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INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL EVIDENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND GENERALIZED TRUST: AN ANALYSIS IN THE CASE OF VIETNAM

■ INTRODUCTION

Does trust in political institutions generate generalized trust? The question has been placed at the centre of the academic debate for several decades. Trust in political institutions is theorized as a prominent explanation of social trust (Rothstein, Stolle 2002, 2008). In countries where the impartial performance of democratic institutions results from the application of the rule of law, positive perception of political institutions fosters trustworthiness as well as produces a higher level of generalized trust in society (Uslaner 2002; Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 452). In contrast, authoritarian and totalitarian political systems are hypothesised to erode generalized trust and narrow the range of citizens' trust down to particular groups (Tao et al. 2014: 239).

While a large body of studies on the effect of institutional trust on generalized trust is empirically presented in the context of democracy, only a modest number of studies occur in nondemocratic settings. Among those that do, Amaney Jamal (2007) finds that the level of political confidence is linked to generalized trust regardless of political settings. However, generalized trust in nondemocratic context is likely to support authoritarian patterns of rule rather than improve democratic forms of political and social engagement (Jamal 2007: 1328). H. Christoph Steinhardt (2012) confirms the strong link between institutional trust and generalized trust in Chinese Mainland, but finds out that trust in Chinese institutions contributes to high levels of generalized

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trust no matter how political institutions perform. A recent study of Ran Tao et al. (2014) also points out that high levels of political trust serve as a basis for sustaining high levels of social trust in the rural China.

This study extends the understanding of the relationship between political institutions and(?) generalized trust in nondemocratic settings by considering the context of Vietnam. Vietnam officially opened up to the outside world with the adoption of the innovation policy (Doi Moi) in 1986 and focused mainly on economic reforms to bring about social change (Thayer 2008). Vietnam remains, however, one of the last countries in the world that still follows the communist ideology (Dalton, Ong 2005: 1), and is still listed under the group of countries considered as nondemocratic. The present political status makes it opportune to examine the way social (general) trust stems from citizens' confidence in political institutions.

Using data from the fourth wave of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), this paper seeks to answer the question whether social (general) trust is an exogenous outcome of political process, the argument underlying the independence thesis for the linkage between the two phenomena (Newton 2001: 203). More specifically, this paper hypothesizes that owing to the regime's one-party ruling, in which political institutions are more likely to be totally governed by „top-down” decisions rather than by citizens' joint participation, indifference to the performance of political institutions among Vietnamese citizens might dominate Vietnamese citizen's perception. Furthermore, by taking partisanship and associational membership as conditions of this link, this study attempts to clarify the working mechanism under which institutional trust contributes to variations in generalized trust, if any, that is absent in previous research.

Taking the above into consideration, this study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) Is institutional trust independent from or influential on generalized trust in the context of Vietnam? And (2) how do partisanship and associational membership affect the link between institutional and generalized trust, if any, in the country?

This paper is organized as follows. The next section will discuss, on the basis of past studies, a theoretical framework that clarifies the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust, including the political implications of this link in the context of Vietnam. A discussion of the data and methodology used in the study appears in the third section. The final section presents the results of this study followed by a discussion of the results and a conclusion.

■ THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS

The link between Trust in Political Institutions and Generalized Trust: A Literature Review

Generalized trust regards the expectancy held by an individual or a group about the trustworthiness of strangers who are unknown for the first time (Rotter 1967). In general, generalized trust is defined as an optimistic attitude in interaction with more or less distant strangers, as an opportunity rather than a threat (Uslaner 2002: 34). The term is conceptualized differently from particularized trust based on Francis Fukuyama's conception of „radius of trust” that refers to trust and reciprocity networks formed with family and friends (Fukuyama 2001). The positive effects of generalized trust have been empirically demonstrated at both individual and societal levels. At the individual level, it promotes volunteering, serving as a solid basis for sustained cooperation, reciprocity, and social connectedness (Putnam 2000; Stolle 2001; Uslaner 2002). At the national level, generalized trust fosters democracy (Uslaner 1999; Putnam 2000), enhancing economic development (Fukuyama 1995), and making society more prosperous (Coleman 1988). Generalized trust is considered as a key component of social capital (Putnam 1993).

The link between institutional and generalized trust can be categorized into two different accounts. The first approach, known as the independent thesis, treats the two types of trust as distinct phenomena (Tao et al. 2014: 238–239). This account argues that social (horizontal) trust and political (vertical) trust are theorized to originate from different sources as well as social conditions (Newton 2001: 203; Tao et al. 2014: 239). As notified by Kenneth Newton, predicting individual's social trust from its trust in government seems to be a short-sighted strategy (Newton 2001: 203; Tao et al. 2014: 239). The independent thesis, in particular, is expected to be supported in the context of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes when citizens develop habits of self-protection and rely on trusted social networks to respond to distrusted state institutions (Shlapentokh 1989; Tao et al. 2014: 239). Empirically, this account is supported in a number of studies. William Mishler and Richard Rose (2001), for example, detect evidence upholding the independent thesis when the authors find social trust as an exogenous outcome from the political process in 10 post-communist countries. Similarly, Jan Delhey, Kenneth Newton, Christian Welzel (2011) also find no robust evidence of the relationship between social trust (measured in terms of the radius of trust) and institutional trust (Delhey, Newton, Welzel 2011).

The second account, labelled as the causal thesis, places the two constructs in a causal relationship which is developed to deal with the matter of the origin

of the two forms of trust based on the mutual relationship between them found in a large number of studies (Levi 1996; Brehm, Rahn 1997; Freitag, Bühlmann 2009; Zmerli, Newton 2008; Rothstein, Eek 2009; Wang Gordon 2011; You 2012; Sønderskov, Dinesen 2014). There exists two distinct perspectives constituting this account. The first one postulates a causal relationship between the two constructs running from social trust to political trust. In this regard, the origin of political trust is theorized to stem from social forces in which social capital or social trust is considered as a prominent factor explaining the variation of citizens' trustful attitudes towards political institutions (Putnam 1993, 2000; Norris 1999, 2011; Hetherington 2005). Robert Putnam (1993, 2000), for example, convincingly argues that a civic culture of „generalized trust” and social solidarity between citizens, willing to cooperate, is an important societal prerequisite of working democracy. The second perspective relies on the institutional approach which views institutional trust as a prominent explanation of social (general) trust (Rothstein, Stolle 2002, 2008). This perspective stresses the role of political institutions as an important source producing generalized trust. It relies on the rational base which hinges on citizen's evaluations of institutional performance (Mishler, Rose 2001: 31). The main assumption underlying this account views rules of governing citizens' behaviour shaping individuals' perceptions of the trustworthiness of others (Levi 1996: 51; Sønderskov, Dinesen 2016: 181). In this regard, the fairness and effectiveness of state institutions serve as a crucial motivation for the willingness of trusting others (Rothstein, Stolle 2008; Sønderskov, Dinesen 2016: 181; Sztompka 1999), and create the sense of security that promotes cooperation among individuals. A number of recent studies which are devoted to disentangle the direction of causality between trust in political institutions and generalized trust strongly support the latter perspective (the institutional approach) (Brehm, Rahn 1997; Sønderskov, Dinesen 2014, 2016; Tao et al. 2014). John Brehm and Wendy Rahn (1997) and Tao et al. (2014), for example, applying instrumental variable techniques, detect a robust causal effect of political trust on social trust without reverse effect (Tao et al. 2014) or with less effect (Brehm, Rahn 1997) from social trust on political trust. Kim Sønderskov and Peter Dinesen (2014), especially in their subsequent work (Sønderskov, Dinesen 2016), by employing panel data to minimize bias from omitted variables and using cross-lagged as well as individual fixed effects models to discover the direction of the relationship and to assess confounding, provide strong evidence of trust in state institutions exercising a causal impact on social trust, while the inverse relationship is limited.

Although the independent thesis is shown to work in the context of post-communist European countries (Mishler, Rose 2001), other empirical studies

in nondemocratic Asian countries provide reverse evidence. Jamal (2007), for example, studying the effect of political trust on social capital in the Arab world, finds out that the performance of political institutions is positively attributed to the level of generalized trust regardless of the types of political regime (Jamal 2007). In this vein, Bo Rothstein and Dietlind Stolle (2008) further postulate that countries with a long tradition of democracy have a higher level of generalized trust, while institutional trust in authoritarian contexts leads to low level of trusting others (Rothstein, Stolle 2008; see also in Uslaner 2002). The reliable, impartial and transparent performance of democratic institutions based on the rule of law leads to the positive perception of society among citizens which, in turn, fosters level of trust (Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 452). In contrast, authoritarian and totalitarian political systems create distrust and scepticism among citizens which, in turn, contribute to the erosion of generalized trust in those contexts (Mishler, Rose 2001: 31). However, those claims are challenged in the case of China. Though China is a prominent instance of authoritarianism, a high level of institutional trust is found there to contribute to a high level of generalized trust in the country (Steinhardt 2012; Tao et al. 2014).

The literature discussed above shows inconsistent evidence of the relationship between trust in political institutions and generalized trust in nondemocratic context. While the link is not found in post-communist countries, in fact it, exists in authoritarian Asian countries. In addition, the assumption that a low level of trust in the authoritarian system generates cautious attitudes towards others is clearly questioned by empirical evidence in the case of China. This leads to a suspicion whether political institutions in nondemocratic countries are perceived as guarantors of the safety, by which the sense of trustworthiness in those societies is enhanced similarly among all citizens. Put differently, whether citizens in nondemocratic countries might also take the quality of political institutions as a basis for the sense of security to be more willing to cooperate with others as it is in the democratic ones. Thus, a further question should be clarified: how does trust in political institutions relate to generalized trust in nondemocratic context? Additionally, what is the working mechanism behind the relationship, if any?

Given recent evidence of the causal relationship between trust in political institutions and generalized trust as discussed above, the purpose of this study is not to re-examine the direction of the link between the two forms of trust but to take trust in political institutions as a predictor instead to untangle the effect of this construct on generalized trust under particular conditions in the context of Vietnam. Two conditions are prominent – partisanship and voluntary membership. The next section discusses these issues in the case of Vietnam – a nondemocratic context.

■ Partisanship and Voluntary Associational Memberships as Conditions

Partisanship: Institutional trust reflects citizens' perception and evaluation of the performance of political institutions. This performance is more likely to be based on subjective evaluation rather than objective assessment. Thus, performances of an incumbent party and a government held by the party are assumed to be positively evaluated by its partisan identifiers and negatively appraised by its opposers. This is because a ruling party holding government power has the propensity to impose its political ideology on a citizenry country (Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 444). In this regard, Kai-Ping Huang, Feng-Yu, Lee and Tse-Min Lin (2013) examined the effect of partisanship on institutional trust in six emerging democratic countries in East Asia. They found that trust in all institutional types is not empirically produced from objective assessments of government performance but is subject to partisan bias. The authors conclude that partisanship should be taken into account as a factor influencing citizens' assessment of these institutions (Huang, Lee, Lin 2013: 18).

In contrast to democratic countries where impartiality and transparency of political institutions constitute the main foundation to build social trust among citizens, in nondemocratic contexts characterized by the low quality of political institutions, subjective assessments of the performance of political institutions based on partisanship can be seen as a crucial basis from which citizens can develop their institutional trustworthiness. Accordingly, the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust is expected to be stronger in the group of partisan identifiers with an incumbent party. This seems, in fact, to be the case in Vietnam, one of the last countries in the world in which politics still follows a communist ideology with political power monopolized by the Vietnamese Communist Party (Dalton, Ong 2005: 1). Governed by a one-party ruling system since its independence, the country appears as an authoritarian state. For more than 70 years, the Vietnamese Communist Party has enabled the communist ideology to prevail all over the country, resulting in the establishment of popular support for the ruling party. Moreover, because of its totalitarian politics, political institutions in Vietnam are more likely to be totally formed by „top-down” decisions rather than by citizens' joint participation. Furthermore, most of the senior officials of political institutions in Vietnam are members of the Vietnamese Communist Party. As a result, political institutions in Vietnam generally reflect the political ideology of the Party and the performance of political institutions is more likely to be strongly supported by partisan identifiers. Drawing on the observed effect of partisanship bias on institutional trust, it can be assumed that communist identifiers are more likely

to rely on their good perception of the performance of political institutions to have high level of generalized trust as compared to non-communist identifiers.

Voluntary associational memberships: Individual memberships in voluntary organizations have been a long-standing traditional factor in explaining generalized trust. Theoretically, formal associations, through interaction with unknown people and members of out-groups, are seen as ideal social spaces from which generalized trust emerges (Putnam, Leonardi, Nonetti 1993; Putnam 2000). The mechanism under which trust is generated from associational memberships is the emergence of norms and social sanction embedded in social structures within voluntary organizations. This, in turn, increases the predictability of cooperation as well as trust for members of an association (Paxton 2007: 50). Although empirical tests yield inconsistent results on the effects of organizational membership on generalized trust, engagement in voluntary organizations leaves promising room as a major factor to raise levels of trust.

In Vietnam, however, scholars express a nuanced perspective on voluntary organizations. As described in the literature, voluntary organizations in Vietnam are not intrinsically similar to those in the West. Contemporary Vietnamese social groups originate from traditional social organizational units of the village (Dalton, Ong 2005: 2). They carry characteristics of Confucian and communist traditions, and are considered as less autonomous and assertive than its counterparts in Eastern Europe (Dalton, Ong 2005: 3). Moreover, in contemporary Vietnamese politics, social organizations fall under the control of the Vietnamese Communist Party through an umbrella organization named The Vietnam Fatherland Front (Thayer 2008: 3). This organization groups twenty-nine registered mass organizations as well as special interest groups and is responsible for keeping the operation of those organizations along the path of the ruling party (Thayer 2008). Accordingly, the existence of social organizations and the participation in social organizations in Vietnam do not serve as a foundation for civil society per se (Dalton, Ong 2005).

After adopting the innovation policy (Doi Moi) in 1986, Vietnam started to align itself with the standards set by international organizations, thus initiating international integration. Participation in international deals, however, has forced the state to obey political standards that the West considers as core bases for long partnership and cooperation. These standards include the respect of human rights, the rule of law and market regulation in economic development. This alignment transformed state-society relations, as spaces opened for public discussions about social and political issues as well as for the emergence of pro-democratic groups (Thayer 2008). A number of associational organizations formed have been increased, following this flow, and their operations have

become more and more visible challenges to the political regime of the one-party ruling in Vietnam (Thayer 2008).

Russel Dalton and Nhu-Ngoc Ong (2005) distinguish two types of organizations, namely state-controlled and autonomous groups. The state-controlled category comprises unions, professional associations and political groups linked to the Vietnamese Communist party and its affiliated organizations. Among these groups are the women's groups (primarily the Vietnamese Women's Association) or youth groups (e.g., the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union). The autonomous groups consist of environmental groups, human rights groups, religious groups, and even community associations (Dalton, Ong 2005: 5). Dalton and Ong (2005) also show an unconventional finding, namely that a non-linear relationship exists between the total number of group memberships that an individual has and his or her level of social trust, in which the level of membership erodes trust among those who join associational organizations the least and the most, while trust is improved among people who have medium memberships. The authors argue that the pattern takes place because individuals active in many go beyond normal mobilized participation to join groups that potentially challenge the system of Vietnam politics (Dalton, Ong 2005: 5 and 6).

It can be seen, to summarize, that in comparison to democratic settings in which a high level of civic engagement enhances the quality of democracy (Putnam, Leonardi, Nonetti 1993; Putnam 2000), the same cannot be necessarily said for political institutions in an authoritarian context. Tao et al. (2014) also learned that members of civil society organizations tend to show lower political trust in local authorities as is in the case of China (Tao et al. 2014: 247). In the Vietnamese context, however, a negative link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust should be observed among those who are active members in voluntary organizations, while the reverse link will exist in the group having a low level of associational memberships.

■ Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses of this study are stated as follows:

H1: All else being equal, there is a positive association between institutional trust and generalized trust.

H2: All else being equal, the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust is stronger in the group of communist identifiers as compared to the group of non-communist identifiers.

H3: All else being equal, the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust is weakened by an increase in the level of voluntary membership.

DATA AND METHOD

This study primarily draws on data extracted from a dataset of the fourth wave of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) project which was conducted in Vietnam in 2015. The ABS project was launched in 2001 with the first wave carried out between 2001 and 2003 in eight countries in East Asia. The survey has undergone four waves from 2001 to 2016. The latest (fourth) wave covers 14 countries in Southeast and East Asia, and focuses, like other waves, on topics related to social and political values, social capital, democratic legitimacy, political participation, and the quality of democratic governance in Asian countries.

As conducted in other countries, the survey implemented in Vietnam in 2015 employed national probability samples to give every Vietnamese citizen an equal chance of being selected and engaged in the study (Asianbarometer 2001). The entire Vietnam was approached upon 6 major study areas, namely Northern Midlands and Mountains, Red River Delta, North and South Central Coast, Central Highlands, Southeast, Mekong River Delta (Asianbarometer 2015). The survey entailed face-to-face interviews, ensured the randomness in selecting sampling units, and presented the totality of adult citizens aged 18 years and over (Asianbarometer 2001). The survey also especially paid attention to the reliability of the data by applying strict protocols for field work supervision as well as for data entry to ensure data quality (Asianbarometer 2001). The data, thus, offer a current and reliable material for testing the above hypotheses.

Table 1. Measurement of Variables

Variable	Measurement	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Generalized Trust	1 = most people can generally be trusted 0 = must be careful	0.43	0.50	0	1
Trust in Partisan Institutions	Multiple point scale (1 to 4)	2.33	0.49	1	3
Trust in Checking Institutions	Multiple point scale (1 to 4)	2.03	0.48	1	3

Partisanship	1 = communist identifier 0 = non-communist identifier	0.03	0.16	0	1
Associational memberships	A count variable with 3-point scale (0 to 3)	0.08	0.31	0	3
Informal contacts	5-point scale (1 to 5) 1 = 0–4 people; 2 = 5–9 people; 3 = 10–19 people; 4 = 20–49 people; 5 = 50 or more	2.36	0.84	1	5
Community safeness	4-point scale 1 = very unsafe; 4 = very safe	3.09	0.56	1	4
Monthly household income	5-point scale 1 = lowest quintile; 5 = highest quintile	3.06	1.39	1	5
Household's economic condition	4-point scale 1 = bad; 4 = very good	2.43	0.60	1	4
Social status of family	10-point scale 1 = lowest status; 10 = highest status	5.87	1.62	1	10
Education Level	Open (in years)	10.91	3.39	1	20
Life control	4-point scale 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree	2.31	1.10	1	4
Female	1 = yes 0 = no	0.5	0.5	0	1
Age	4-point scale 1 = 18 to 30; 2 = 31 to 44; 3 = 45 to 60; 4 = older than 60)	1.87	0.88	1	4
Religiosity	7-point scale 1 = less often; 7 = several times a day	2.17	1.58	1	8

Dependent Variable:

The dependent variable is generalized trust which the survey measures through the standard question „Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?”. This variable is coded as a binary outcome with 1 – „most people can generally be trusted” and 0 – „can't be too careful”. There is 43.1 percent of respondents answering that most people can generally be trusted.

Main Independent Variables:

Trust in political institutions: Rothstein and Stolle (2008) point out that confidence in political institutions, or institutional trust, should not be collapsed into a one dimensional measure because of the existence of various types of institutions (Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 443). They propose instead to distinguish between confidence in the institutions on the representational side and on the implementation (order) side of the political system (Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 444). Representational institutions such as parties, parliaments or cabinets are mainly responsible for partisanship. On the other side, one of the major roles of order institutions (such the courts, the police and other legal institutions) are to implement public policies, and trusting such institutions depends on the extent to which actors such as civil servants, judges, the police are judged as even-handed or impartial (Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 445). Conducting an empirical analysis based on data from the third wave of World Values Survey, Rothstein and Stolle (2008: 448) identify three types of political institutions, namely partisan institutions (parliament, political parties, government, civil services), neutral and order institutions (the army, the police, and legal institutions), and power checking institutions (TV and the press).

This study follows Rothstein and Stolle's (2008) suggestion to measure institutional trust in the Vietnam context. The fact is that political practice in Vietnam presents a particular phenomenon in which all types of political institutions reflect the communist ideology due to the totalitarian characteristic of politics of the country. More specifically, political institutions are totally formed by a „top-down” process in which a majority of senior officials of political institutions are members of the Vietnam Communist Party. As a result, the assumption is that institutional trust constructed by citizen's confidence in various types of political institutions in the country may tap one dimension that largely reflects the representational side.

In the ABS survey, confidence in political institutions is measured via this question: „I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust do you have in them? Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?”. There are 13 institutions listed on which respondents assess their own level of trust by scoring on a scale from 1 – a great deal of trust to 4 – none at all. In order to test the extent to which these items reflect a one- or multi-dimensional measure of institutional trust as it appears in Vietnam, the study used a principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation to reduce the 13 listed categories of confidence in political institutions to a smaller number of latent constructs. Table 2 reveals the emergence of two conceptually different factors labelled as „trust

in partisan institutions” and „trust in checking institutions”. The dimension of partisan institutional trust consists of confidence in seven institutions in both representational and implementation side (president or Prime Minister, courts, national government, political parties, parliament, military forces, police). This factor explains 26.9% of the variance and a reliability test using Cronbach’s Alpha for its seven sub-items yielded an acceptable value of 0.83. These seven items are then combined to create an additive index of trust in partisan institutions. In turn, „checking institutional trust” comprises items showing individual confidence in institutions responsible for monitoring the operation of partisan institutions (such as civil service, local government, newspapers, television, election commission, and non-governmental organizations). This factor explains 21.9% of the variance and its index is also an additive measure constructed by combining six sub-items which yielded a reliable Cronbach alpha of 0.75.

Table 2. Types of Trust in Political Institutions in Vietnam (N=1089)

	Factor 1 – Trust in Partisan Institutions	Factor 2 – Trust in Checking Institutions
The president or Prime Minister	0.7621	0.1258
The courts	0.6825	0.2448
The national government	0.7683	0.2072
Political parties	0.4290	0.4101
Parliament	0.7490	0.1768
Civil service	0.3375	0.4785
The military (or armed forces)	0.6100	0.2390
The police	0.5002	0.4185
Local government	0.4097	0.4599
Newspapers	0.1194	0.7662
Television	0.1820	0.7124
The election commission	0.3945	0.5833
Non-governmental organizations	0.1103	0.6516
Explained variance	26.9%	21.9%
Cronbach’s alpha of bold items	0.83	0.75
Means of scale constructed by bold items	2.33	2.03

Partisanship: The ABS survey asked respondents' partisanship by the question „Among the political parties listed here, which party if any do you feel closest to?”. Unfortunately, the data set provides no data of this question in the case of Vietnam. As a proxy variable, this study uses an item that asked whether respondents are a member of the Vietnam communist party. The argument is that members of the party absolutely identify themselves as adherents of the communist ideology, while respondents who are not members of the communist party are assumed to be non-partisan (non-communist) identifiers of the party.

This variable is constructed through this question: „On the following card, we have listed various types of organizations that many people belong to. Could you identify the three most important organizations or formal groups you belong to. You can also tell us the name of the organizations that you belong to and we can identify the appropriate categories for you”. The category of political parties is one of nineteen types of organizations listed for respondents' identification. Respondents who belong to this category are evidently communists because of the fact that Vietnam is a single-party state ruled by the Vietnam Communist Party. Communist identifiers are coded 1 and 0 if otherwise.

Associational memberships: Dalton and Ong (2005: 2) argue that the form of mobilized participation in communist society is not presented as voluntary memberships in the civil society literature per se. In the case of Vietnam, religious groups, environmental groups, and educational/cultural groups are considered as more autonomous than other types in relation to the state (Dalton, Ong 2005: 6). This study, thus, measures associational memberships following Dalton and Ong's (2005) suggestion by counting the total number of autonomous organizations (namely residential and community associations, religious groups, sports or recreational clubs, culture organizations, charities, alumni associations, other volunteer organizations) that respondents belong to. This construction comes from the question: „On the following card, we have listed various types of organizations that many people belong to. Could you identify the three most important organizations or formal groups you belong to. You can also tell us the name of the organizations that you belong to and we can identify the appropriate categories for you”.

Control variables: This study also controls the effects of factors that may likewise have an impact on generalized trust suggested in the literature. *Social networks*, for example, which stress the importance of informal social relations and daily interaction with the known people in creating trust are taken into account (Delhey, Newton 2003; An 2018). It is an ordinal variable measuring the number of people that respondents contact every day through the question. This variable has a scale as follows: 1 (0–4 people); 2 (5–9 people); 3 (10–19 people); 4 (20–49 people); 5 (50 or more people). To control the effect of *success factors* on generalized trust (Brehm, Rahn 1997; Paxton 2007; Delhey, Welzel 2012), the

following variables are included: *level of education* (in years), *subjective assessment of monthly household income* (1 – lowest quintile to 5 – highest quintile), *subjective assessment of household's economic condition* (1 – bad to 4 – very good), *subjective social status of family* (1 – lowest status to 10 – highest status). Another factor demonstrated to affect generalized trust in the literature is the *sense of community safeness* (Putnam 2000; Delhey, Newton 2003) which is measured on a scale of 1 – very unsafe to 4 – very safe in a question asking to what extent there is safeness in the city / town / village the respondents are living in. This study also pays attention to the impact of personality characteristics on generalized trust by taking *life control variable* to be included (Oskarsson et al. 2012). This variable is measured via a question asking whether one agrees with a statement that asserts that wealth, poverty, success or failure are decided by fate, which has a scale of 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree. It is acknowledged, too, that happiness and well-being are powerful predictors of generalized trust. Unfortunately, the ABS survey has no items to measure these factors and are thus they are excluded from this study. The effects of demographic variables such as female (coded 1 – yes and 0 – no), age (measured as 1 – 18 to 30; 2 – 31 to 44; 3 – 45 to 60; 4 – older than 60), and religiosity tapping the notion of respondents' frequency of practice of religious services or rituals (measured as 1 – less often to 7 – several times a day) are also included in the analysis (Fukuyama 1995; Traunmüller 2009).

Because the dependent variable is binary by nature, logistic regression models are employed to estimate the effect of trust in political institutions on generalized trust (Long 2003: 187–308). Furthermore, in order to detect whether the effect of trust in political institutions on generalized trust is conditional on partisanship and associational memberships, relevant interactions' terms between institutional trusts (trust in partisan institutions and trust in checking institutions) and partisanship as well as associational memberships will be included in the regression models (Brambor, Clark, Golder 2006).

■ EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Table 3 presents the results of two logistic regression models. Model 1, where interaction variables are excluded, tests the first hypothesis relating trust in political institutions and generalized trust. Model 2, with the inclusion of interaction variables, investigates the link between institutional trust and generalized trust conditioned by partisanship and voluntary organizational membership. Control variables like informal contacts, community safeness, a set of variables of success and well-being, life control, and demographic variables are included in all models.

Table 3. Logistic regression models with dependent variable of generalized trust

Predictors		Model 1	Model 2
Trust in Partisan Institutions		0.83*** (0.15)	0.86*** (0.20)
Trust in Checking Institutions		0.17 (0.20)	0.23 (0.21)
Communist Identifiers		1.34* (0.57)	1.14 (4.20)
Associational memberships		-0.003 (0.23)	2.5* (1.13)
Communist Identifiers* Trust in Partisan Institutions			2.73 (2.57)
Communist Identifiers* Trust in Checking Institutions			-3.09 (2.08)
Associational memberships* Trust in Partisan Institutions			-0.79 (0.67)
Associational memberships* Trust in Checking Institutions			-0.32 (0.66)
Informal contacts		0.18* (0.09)	0.17* (0.09)
Community safeness		0.14 (0.13)	0.13 (0.13)
Success and well-being	Monthly household income	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)
	Household's economic condition	0.33** (0.12)	0.33** (0.12)
	Social status of family	0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
	Education Level	0.12*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.03)
Life control		-0.22*** (0.07)	-0.22*** (0.07)
Female		-0.29* (0.14)	-0.31* (0.14)
Age (18–30)	31–44	0.04 (0.16)	0.04 (0.17)
	45–60	0.38* (0.20)	0.38* (0.20)
	older than 60	0.83* (0.40)	0.84* (0.40)
Religiosity		-0.31*** (0.05)	-0.31*** (0.05)
Constant		-4.34*** (0.70)	-4.47*** (0.71)
Log likelihood		-622.81	-618.72
McFadden R2		0.132	0.138
N		1045	1045

+ $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

Note: Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the effects of socio-economic characteristics on generalized trust is very significant. Women are more likely to less trust in others than men ($p < 0.05$). Trust seems to be more popular among the older than the younger. And people who more practice religious service more distrust in other ($p < 0.001$). Regarding other important control factors, social network theory of generalized trust is confirmed in this study where informal contacts increase individuals' probability of trusting ($p < 0.05$). The sense of community safeness is shown not to be a prediction of generalized trust in the context of Vietnam. Indicators capturing success and well-being theory present inconsistent effects on generalized trust in this study. While monthly household income and subjective assessment of a family's social status are not connected to generalized trust, two other variables, namely subjective assessment of household's economic condition and the level of education are demonstrated to boost the level of trust among individuals ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$ respectively). The life control variable capturing individual characteristic theory has a converse effect on generalized trust as it is theorized. This factor reduces the individuals' level of generalized trust ($p < 0.001$).

Model 1 shows that when controlling for the effects of relevant variables, only trust in partisan institutions is positively and significantly associated with generalized trust ($p < 0.001$), while trust in checking institutions is not a predictor of generalized trust. This finding doesn't lend support to the first hypothesis that there is a statistical association between institutional trust and generalized trust in Vietnam. The results are inconsistent with empirical results from previous studies (Jamal 2007; Steinhardt 2012) and also don't completely favour the claim that political trust positively affects generalized trust regardless of the type of political regimes (Jamal 2007; Rothstein, Stolle 2008).

By including the interaction variables of both type of trust in political institutions and partisanship and voluntary associational membership, Model 2 shows the relationships between institutional trust (partisan as well as checking institutions) and generalized trust changes, if at all, with variations on partisanship and associational membership.

At first, looking at the coefficients of the interaction variables between both types of institutional trust and partisanship (communist identifier) in Model 2, though both coefficients are statistically insignificant, the coefficient of the interaction between partisanship (communist identifier) and trust in partisan institutions is positive, while the one between partisanship (communist identifier) and trust in checking institutions has a negative effect. However, as the logit model is non-linear, looking at the sign, magnitude, or statistical significance of the unstandardized coefficient on the interaction term leads to misleading interpretations (Ai, Norton 2003: 129). Therefore, in Table 4, the predicted values of generalized trust varying between both, the groups of

communist and non-communist identifiers under the effect of trust in political institutions, are calculated in details.

Table 4. Partisanship-Conditioned Effect of Trust in Political Institutions on Generalized Trust^a

Trust in partisan institutions	Communist identifier	Non-communist identifier
1	0.02 [-0.33;0.18]	0.20 [0.12;0.29]
1.5	0.12 [-0.34;0.59]	0.28 [0.20;0.35]
2	0.45 [-0.05;0.95]	0.36 [0.32;0.41]
2.5	0.83 [0.61;1.04]	0.46 [0.42;0.49]
3	0.97 [0.85;1.09]	0.56 [0.49;0.63]
Trust in checking institutions	Communist identifier	Non-communist identifier
1	0.98 [0.89;1.07]	0.37 [0.28;0.47]
1.5	0.92 [0.73;1.11]	0.40 [0.34;0.46]
2	0.73 [0.50;0.97]	0.42 [0.39;0.46]
2.5	0.40 [-0.11;0.90]	0.45 [0.39;0.50]
3	0.13 [-0.33;0.59]	0.47 [0.37;0.57]

^a predicted probabilities of generalized trust were estimated using margins command (Long, 2003) in Stata.

Notes: The numbers in brackets are 95 per cent confidence intervals. Control variables are held at their means.

As shown in the first part of Table 4, an increase in the level of trust in partisan institutions from 1 to 3 while all else is held at the means leads to the probability of trust raising from 0.02 to 0.97 in the group of communist identifiers. While the same change in the group of non-communist identifiers increases the probability of trust from 0.20 to 0.56. Hence, the link between trust in partisan institutions and generalized trust is positive in both groups, but it is stronger in the group of communist identifiers than in the group without partisanship. In the second part of Table 4, an increase in the level of trust in checking institutions, moving from 1 to 3 while all other variables are held at the means, brings about an increase in probability of trust among non-communist identifiers from 0.37 to 0.47. In contrast, the probability of trust among communist identifiers considerably falls down from 0.98 to 0.13. Thus, at the highest level of trust, the link between trust in checking institutions and generalized trust is stronger in the non-communist identifier group than in the identifier group, and follows a reverse pattern at

the lower levels of trust in checking institutions. Figure 1 and 2 provide a visual summary of the relationships displayed in Table 4.

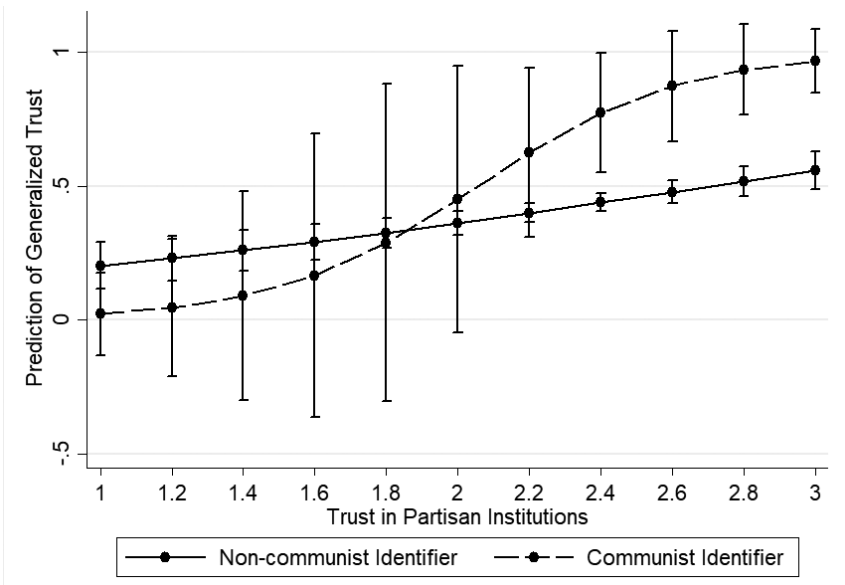


Figure 1. Predicted Probability of Generalized Trust by Trust in Partisan Institutions conditional on Partisanship

Note: The lines show the main predicted probability.

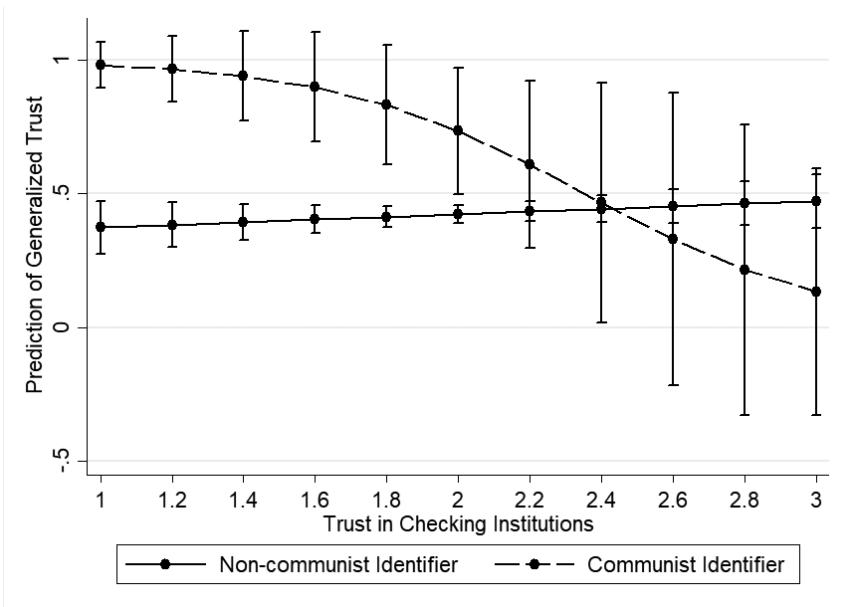


Figure 2. Predicted Probability of Generalized Trust by Trust in Checking Institutions conditional on Partisanship

Note: The lines show the main predicted probability.

This finding does not support the second hypothesis which expects the link between both types of trust in political institutions and generalized trust to be stronger among communist identifiers than among non-communist identifiers. Instead, while the performance of partisan institutions is associated with a high level of trust among the Vietnamese, the link is stronger among communist identifiers than among non-communist identifiers. In addition, a converse finding shows a positive relationship between trust in checking institutions and generalized trust among non-communist identifiers and a negative one among communist identifiers at the same time.

Membership-conditioned effect of institutional trust on generalized trust appears in Model 2 of Table 3. The coefficients of those interaction variables are negative but statistically insignificant in the model. Table 5 shows in detail the heterogeneity of predicted values of generalized trust with different level of voluntary membership under the effect of trust in political institutions.

Table 5. Membership-Conditioned Effect of Trust in Political Institutions on Generalized Trust^a

Trust in partisan institutions	Membership 0	Membership 1	Membership 2	Membership 3
1	0.19 [0.09;0.26]	0.40 [-0.04;0.84]	0.67 [-0.15;1.49]	0.86 [0.19;1.53]
1.5	0.26 [0.19;0.33]	0.42 [0.12;0.72]	0.59 [-0.001;1.19]	0.75 [0.05;1.45]
2	0.36 [0.31;0.40]	0.44 [0.27;0.60]	0.52 [0.18;0.85]	0.60 [0.11;1.10]
2.5	0.47 [0.43;0.51]	0.46 [0.34;0.57]	0.44 [0.22;0.66]	0.42 [0.09;0.76]
3	0.59 [0.51;0.66]	0.47 [0.26;0.69]	0.36 [-0.04;0.77]	0.27 [-0.25;0.78]
Trust in checking institutions	Membership 0	Membership 1	Membership 2	Membership 3
1	0.40 [0.29;0.50]	0.49 [0.17;0.81]	0.59 [-0.03;1.21]	0.68 [-0.15;1.52]
1.5	0.41 [0.35;0.48]	0.47 [0.29;0.65]	0.53 [0.17;0.89]	0.59 [0.06;1.12]
2	0.43 [0.40;0.47]	0.45 [0.34;0.56]	0.47 [0.25;0.69]	0.49 [0.15;0.82]
2.5	0.45 [0.39;0.51]	0.43 [0.23;0.62]	0.41 [0.02;0.80]	0.39 [-0.19;0.97]
3	0.47 [0.40;0.57]	0.41 [0.08;0.73]	0.35 [-0.28;0.98]	0.30 [-0.57;1.17]

^a Predicted probabilities of generalized trust were estimated using margins command (Long, 2003) in Stata.

Notes: The numbers in brackets are 95 per cent confidence intervals. Control variables are held at their means.

The first panel of Table 5 shows that a higher likelihood of trust occurs when trust in partisan institutions is high and when level of voluntary membership is high. Observe, for example, on the first row, how the predicted value of generalized trust at the lowest level of trust in partisan institutions (level=1) increases as the level of voluntary memberships (level=3) arises i.e., from 0.19 to 0.86. The probability is approximately two times higher among individuals with one membership (from 0.19 to 0.40), reaching 0.67 and 0.86 for people joining two and three voluntary organizations respectively. Note a similar pattern when the level of trust in partisan institutions reaches its medium value (level=2), although in this case the leaps in the size of the predicted value of generalized trust as membership levels increase are not as intense. When the level of trust in partisan institutions reaches the highest point (level=3), however, and the more active voluntary membership is (level=3), the less individuals trust others.

The same pattern prevails when we look at trust in checking institutions, as the bottom panel of Table 5 reveals. More specifically, an increase in the level of trust in checking institutions from levels 1 to 3 leads to a slight decrease in probability of trusting others among individuals participating in one voluntary organization (from 0.49 to 0.41), but nearly half a decline in the probability of trusting others among people who are members of two voluntary organizations (from 0.59 to 0.35), and more than a three-fold drop in the probability of trusting others among individuals with the most active voluntary membership (level=3), a fall from 0.68 to 0.30. In contrast, the rise in the level of trust for checking institutions stimulates an increase in the probability of trusting others among individuals without membership in organizations, a surge from 0.40 to 0.47.

Figures 3 and 4 help us understand, in more vivid terms, the membership-conditioned effect of trust in political institutions and generalized trust. Figure 3 reveals that as the level of trust in partisan institutions increases, the level of generalized trust among individuals with more than one membership dramatically decreases, that of individuals with one membership seems to be constant, while, an increase in the level of trust among individuals without voluntary memberships is a clear upward line. Figure 4 illustrates a similar story of the link between trust in checking institutions and generalized trust. These results are roughly in line with the third hypothesis which assumes that the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust is weakened by an increase in the level of voluntary memberships.

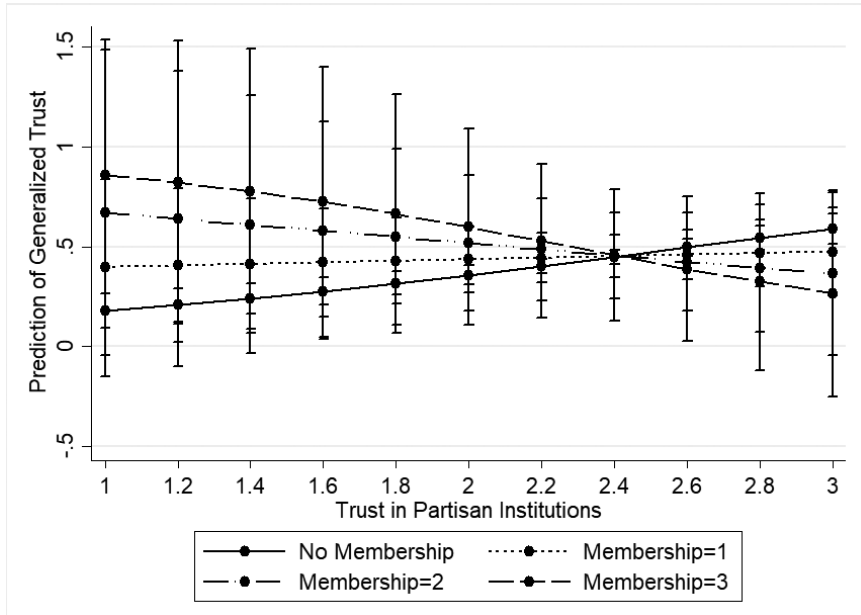


Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Generalized Trust by Trust in Partisan Institutions conditional on Voluntary Memberships
 Note: The lines show the main predicted probability.

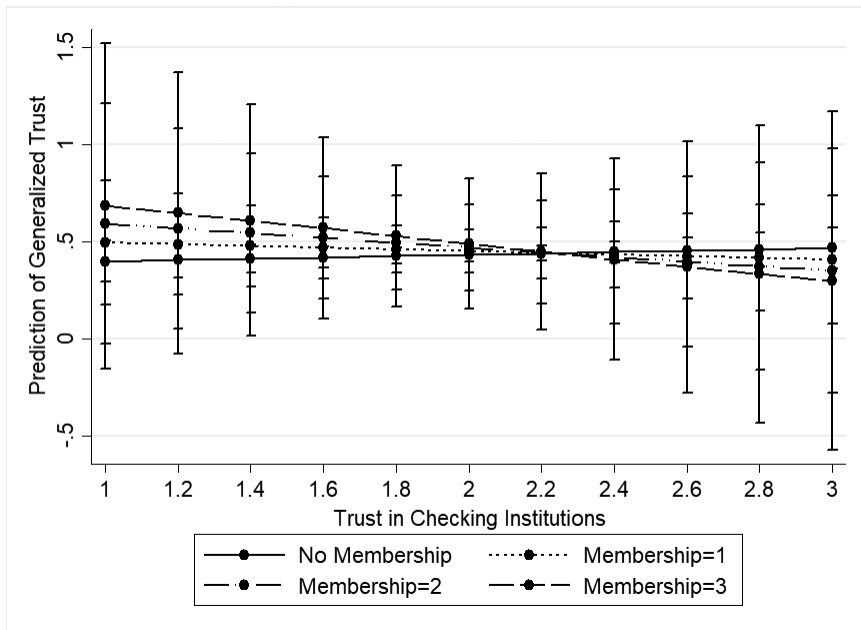


Figure 4. Predicted Probability of Generalized Trust by Trust in Checking Institutions conditional on Voluntary Memberships
 Note: The lines show the main predicted probability.

■ DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study analyses the relationship between trust in political institutions and generalized trust in the nondemocratic context of Vietnam using Vietnam ABS data from the fourth wave collected in 2015. The main aim of this study is to expand the understanding of the link by investigating mechanisms that condition this relationship, two of which are partisanship and voluntary membership in organizations. Three theoretical assumptions were developed to guide the study as follows: 1) Trust in political institutions is generally assumed to have positive effect on generalized trust; 2) The positive and stronger correlation between institutional trust and social trust is hypothesized to be observed among communist identifiers as compared to non-communist identifiers; and 3) the link is expected to be weaker in relation to an increase in the level of voluntary membership.

At first, this study showed that the effects of trust in political institutions on generalized trust in Vietnam vary depending on different types of institutional trust. Trust in partisan institutions is demonstrated as an important source generating social trust, while trust in checking institutions is not a predictor of generalized trust. Trust in partisan institutions in the political context of Vietnam is tapped with the confidence in both the representational side (president or Prime Minister, national government, political parties) and implementation institutions (courts, parliament, military forces, police). This construction is different from the one developed by Rothstein and Stolle (2008: 448), which only includes the representational side of a state. However, the implementation institutions of which the performance and degree of impartiality are seen as a crucial factors affecting citizens' motivation or willingness to place trust in others are also theorized as sources determining the variation of generalized trust (Rothstein, Stolle 2008: 444 and 445). Accordingly, the association between trust in partisan institutions and generalized trust in Vietnam is in line with the theoretical assumption suggested by the authors.

Secondly, this study demonstrated that partisanship and voluntary associational membership are two important factors affecting the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust. For partisanship, while the performance of all types of political institutions is evidently a basis for non-communist identifiers to generate trust, it is not the same for the group of communist identifiers. Social trust of communist identifiers is more likely due to the available sense of commonly held beliefs of the general population that comes from the subjectively partisanship-based evaluation of performance of partisan institutions no matter how the partisan institutions work. However, the level of trust of this group seems to be weakened by or at least kept

distance with the performance of checking institutions. This is at odds with the theoretical expectation of the present study because of the fact that checking institutions still carry communist ideology under the totalitarianism of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Thayer 2008: 3). The question is why this fact exists. Whether checking institutions' function is perceived as challenges rather than guarantors of the safety by the group of communists, from which trust among those communist identifiers is repressed. The answer should be clarified in relation to substantial changes in the country resulting from the implementation of renovation policies from the 1980s, which foster private sectors into business and liberalize foreign trade and investment in Vietnam (Dalton et al. 2002). The changes are more likely to contribute to the growth in the number of checking institutions such as civil service and non-governmental organizations, of which functions of monitoring and criticism toward the performances of partisan institutions as well as policies adopted by partisan institutions become practical challenges in the sense of critical outlooks.

Regarding voluntary associational membership, while individuals without memberships count on the good perception of the performance of political institutions to trust in others, people with higher level of participation in voluntary organizations express cautious attitudes towards political institutions to develop trust. This study measures individual memberships by counting the number of autonomous voluntary organizations challenging political system that respondents belong to as supposed by Dalton and Ong (2005: 6). In fact, individuals participating more actively in such autonomous organizations are more likely to improve interpersonal skills and critical thinking, which in turn leads to the development of different outlooks beyond the dominant one. Still, such individuals seem to have negatively bias-based assessments of the performance of political institutions, resulting in the fact that they develop trust by ruling out taking political institutions as a basis.

These findings suggest theoretical implications for studies on the link between institutional trust and generalized trust, especially in nondemocratic contexts. Firstly, different types of institutional trust should be taken into account when investigating its effects on generalized trust. In addition, in contrast to democratic settings where the impartial operation of political institutions constitutes the main foundation to develop trust, due to their poor performance, political institutions in nondemocratic countries are not taken as a foundation of generalized trust by all citizens. However, that is not to say that there is merely unidirectional effect from trust in political institutions on generalized trust in the case of Vietnam. As notified in the previous sections, given the evidence of recent studies on the causal relationship between them where there is convincingly demonstrated that the direction is to run from

political trust to generalized trust, this study aims to investigate the impact of political trust on generalized trust by taking it as a predictor. Measuring the causality of the link between the two forms of trust, in which adequate methods, for example, the use of instrumental variable techniques for cross-sectional data or the application of appropriate techniques to panel data should be employed, is beyond the scope of this study. Secondly, partisanship and voluntary associational membership were convincingly proven as two prominent conditions under which the variation of the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust can be observed.

This finding has puzzling implications with regard to the policy of developing or improving trust among the Vietnamese. The Vietnam society is in a rapid process of transition from a traditional to modern society and from a society that merely accepts communism to the one where pluralism in political ideology is more widely and publicly discussed. This transition leads to inconsistent perceptions of the importance of the role of political institutions in different social and political groups. Thus, different from democratic contexts where improvement of the performance of political institutions is considered as a key solution to facilitate the high level of trust, as demonstrated in the findings of this study, developing trust by taking into account the performance of political institutions in the context of Vietnam seems not to be very suggestive.

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INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL EVIDENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND GENERALIZED TRUST: AN ANALYSIS IN THE CASE OF VIETNAM

The relationship between political and generalized trust has been placed in the centre of academic debate for several decades. Recent studies have found a positive link between the two constructs in democratic countries and Asian nondemocratic settings, but no correlation among them in post-communist countries. This paper extends the understanding of the link in nondemocratic settings by taking Vietnam as a case to investigate conditions behind the relationship. Using data of Vietnam from the fourth wave of Asian Barometer Survey, results of logistic regressions reveal that different types of trust in political institutions differently affect generalized trust. Trust in partisan institutions is positively associated with generalized trust, while there is no relationship between trust in checking institutions and generalized trust. Furthermore, partisanship and voluntary associational membership are demonstrated as two prominent conditions under which the variation of the link between trust in political institutions and generalized trust can be observed.

Keywords: generalized trust, trust in political institutions, political trust, social capital