Contending views and conflicts over land In Vietnam's Red River Delta

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Abstract: This study offers an approach about the nature of peasants and the reasons for their political actions. It examines the views of different parties towards the question on how land should be owned, managed, used, by whom, for whose benefits, and uncover as well as explains the resulting conflicts over land rights in the Red River Delta since decollectivisation. It postulates that the contending views among parties over decision-making, distribution, and holding of land rights, create dynamics for conflicts, which take place under the form of public resistance, in a number of communities. © The National University of Singapore 2007.

Index Keywords: decision making; decollectivization; land rights; land use planning; political conflict; Asia; Eurasia; Red River Delta; Southeast Asia; Viet Nam

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• Given the Vietnamese context, I use the term 'controlling,' instead of 'management' to indicate what in Vietnamese means 'quản lý.' In some cases, those who were not male adults, such as widows and orphans, also received land shares. Huy Phúc, V., (1979) Tìm hiểu chế độ ruộng đất ở Việt Nam nửa sau thế kỷ XIX [Investigating land tenure system in Vietnam in the first half of nineteenth century] (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản (Nxb). Khoa học Xã hội.
Like in China and other socialist countries, agricultural cooperatives did not put all agricultural land of its members into the hands of the cooperative for control and use, but left a small portion for members to farm on their own. In Vietnam, from 1961-1988, agricultural land for family use theoretically amounted to five per cent of the total agricultural area in the village. Many villagers either called these plots ‘land for vegetable farming’ or ‘the five per cent land,’ in one sense, therefore, the cooperative members still maintained their family economy while engaging in the economy of the cooperative. The five per cent plot and other non-collective economic activities formed the villagers' family economy which was significantly complementary to their collective economy. The 1988 Law authorised the doubling of this area, from five to ten per cent, and named it, agricultural land for family economy. The 1988 Land Law was passed as a direct result of agricultural decollectivisation. In one sense, this brief and uncomplicated Law broadly answered the question of how and in what way the land in Vietnam should be owned, managed and used, by whom and for whose benefit, from the state's point of view.
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- Scott, J.C., The moral economy, pp. 13-55
- Popkin, S.L., The rational peasant, pp. 104-105
- Kerkvliet, B., Everyday politics in the Philippines
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- 'An approach for analysing state-society relations in Vietnam (2001) SOJOURN, 16 (2), pp. 238-278
- The power of everyday politics
- O'Brien, K.J., p. 33The term mâu thuận means 'contradiction'
- Vietnamese Marxist terminology has adopted the Maoist use of the word to refer to a 'conflict', e.g. between classesKerkvliet, B., Village-state relations in Vietnam' The power of everyday politics
- Long Giang, 'Quan he ruong dat trong buróc chuyen sang co che thi truong' [Land relations in the transformation to market mechanism], in Mot so van de ve doi moi quan he so hưu dat dai [Some issues on land ownership reform], ed. Tran Quoc Toan (Hà Nội: Tap chí Thông tin Lý luận, 1993), pp. 21-37Do Bá, 'Van de so huu ruong dat o nuoc ta hien nay' [The question of land ownership in contemporary Vietnam], in Mot so van de ve doi moi quan he so huu dat dai [Some issues on land ownership reform], ed. Tran Quoc Toan (Hà Nội: Tap chí Thông tin Lý luận, 1993): 37-44Sinh Cúc, N., Quan he ruong dat o nông thôn sau Nghi quyet 10: Nhưng mâu thuẫn và các giải pháp' [Land relations in the countryside after Resolution 10: Conflicts and solutions] Mot so van de ve doi moi quan he so huu dat dai [Some issues on land ownership reform], pp. 44-50
- (2) regulating the area limit and time span of land use rights
- and (3) deciding prices of land use rights. The state allocates people land use rights, recognises such use rights as well as the rights and duties of use rights possessors. The state also has power to adjust resources from land through its financial policies, for example, collecting land-use or rent fees, land-use taxes, land-income taxes, and land-transfer taxesFirstly, in contrast to
residential land, the holdings of agricultural land use rights are limited to a fixed time. Under the 1988 Land Law, the duration of use rights holdings ranged from five to 15 years. The 1993 Land Law extended it to 20 years for agricultural land for annual crops and 50 years for perennial crops. Accordingly, when the holdings of land use rights expire, a redistribution must be made to balance the holdings of villagers in the rural areas. Secondly, the area of land use rights that one possessor can hold is limited, and depends on the types of land use rights possessor and the kind of land. In regards to agricultural land for annual crops, the dominant types of land in the Red River Delta, the 1993 Land Law regulated that one individual or households could hold a maximum of two ha of land. In 2003, the amended version of Land Law increased the maximum area of one possessor to three ha see Table 1, Finally, besides rights, possessors of land use rights have respHowever, William Bredo has argued that because of a long tradition of tenancy and landlessness, many southern Vietnamese peasants under the Republic of Vietnam had a strong desire to own the land they farm. This desire varied hardly at all with peasant status. See Land reform in Vietnam, Working paper, V1, Part 1 of 2 (California: Stanford Research Institute, 1968), pp. 83-89


• Scott, J.C., The moral economy, and Xây dựng co so ha tang nông thôn trong quá trình công nghiệp hóa, hiến đại hóa o Việt Nam, ed. Do Hoàng Nam and Lê Cao Dam [Rural infrastructure construction in industrialisation and modernisation period in Vietnam] (Hà Noi: Nxb (2001) Khoá học Xã hội


• Kerkvliet, B., p. 16

• Personal communication[The land question in the Central Highlands], in [Some issues on the socio-economic development in Central Highland villages], ed. Trung tâm Khoa học xã hội và Nhân văn Quốc gia (Hà Noi: Nxb. Khoa học xã hội, 2000)[Report on land disputes], (1992), pp. 2-3 and 13-15, pp. 7-10. The brown revolution continues, pp

• Vietnamese source[Vietnamese sourceKerkvliet, B., , pp. 278-280[Summary report on implementation of the Politburo's Resolution 10 on renovation in management of the agricultural economy], 1988, p. 8(1988), 1989, p. 5. Report on land management in[Report on violations of Land Law in Hà Bac and plan for investigation and resolution], 1995, p. 1This initiative in Hà Bac aimed to implement Directive 77 of the Council of Ministers which ordered, in early 1993, the lower state authorities to find urgent solutions to stop the illegal allocation, sale, purchase, and exchange of land use rights[Assessment of the land use situation after allocation of long-term land use rights to peasant households in Hà Bac], 1994, p. 7This worked out to 39 per cent of the total communes in the province at the timeVietnamese sourceChina', (2001) The China Quarterly, 166, pp. 422-439. In China, Xiaolin Guo's research shows that land use rights appropriation has also been one of the main causes for rural conflicts in the past decades. See 'Land expropriation and rural conflicts in

committee's report on the situation and resolution of people's internal conflicts during