

**POLITICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:
THE PATH OF SOCIALIST-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT
IN VIETNAM (1986 - 2023)**

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates Vietnam's unique development trajectory under the socialist-oriented market economy model, with a focus on the interplay between political institutions and socio-economic outcomes. Drawing on qualitative document analysis and secondary data, the study examines how state control, economic liberalization, and centralized governance have shaped Vietnam's economic growth, poverty reduction, and social development since the Đổi Mới reforms of 1986 (Đổi Mới (IPA: [dõĩ mǎ:ĩ]; "renovation" or "innovation") is the name given to the economic reforms initiated in Vietnam in 1986 with the goal of creating a "socialist-oriented market economy"). Utilizing a single-country case study approach, the research analyzes key national policies, party resolutions, and international reports to evaluate development outcomes across multiple dimensions, including education, healthcare, and institutional governance. The findings reveal that Vietnam has achieved remarkable progress in economic performance, with consistent GDP growth, increased foreign direct investment, and a sharp decline in poverty rates. Social indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, and healthcare coverage have also improved significantly. However, the study identifies persistent regional disparities, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and institutional constraints that limit the effectiveness of policy implementation. The tension between state control and market dynamics remains a central theme, as Vietnam continues to balance socialist principles with global economic integration. The thesis concludes that while Vietnam's development model has delivered notable gains in economic and social indicators, future success will depend on adaptive governance, decentralization, and institutional reform. The implications of this research offer valuable insights for other transitional economies navigating the balance between political stability and market-oriented development.

Keywords: Socialist-Oriented Development, Centralized Political Structure, Vietnam, Doi Moi, Social Development, Market Socialism, Governance