

Review of: "Vietnam's Religious Policy: Navigating the Path to Religious Freedom"

Yves Guermond¹

¹ Université de Rouen - Haute Normandie

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article begins with a brief analysis of the six main religious trends present in Vietnam, and recalls that Vietnamese law of 2004 affirms the right to religious freedom. The path to this freedom is, however, blocked by disputes. These disputes are indicated in a somewhat confused way. They seem to concern above all the Hoa Hao and certain Buddhist tendencies such as the An Dan Dai Dao, which are accused of challenging the government on social networks. These two tendencies appear to have maintained relations with the South Vietnamese leadership prior to reunification. The text is not very precise on this question, which could explain the poor relations with the current leadership. The founder of An Dan Dai Dao, arrested in 2012, died in prison. We are told that the leader of another Buddhist group, also apparently independent (page 10) Le Tung Van, aged 90, was arrested in 2022, and sentenced to 23 years in prison. The reasons given for these sentences, which appear to be truly abusive, should be clarified. Disputes with Catholics seem less profound, but at least clearer, since they involve demonstrations against state development projects involving land confiscation. It does not appear that other religious movements were involved, or at least the article does not mention them.

The article should specify more clearly the reasons for the destruction of pagodas and the basis for disputes with certain Buddhist communities. The US government places Vietnam among the 4 countries most responsible for violations of religious freedom, but in this area as in others, the US government's moral judgments are not always scientifically rigorous. The first step would be to pinpoint the sources of disagreement between certain Buddhist tendencies and the government, which have resurfaced over the years, and which are not explained in the paper.

Yves Guermond