, the letter called on the Party to "leave off from the mistaken path of socialism for a definitive change to the path of the people and democracy" (Para 6). It was a bold statement for a country where public expressions of opposition to the authoritarian regime are strongly discouraged and sometimes harshly punished. Later in October, another online statement by a new generation of self-declared independent "civil society organizations" declared their support for pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong and made an appeal to Vietnamese youth to take on a similar struggle at home. These initiatives were examples of a new movement in Vietnam of using online petitions to publicize social grievances while also directly or indirectly promoting liberal democratic ideas and challenging authoritarianism.

The online petition movement is a recent development in Vietnam's domestic politics. It has helped generate open and critical commentary on the most controversial topics of the moment, in contrast to the state's tendencies to hide and censor them. In doing so, it has also advocated for liberal constitutional freedoms of speech, assembly and private property, rule of law, and opposition to party dictatorship. Furthermore, the people leading the petitions have included many renowned public figures — loosely referred

JASON MORRIS-JUNG is a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore.

to as “prominent intellectuals” (*nhân sỹ trí thức*) — and those signing onto them have come from all walks of life. While their total numbers still only reach a few thousand — with the notable exception of the 15,000 that signed the petition on constitutional reform in 2013 — they are a leading edge in a country where, traditionally, only the boldest and most radical individuals expressed their opposition to party dictatorship. This article retraces the emergence of Vietnam's online petition movement and examines its significance.

The Internet and Domestic Politics

The emergence of Vietnam's online petition movement partly reflects the rapid expansion of the Internet in Vietnam. However, the Internet should not be seen strictly as a technological miracle that automatically makes societies more democratic. Rather, it has been used both to support and resist democratization efforts. Scholarly literature on the topic has warned against unilineal assumptions on the causal relation between the Internet and democratization. As much as the Internet might facilitate access to information and enable wider political participation, governments, businesses and other powerful forces have also used it effectively to reinforce existing power relations.¹ In authoritarian regimes, state forces have made use of the Internet to spread propaganda (overtly and covertly), monitor and gather evidence against activists, and deploy highly sophisticated strategies of online censorship.² To understand more clearly the varying contributions of the Internet to the processes of democratization demands attention to the specific socio-historical and political contexts in which they are used. In this regard, Vietnam's online petitions have been significant as a socially and historically embedded practice that uses the Internet to challenge the ideology and political culture of state authoritarianism.

Internet technologies became widely available in Vietnam only in the early 2000s, though this was largely contained to Vietnam's major cities. Availability and use expanded from 180,000 Internet subscribers in 2001 to 5.6 million by 2008.³ Currently, Vietnam has nearly 40 million Internet users, representing nearly 43 per cent of the national population.⁴ Some 66 per cent of Vietnamese Internet users use the Internet every day and spend an average of 29 hours on it per month.⁵ However, as Surborg has noted, access and usage is biased

towards the wealthier and urban populations.⁶ Social media has also expanded rapidly in recent years, with an estimated 8.5 million users in Vietnam today.⁷ Facebook is the most popular interface, with a new Vietnamese user joining every three seconds. Increasingly, Vietnamese citizens have been using the Internet for a wide range of purposes, including social and political activism.⁸ Notably, Blogging and Facebook have become increasingly important for expressing dissent and organizing campaigns that criticize government policies and challenge state authority.

Writing letters and petitions to state authorities or rulers has a much longer and storied history in Vietnam. In Vietnamese folklore, even the lowliest peasant could gain a sympathetic ear by sending a letter to the Emperor, so long as the letter never criticized the Emperor himself. Under Vietnamese socialism, critical letters and petitions also fit in with the tenets of “democratic centralism” so long as they were maintained as strictly internal matters and they clearly displayed a loyal endeavour to improve — rather than challenge — state authority. However, petitioning is also fraught with risks. A few exemplary cases of state crackdowns have been enough to serve as constant reminders, from the harsh crackdown on artists and intellectuals in the 1950s to the suppression of the pro-democracy coalition Bloc 8406 in 2006.

These two practices come together in the online petition, which simultaneously reflects a culturally and historically embedded practice for appealing to political leaders, while also challenging this tradition by making them highly visible and confrontational. The online petitions discussed here come under a range of titles, including petition or recommendation (*kiến nghị*), declaration (*tuyên bố*), appeal (*lời kêu gọi*) or open letter (*thư ngỏ*), or more straightforwardly as statements to “oppose” (*phan đối*), “demand” (*yêu cầu*) or “contribute ideas” (*góp ý*). They also address a variety of issues, for example, bauxite mining, political prisoners, Internet regulations, national development and the South China Sea conflict. However, the petitions all share a common general form. They are usually brief texts of one to three pages, initially signed by a well-known group of Vietnamese persons and then posted online for a wider public to read, comment on and, if they so choose, sign. In certain cases, the petitions are more like collective declarations, posted online for a wider audience to consult and review but without soliciting further signatures. The petitions are most commonly addressed to the nation’s top leaders, though they may also be addressed to specific organizations or individuals for particular

issues. Usually, the petitions address the most controversial issues of the moment. Table 1 presents a selection of some of the most popular online petitions in the past five years.

The first of these petitions to make a splash was one against bauxite mining in April 2009. This petition protested what had then become a widespread controversy on government plans for bauxite mining in the Central Highlands. The petition garnered so much attention mainly for the first 135 people that had signed it. It was the first time in the post-war era that such a well-known group of Vietnamese intellectuals from across the country and around the world had spoken out together against a major state policy.⁹ The petition also collected online more than 2,700 supporters, which was also an unprecedented number in the post-war era. They cut across all categories of Vietnamese people and were spread out over an extensive geography. Critical comments on a controversial national-level issue, the leading role played by prominent intellectuals, and the widespread public response to the petition are key features that have since defined the online petition movement.

Since 2009, such high profile and controversial online petitions have emerged every year with increasing frequency and popularity. A year-and-a-half later, the group that had organized the bauxite petition posted another one online in reaction to a massive tailings spill at a bauxite processing plant in Ajka, Hungary. The second bauxite petition was significant because it connected two groups of prominent intellectuals, one that had emerged around bauxite and another group who identified themselves as former members of what had initially been touted as Vietnam's "first independent think-tank", but was then controversially disbanded — the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). This petition also collected more than 2,700 signatures. Among them was former Vice-President Nguyễn Thị Bình, who is nationally renowned for her role in negotiating the 1973 Paris Peace Accords.

Bold new strides were taken in 2011. In April, the bauxite group led another online petition to demand the release of lawyer Cù Huy Hà Vũ, who had been recently sentenced on charges of "spreading propaganda against the state". If the bauxite mining petitions had offered a degree of political cover by focusing on an "environmental" or "scientific" matter, the petition for Cù Huy Hà Vũ was explicitly political. While these petitioners were certainly not the first to speak out against human rights violations, the petition was significant because prominent intellectuals who had previously kept quiet on these divisive

TABLE 1
Selection of Online Petitions 2009–14

<i>Full title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Initial Signatures (#)</i>	<i>Total Signatures (#)</i>	<i>Lead signature</i>
Petition on the Master Plan and projects for bauxite mining in Vietnam	2009	9 April	135	2,746	Nguyễn Huệ Chi
Petition on bauxite mining in the Central Highlands, in light of the red mud spill disaster at the Ajka Timfoldgyar factory, Hungary	2010	9 October	12	2,765	Hoàng Tuy
Petition for the release of citizen Cù Huy Hà Vũ	2011	9 April	—	1,889	Nguyễn Huệ Chi
Petition to Ministry of Foreign Affairs to clarify its relations with China	2011	2 July	18	No longer available	Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh
Petition for the protection and development of the country in the current situation	2011	10 July	20	1,219	Hồ Uy Liêm
Open Letter to the leaders of Vietnam on foreign threats and national strengths	2011	21 August	36	No longer available	Đoàn Quốc Sỹ
Total reform to develop the country [note: overseas Vietnamese]	2011	8 September	14	14	Hồ Tú Bảo
Petition of the citizens [on case of Đoàn Văn Vươn]	2012	February	—	1,361	Lê Hiền Đức
Declaration on the forceful expropriation of land in Văn Giang [in Hưng Yên Province]	2012	1 May (International Labour Day)	—	3,350	Nguyễn Huệ Chi
Open letter [by the persons who signed the 7–11 and 9–11 petitions]	2012	6 August 2012	71	71	Nguyễn Quang A

Declaration to oppose the Chinese authorities on printing an image of the “cow’s tongue” [i.e., nine-dash line on South China Sea] in citizen passports	2012	25 November	—	359	Nguyễn Đình Đầu
Appeal to enforce human rights in accordance with the National Constitution of Vietnam	2012	25 December (Christmas Day)	82	347	Hoàng Tuy
Petition for revising the National Constitution of 1992 [Petition of 72]	2013	19 January	72	~15,000*	Nguyễn Quang A
Declaration to oppose Decree 72 of the Government	2013	29 August	108	545	Nguyễn Quang A
Letter to demand pursuit of legal action against China in international court	2014	15 May	—	3,711	Nguyễn Quang A and Lê Trung Tĩnh
Letter on the urgent situation of the country	2014	30 June	115	1,030	Phạm Xuân Yêm
Letter to the Central Committee and all Party members of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	2014	28 July	61	61	Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh
Declaration on the pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong and Vietnam	2014	5 October	22	22	Bạch Đằng giang Foundation, Đại diện: Ths Phạm Bá Hải**
Demand for release of writer Nguyễn Quang Lập, also known as blogger Quê Choa	2014	10 December (International Human Rights Day)	35	1,548 (January 2015)	Nguyễn Ngọc

Notes: ** Signatures no longer available online. This figure is taken from Malesky (2013).

** This petition was led by organizations, each listed with a representative individual.

issues and now joined with other more dissident ones. Later in the summer several petitions emerged after incidents of harassment and intimidation of Vietnamese fishing and oil exploration vessels by Chinese military and non-military ones in the South China Sea. On 11 July, an online petition (dubbed as the 7–11 Petition) led by former director of the government's Vietnam Union for Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA), Hồ Uy Liêm, sounded an alarm about the current political crisis of the country and the inability of the current leadership to protect national sovereignty. This call for a critical re-assessment of Vietnam's current political situation was echoed by another online petition on 21 August by thirty-six overseas Vietnamese intellectuals and yet another on 8 September (dubbed as the 9–11 Petition) by fourteen others. Even though these latter two petitions were led by overseas Vietnamese, they were also signed by many persons in Vietnam.

These latter petitions reflected a growing uneasiness among Vietnamese about China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea. They also emerged during a time when mass demonstrations on the South China Sea were being regularly held every Sunday morning in the streets of Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City. The online petitions both raised attention for mass demonstrations and, by their critical commentary, connected them with a stern critique of Vietnamese political leadership and organizations. In this way, they connected popular unrest with problems in the political system. Several leaders of the online petition movement joined the demonstrators in the streets and posted pictures of them together online, lending credibility and legitimacy to the demonstrations.

In 2012, online petitions emerged in response to yet another kind of conflict. One involved a farmer in Hải Phòng, Đoàn Văn Vuron, who hid out in a tree on his orchard to shoot at local police officers as they tried to evict him. The incident, which was widely reported in the domestic media, had elicited much public sympathy as reflective of growing problems of injustice in state land expropriation for private development. The other involved mass demonstrations by a few thousand farmers and residents against state expropriation of land in Văn Giang, Hưng Yên Province. The petition defended the rights of local people to demonstrate and protested the government's crackdown upon them. As with the South China Sea conflict, these petitions connected widespread grievances over land expropriation with critical discourses of the political system. They also promoted liberal constitutional rights by defending freedom of assembly, rule of law and rights to private property. They also brought more new

kinds of people into the movement. Among the online signatures to the Văn Giang petition were also hundreds of farmers and residents from the Văn Giang area.

The bar was raised yet again in early 2013, when nearly 15,000 persons signed an online petition on constitutional reforms.¹⁰ The Petition of 72, as it was dubbed after the seventy-two prominent intellectuals who initially signed it, made recommendations to the government's open consultations on constitutional revisions and provided its own draft text for the revised Constitution. The petition's recommendations boldly called for a "society based on democracy, equality and rule of law" (Para 11), protecting the "natural rights of humans" according to the criteria of the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights (Para 18), limiting powers of the state to expropriate land (Para 24), and "protect[ing] in reality the independence of the judicial system" (Para 25). In addition, the petitioners argued that one of the basic objectives of the Constitution was to "limit abuse of power by the authorities" (Para 5) and not to spread propaganda for a particular organization (Para 7), without naming names of course. The draft text for the revised Constitution boldly omitted Article 4, which provides a constitutional basis for party dictatorship. It also proposed renaming the country from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (ironically, as North Vietnam was called prior to reunification).¹¹

And then came 2014. The event that marked 2014 for Vietnam was when a Chinese oil rig moved inside Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on the South China Sea to drill for hydrocarbons. The event led to mass demonstrations across the country, including a few that descended into violent riots, and much public debate.¹² Over the two-and-a-half months during which the Chinese rig was stationed inside Vietnam's EEZ, at least a dozen online petitions and collective statements were posted online. They condemned Chinese aggression, chastised the Vietnamese leadership for complacency and incompetence, and supported more public demonstrations while also admonishing against violence. The open letter of sixty-one Party members was a crescendo to this outpouring of public criticism, shortly after the China unilaterally withdrew its rig in mid-July. Building on the bold statements of the Petition of 72, the sixty-one Party members — twenty-five of whom had also signed the Petition of 72 — demanded an end to socialism in Vietnam and a definitive shift towards democracy. "Confronting the poor and dangerous situation of the country", they demanded all Party members to "voluntarily and proactively ... leave off from the mistaken path of socialism for a definitive

change to the path of the people and democracy, and most importantly change the political system from totalitarianism to democracy in a decisive but stable way” (Para 6). Although the precise nature of democracy was left vague, the petition made clear that it was something more than conventional “inner-part democracy”.

Such explicit demands for democracy emerged again in October in an online declaration to support pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong. While the statement’s ostensible purpose was to commend and support Hong Kong protesters in their “opposition to the communist regime” of Beijing (Para 4), it also decried the current situation in Vietnam as “a thousand times more undemocratic and hostile to human rights than Hong Kong” (Para 8). It encouraged young people in Vietnam to take up the struggle for democracy by wishing them to gain a “deep awareness of democracy” (Para 8) and for parents, teachers and leaders to help “cultivate the democratic mindset in our young people” (Para 9). It also cited the general example of young people in Eastern Europe and, more recently, Northern Africa, the Middle East, Ukraine, Xinjiang and Tibet as models for Vietnamese youth (Para 11) and called on the “youth of Hong Kong to be the hope of the world” (Para 13).

This petition was additionally significant because it was signed by organizations rather than individuals, though individual names representing these organizations were included alongside. It is significant because these organizations have defied government impositions on autonomy — a question that has plagued discussions on Vietnamese civil society for decades¹³ — by declaring their existence online. While their activities are still restricted inside Vietnam, they have an online presence that sometimes translates into more tangible campaigns and activities.

Petitioning for Democracy

To understand how the online petition movement is contributing to the promotion of democracy in Vietnam, it is critical to understand how it specifically responds to the Vietnamese political context and its political history. As political scientist Dan Slater has argued, Vietnamese politics in the post-war era has been characterized by a “chronic absence of democratic mobilization”.¹⁴ However, the reasons for this lay deeply in Vietnam’s revolutionary history and the eventual consolidation of state power by the Vietnamese Communists. Through decades of revolution and war, the VCP simultaneously eliminated potential hegemonizing

forces — notably, religious groups and the imperial tradition — and established itself as the sole repository of nationalist authority. As Slater writes, nationalist authority “accrued from Ho Chi Minh to the post-colonial VCP, which was further reinforced through the Indochinese wars”.¹⁵ The result has been a symbolic advantage in relation to the VCP that has left democracy activists “chronically hamstrung”.¹⁶

These dynamics are significant because, as Slater argues, of the three main political resources (namely, money, arms and symbolism), activists can usually only gain an advantage *vis-à-vis* the state in symbolic authority. Furthermore, his comparative study of seven Southeast Asian polities shows that the only types of symbolic authority that have led to significant democratic movements in Southeast Asia have been either religious or nationalist. In the Vietnamese case, religious authority was dissipated and dispersed through war and revolution, while the VCP maintains a monopoly on nationalist authority. The dynamics of this problem are evident whenever the VCP chooses to crack down on a high-profile dissident or groups of activists. These crackdowns are rarely carried out solely by state violence. Typically, they are accompanied by extensive propaganda campaigns in the state media. A common point of attack is to allege that dissidents or activists were being manipulated by external forces. Rekindling rhetoric from the revolutionary era, these campaigns portray activists as foreign collaborators and position them in diametric opposition to the VCP. In other words, the VCP leverages on its symbolic advantage to discredit and marginalize activists, as well as to justify harsh treatment against them.

For these reasons, it should be understood that the petitions are largely a symbolic intervention on political discourse and ideology. More than trying to influence state decision-making — which if used as a measure, the petitions have been abysmal failures — the primary significance of the petitions is to challenge mainstream thinking about the nation-state and both the people's relations to it. Their objectives are about raising awareness in the Vietnamese public and exposing abuses of state power, disregard for the common people, and the empty rhetoric of state socialism.

However, it is equally important to recognize that the petitions promote liberal democratic ideals through concrete contemporary problems with particular significance to Vietnamese political history, such as peasant rights to land, the leadership of the VCP, and struggles against foreign and especially Chinese domination. Their primary points of reference for liberal democratic ideals are not international agreements or even universal ideals, but rather culturally and

historically embedded experience. The emphases the petitions have given to struggles with China in the South China Sea are especially significant because they directly challenge the nationalist authority of state leaders. They allege that state leaders are ineffective or, worse, compromised by their socialist ties with China. They flip the party-state's own rhetoric against pro-democracy activists on its head by promoting the nationalist credentials of the petitioners and generating scepticism over that of state leaders.

Who has been leading the petition is also significant. Slater argues that a key reason for the chronic absence of democratic mobilization in Vietnam has been the absence of autonomous communal elites. Communal elites are "society's primary possessors of nationalist and religious authority", which, in Vietnam, has been dominated by the Communist heroes and leaders of the anti-colonial revolution and Indochinese wars.¹⁷ However, as Slater argues, "democratic uprisings are more likely both to emerge and succeed when communal elites ... assume an oppositional posture [to the ruling regime]."¹⁸ Communal elites are "pivotal players" in determining the course of democratic mobilization in Southeast Asia. It can be argued that many of the persons leading the online petition movement have been these types of figures. They represent some of the VCP's brightest lights, notably in terms of their creative and intellectual contributions to science, the arts and scholarship. Many of them built their careers and reputations as Party members in service of the state. They are communal elites, who, through the petitions, have been taking increasingly oppositional stances towards the state. In Vietnamese, they are often referred to as "prominent intellectuals" (*nhan sy tri thuc*), which reflects both their intellectual achievements and revered social status. It also symbolically associates them with the fabled intellectuals who led the anti-colonial resistance movements and revolution.

Finally, the different types of people who have joined in the petitions have also been significant in a symbolic sense. As mentioned, the number of persons signing the petitions has been miniscule relative to the national population. However, they include farmers, workers, professionals, intellectuals, artists, journalists, dissidents, Buddhists, Catholics, state officials, military, NGO workers, students, and more. Furthermore, they come from every region of Vietnam and from both inside and outside the country. Their heterogeneity is especially significant in a state that has so effectively suppressed dissent by dividing and isolating forces of opposition.

In sum, the online petitions are an intervention in the Vietnamese political discourse and ideology that challenges the symbolic advantage of the VCP. And

while the participants of the petitions do not yet constitute a significant portion of the domestic population, they represent an important slice of it.

Conclusion

The online petition movement that has emerged since the bauxite mining controversy in 2009 has been an important new development in Vietnam's domestic politics. The popularity of the petitions are reflective of the advance and widespread popularity of the Internet and social media in recent years. However, as this paper has argued, their relevance to domestic politics is in their particular use of the Internet to indirectly promote liberal democratic ideas in ways that respond directly to Vietnam's particular political context and history. They challenge the nationalist authority of the VCP, they give visibility to a growing force of increasingly autonomous communal elites, and they have been endorsed by a wide cross-section of Vietnamese society. Each of these developments has been important for challenging the symbolic advantage of the VCP that has for so long hamstrung pro-democracy activists in Vietnam.

While the petitions may help pro-democracy activists gain more symbolic advantage, it is certain that political leaders still maintain an enormous political advantage in terms of financial resources and brute force — two other key kinds of political resources. However, it should be noted that the petitions themselves are examples of non-violent forms of political struggle and they beckon state authorities to follow their lead. The online petition movement itself is mostly elite- and urban-based in its composition. While the petitioners may represent a vanguard group (that is, the ones taking personal and professional risks for the sake of the wider society), it remains to be seen how they might represent a more sizable proportion of the domestic population. While some will continue to believe that the online petition movement is currently too miniscule to be significant, its interventions in the political discourse and ideology may yet prove to have significant political effects over the longer term.

Notes

1. John Michael Roberts, *Digital Publics: Cultural Political Economy, Financialisation and Creative Organisational Politics* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis, 2014); Robert W. McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New York: The New Press, 2013); John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, "The Internet's Unholy Marriage to Capitalism", *Monthly Review* 62, no. 10 (2011): 3.

2. Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012); Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010).
3. Björn Surborg, "Is It the 'Development of Underdevelopment' All Over Again? Internet Development in Vietnam", *Globalizations* 6, no. 2 (2009): 225–47, doi:10.1080/14747730902854182.
4. See <<http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/vietnam/>>, and <<http://wearesocial.net/tag/vietnam/>>. Vietnam ranks 14th worldwide in total number of Internet users, though only 111th in terms of Internet penetration.
5. "Vietnam", available at <<http://wearesocial.net/tag/vietnam/>> (accessed 12 November 2014). Data collected by We Are Social show that some 95 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 24 have access to the Internet in Vietnam, while 73 per cent of Internet users are reported to be under 35 years old.
6. Surborg, "Is It the 'Development of Underdevelopment' All Over Again?", op. cit.
7. "Vietnam", op. cit.
8. Edmund Malesky, "Vietnam in 2013: Single-Party Politics in the Internet Age", *Asian Survey* 54, no. 1 (1 February 2014): 30–38, doi:10.1525/as.2014.54.1.30; Jonathan London, *Politics in Contemporary Vietnam: Party, State, and Authority Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Andrew Wells-Dang, "Political Space in Vietnam: A View from the 'Rice-Roots'", *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 1 (2010): 93–112, doi:10.1080/09512740903398355.
9. Jason Morris-Jung, "The Vietnamese Bauxite Mining Controversy: Towards a More Oppositional Politics", *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10, no. 1 (2015): 63–109; Hunter Marston, "Bauxite Mining in Vietnam's Central Highlands: An Arena for Expanding Civil Society?", *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2012): 173–96; Carlyle A. Thayer, "Political Legitimacy of Vietnam's One Party-State: Challenges and Responses", *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 28, no. 4 (14 January 2010): 47–70.
10. Malesky, "Vietnam in 2013", op. cit.
11. The Petition of 72 was also followed up with two other online statements signed by similar though shifting coalitions of individuals, as discussions over the constitutional revisions progressed over 2013. One opposed the constitutional draft approved by the National Assembly in June, while the other provided further recommendations on the Constitution and the Land Law — raising again issues of land loss and expropriation — one month later. Another petition emerged in August to protest new government regulations on Internet use and service providers in Decree 72 as further infringement on constitutionally protected rights of free speech.
12. Edmund Malesky and Jason Morris-Jung, "Vietnam in 2014: Opportunity and Uncertainty in the Wake of the Oil Rig Crisis", *Asian Survey* 55, no. 1 (2015): 165–73.

13. Russell Hiang-Khng Heng, "Civil Society Effectiveness and the Vietnamese State — despite or because of the Lack of Autonomy", in *Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, edited by Lee Hock Guan (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), pp. 144–66.
14. Dan Slater, "Revolutions, Crackdowns, and Quiescence: Communal Elites and Democratic Mobilization in Southeast Asia", *American Journal of Sociology* 115, no. 1 (1 July 2009): 203–54, doi:10.1086/597796.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

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