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The Role of Government in the United States and Vietnam

Freedom is one of the most important aspects of life for many people. In the United States, people have the freedom to choose their career, their religion, and they can vote for change when they think it's needed. In a democracy, these freedoms are part of everyday life, but not everyone around the world is able to experience the same freedom because there are many who live in countries where one person or one party makes all the decisions. Vietnam, for example, is run by the Communist Party of Vietnam under an authoritarian system which does not allow the same freedoms that are experienced in the United States. Vietnam and the United States vary greatly in how they make and enforce laws, what role citizens have in choosing leaders and influencing laws, and how these governments affect their citizens' freedoms and ability to accomplish their goals.

First of all, even though new laws are passed in both the United States and Vietnam, the way that they are passed and enforced is different in each country. In the United States, an idea is turned into a bill which is sponsored by a representative and then goes to a committee to be approved, and then be voted on by the House of Representatives and later the Senate. Once it passes both the House and Senate, "a conference committee made of House and Senate members

works out any differences between the House and Senate version of the bill” (U.S. House of Representatives). After this process, it goes back to the House and Senate to be approved before going to the President of the United States to sign or veto the proposed bill within 10 days (U.S. House of Representatives). This system of checks and balances ensures that legislation is fair and keeps one group from having too much power or authority. In contrast, Vietnam has a single-party system where the Communist Party of Vietnam “holds leadership over the state and society” (Vietnam’s 2025 Constitutional Reform). Laws are developed and enforced by the Communist Party. Vietnam’s political system has been described as “cumbersome, characterized by overlapping functions, unclear responsibilities, and inconsistent authority” (Vietnam’s 2025 Constitutional Reform). This system allows one party to control the laws that fit their goals and desires, restricting change and progress.

Secondly, Vietnam and the United States differ in the way that citizens choose leaders and influence laws. Because the United States was built as a democratic republic, according to the Constitution, citizens govern themselves and the power of the government comes from the people themselves (USCIS). After people turn 18, they can vote for their government officials. These elected people represent the “concerns and ideas of the citizens in government” (USCIS). According to Sun Nguyen, “Vietnam also has elections, but it is hard to call the elections democratic given its methodology and context as a one-party state – which only recognizes the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP)” (Nguyen). People outside of the governing party can technically run for office in Vietnam, but the rules that include keeping candidates from raising funds or using personal wealth, not allowing them to have campaign rallies, and only allowing campaigning through media that the VCP controls limits outsiders from breaking into politics

(Nguyen). According to the Vietnam Embassy, the country believes that, “The Communist Party of Viet Nam is the vanguard of the Vietnamese working class, the working people, and the whole nation; a loyal representative of the interests of the working class, the working people, and the whole nation” (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam). Vietnam would like to claim that they represent the people, but the lack of freedom in the elections would show that they are not.

Lastly, the governments in both Vietnam and the United States affect their citizens' freedoms and ability to accomplish their goals in different ways. The United States is built on a concept of freedom for all citizens. According to Nicholas Monck, “The Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments codify freedoms such as speech, religion, due process, and equal protection under the law” (Monck). Because of this system of freedoms, people are able to chase the American Dream and accomplish their goals. In contrast, laws that allow freedom of expression, religion and other rights are not available to Vietnamese citizens (Vietnam). Instead of this getting better over time, it is actually getting worse. Freedom in the World shares the opinion that, “Even by Vietnam’s authoritarian standards, in recent years, and particularly in 2024, the authorities have engaged in one of the widest-ranging crackdowns on dissent in decades” (Vietnam). Vietnamese people would have a harder time living their dreams and accomplishing goals because of the restrictions that are set upon them by the Vietnamese Communist Party.

In conclusion, in a democracy freedoms are part of everyday life, but not everyone around the world is able to experience the same freedom because there are many who live in countries where one person or one party makes all the decisions. How governments make and enforce laws, what role citizens have in choosing leaders and influencing laws, and how

governments affect their citizens' freedoms and ability to accomplish their goals is very different between the United States and Vietnam. For those living in freedom, being able to live how you choose and accomplish your goals is something that shouldn't be taken for granted. Even though there are challenges in the United States, it does not compare to the challenges others have to deal with where freedom is not available.

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